POLITECNICO DI TORINO
Repository ISTITUZIONALE

Forecasting the response to global warming in a heat-sensitive species

*Original*
Forecasting the response to global warming in a heat-sensitive species / Brivio, F., Zurmuhl, M., Grignolio, S., von Hardenberg, J., Apollonio, M., Ciuti, S.. - In: SCIENTIFIC REPORTS. - ISSN 2045-2322. - 9:(2019). [10.1038/s41598-019-39450-5]

*Availability:*
This version is available at: 11583/2815000 since: 2020-04-22T14:09:34Z

*Publisher:*
NATURE PUBLISHING GROUP

*Published*
DOI:10.1038/s41598-019-39450-5

*Terms of use:*

This article is made available under terms and conditions as specified in the corresponding bibliographic description in the repository

*Publisher copyright*

(Article begins on next page)

15 July 2026



HPA
Histories of Postwar Architecture

n.**14** 20**24**
vol.**VII**

# The Churches and the City. European Experiences Between the 1950s and the 1960s

edited by
**João Alves da Cunha, Andrea Longhi, João Luís Marques, Sofia Singler, Giovanni Bellucci and Raffaella Maddaluno**

**Nicholas Adams**
**Alba Arboix-Alió**
**Angeliki Bara**
**Giovanni Bellucci**
**Herman van Bergeijk**
**Esteban Fernández Cobián**
**João Alves da Cunha**
**Lorenzo Grieco**
**Kate Jordan**
**Anna Kloke**
**Chiara Kuijpers**
**Laura Lazzaroni**
**Andrea Longhi**
**Stefano Mais**
**Raffaella Maddaluno**
**João Luís Marques**
**Patrizia Montuori**
**Giorgio Nepote Vesin**
**Özlem Balcı Öztürk**
**Marta Vilas Rodríguez**
**Oya Şenyurt**
**Riccardo Serraglio**
**Sofia Singler**
**Sven Sterken**
**Martina Ulbar**
**Femke Van der Meulen**
**Stephanie Van de Voorde**
**Rosa Maria Marta Caruso**
**Giovanni Multari**

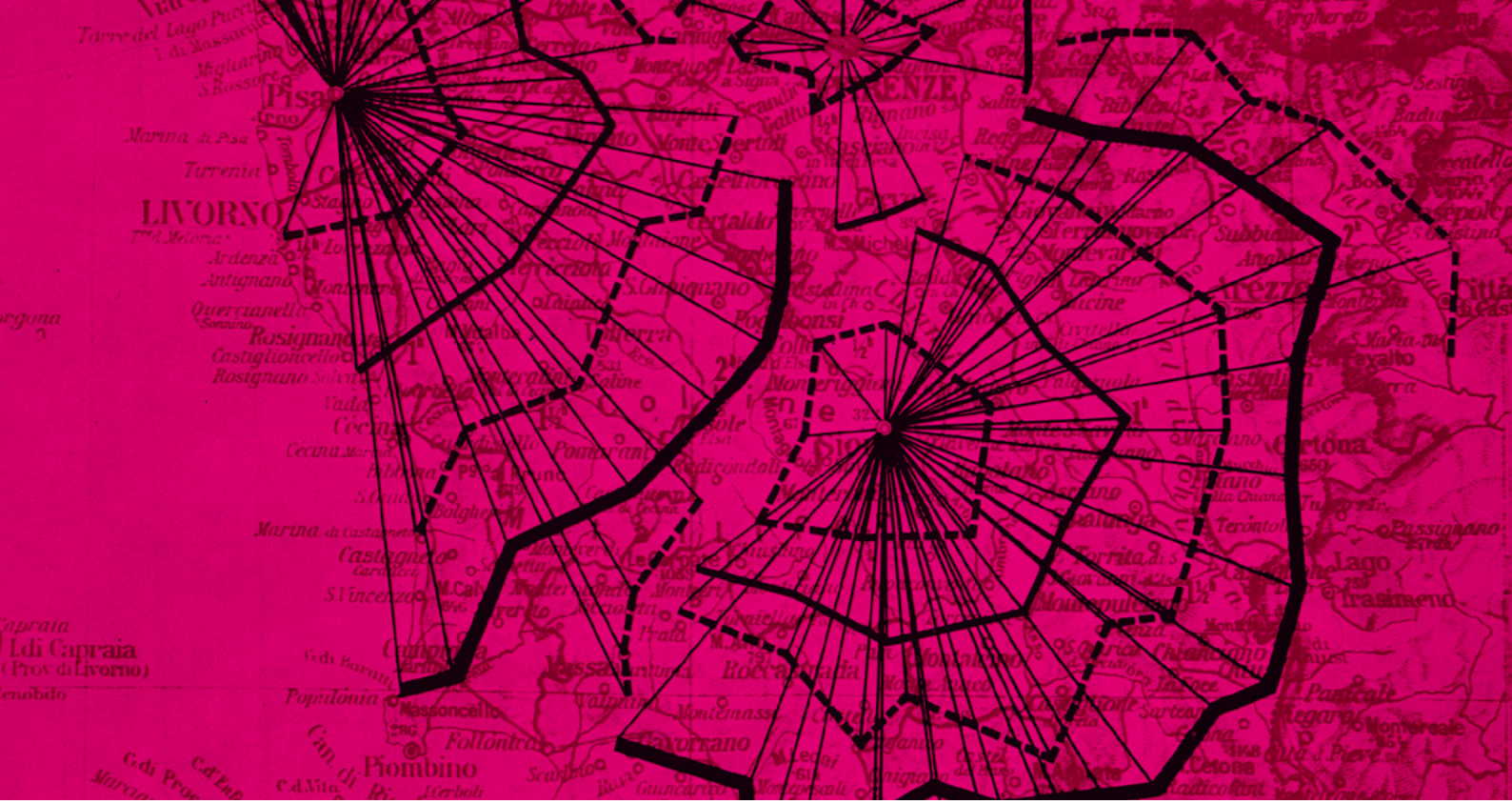
HPA
Histories of Postwar Architecture

n.**14** 20**24**
vol.**VII**

# The Churches and the City. European Experiences Between the 1950s and the 1960s

edited by

**João Alves da Cunha, Andrea Longhi, João Luís Marques, Sofia Singler, Giovanni Bellucci and Raffaella Maddaluno**



# Histories of Postwar Architecture

ISSN 2611-0075
https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/v7-n14-2024

"**Histories of Post War Architecture**" is a scientific journal recognized by ANVUR (Italian National Agency for Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes) for disciplinary area 10 (Antiquities, philology, literary studies, art history). Since 2018 it is rated "Classe A" Journal for disciplinary area 08 (Civil engineering and architecture). The Journal is indexed in the following databases and search engines: Scopus, ANCP, BASE, DOAJ, ERIH PLUS, Google Scholar, JournalTOCs, PLEIADI, ROAD, Worldcat.

under the auspices of

AISU Aisu International Associazione Italiana di Storia Urbana

**PNRR** Partenariato Esteso Cultura umanistica e patrimonio culturale come laboratori di innovazione e creatività

CHANGES CULTURAL HERITAGE ACTIVE INNOVATION FOR NEX-GEN SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY EXTENDED PARTNERSHIP

Spoke7 PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGES, NATURAL AND ANTHROPIC RISKS

with the patronage of

fct Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia

U.PORTO FACULDADE DE ARQUITECTURA UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

CEAU Centro de Estudos de Arquitectura e Urbanismo

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CIAUD Centro de Investigação em Arquitetura Urbanismo e Design

FACULDADE DE ARQUITETURA LISBON SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA

CATÓLICA CEHR · CENTRO DE ESTUDOS DE HISTÓRIA RELIGIOSA

U LISBOA UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA

with the scientific support of

Politecnico di Torino

UNIVERSITÀ DI TORINO

DIST Dipartimento Interateneo di Scienze, Progetto e Politiche del Territorio

**Scientific Commitee**

Nicholas Adams (Vassar College), Eve Blau (Harvard University), Ruth Baumeister (Aarhus School of Architecture), Herman van Bergeijk (Delft University of Technology),Maristella Casciato (Getty Research Institute), Pepa Cassinello (Universidad Politécnica de Madrid), Christophe van Gerrewey (EPFL), Carola Hein (Delft University of Technology), Hélène Jannière (Université Rennes 2), Thomas Leslie (Iowa State University), Mary Caroline McLeod (Columbia University), Daniel J. Naegele (Iowa State University), Joan Ockman (Penn University), Antoine Picon (Harvard Graduate School of Design), Antonio Pizza (Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura de Barcelona), Dominique Rouillard (Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris Malaquais), Paolo Scrivano (Politecnico di Milano), Laurent Stalder (ETH Zurich), Martino Stierli (MoMA), Rosa Tamborrino (Politecnico di Torino), André Carinha Tavares (University of Porto), Letizia Tedeschi (Archivio del Moderno, Università della Svizzera Italiana).

**Editorial Team**

**Editor in Chief**
Giovanni Leoni (University of Bologna, Italy)

**Deputy Editor in Chief**
Matteo Cassani Simonetti (University of Bologna, Italy )

**Journal Manager**
Ilaria Cattabriga (University of Bologna, Italy)

**Publishing Editors**

Micaela Antonucci (University of Bologna), Francesco Benelli (Università di Bologna), Lorenzo Ciccarelli (University of Florence, Department of Architecture, Italy) Marco Falsetti (Sapienza University of Rome, Department of Architecture and Design) Elena Formia (University of Bologna), Rute Figueiredo (Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa (Da/UAL)), Elmira Jafari (Delft University of Technology, Holland), Beatrice Lampariello (Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium), Raúl Martínez Martínez (Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya-BarcelonaTech, Spain), Gabriele Neri, (Politecnico di Torino), Anna Rosellini (University of Bologna), Matteo Sintini, (Ministry of the Cultural Heritage), Ines Tolic (University of Bologna).

**Editorial Assistants**

Giovanni Bellucci (University of Bologna)
Ramona Loffredo (University of Bologna)

**Graphic and Design Editors**

Stefano Ascari (University of Bologna, Italy)
Ilaria Cattabriga (University of Bologna, Italy)
Giovanni Bellucci (University of Bologna, Italy)

Cover picture:

**Detail of the Bronze Cross for the Altar of the Seminary Church in Mantua, Chiesa e quartiere, no. 32 (January 1965): 59.**

Front and last page:

**Schemes for the Territorial Restructuring of the Tuscan Conciliar Region, Cover of Chiesa e quartiere, no. 42 (June 1967).**

Editorial page:

**Detail of the Exterior Wall of the Florence Cathedral Baptistery, Cover of Chiesa e quartiere, no. 14 (1960).**

HPA
n.**14** 20**24** vol.**VII**

# The Churches and the City. European Experiences Between the 1950s and the 1960s

edited by
João Alves da Cunha, Andrea Longhi, João Luís Marques, Sofia Singler, Giovanni Bellucci and Raffaella Maddaluno

**/ EDITORIAL**

João Alves da Cunha, Andrea Longhi, João Luís Marques, Sofia Singler, Giovanni Bellucci and Raffaella Maddaluno
**Editorial** ..... 9

**/ Introduction to geographies and case studies**

Andrea Longhi
**Between Liturgical Reform and Social Commitment: a Historiographic Profile of Policies for the Ecclesiastical Infrastructure of Italian Cities in the Post-War Period** ..... 13

Esteban Fernández Cobián and Marta Vilas Rodríguez
**Religious Architecture and Urbanism in Vigo During José Delicado Baeza's Episcopate (1969-1975)** ..... 39

João Alves da Cunha
**MRAR – The Portuguese "Religious Art Renovation Movement" (1954-1969) and the Changes in the 20th Century Religious Architecture in Portugal** ..... 63

Herman van Bergeijk
**A Curious Competition for a Protestant Church in the Netherlands** ..... 78

**/ From Europe ...**

Anna Kloke
**The Church in the Camouflage of Mass Housing Construction. The Ecumenical Centre of Scharnhorst-Ost in Dortmund** ..... 100

Özlem Balcı Öztürk and Oya Şenyurt
**Brutalist Practice in 1960's Berlin Churches: Experimental Interior Spaces** ..... 119

Alba Arboix-Alió
**Parish Churches and Public Space in Barcelona: A Catalan Experience During the 1950s and 1960s** ..... 136

João Luís Marques
**Fernando Távora Churches an Modernity in North Portugal** ..... 166

Lorenzo Grieco
**Multifunctionality and Ecumenism in Post-War British Church Architecture: Two Projects by Martin Purdy** ..... 189

Kate Jordan
**Beyond the Pale: Reading the White Interior in Contemporary Church Refurbishments** ..... 207

**/ ... through readings ...**

Chiara Kuijpers, Femke Van der Meulen, Sven Sterken and Stephanie Van de Voorde
**Constructing a Modern Image. The Representation of Post-war Churches in Belgian Periodicals (1945-1975)** ..... 218

Laura Lazzaroni
**Sacred Architecture in Italian Magazines, 1950-1970** ..... 248

**/ ... to Italy**

Giovanni Bellucci
**Giacomo Lercaro, an Architect among Architects? The Scientific Planning of the "Seconda Bologna" between the 1950s and 1960s** ..... 291

Sofia Singler
**Selective Participation: Alvar and Elissa Aalto's Sacred Architecture in Riola di Vergato** ..... 320

Martina Ulbar and Giorgio Nepote Vesin
**Adriano, the Church, and the City. Olivetti and the Religious Architectural Patronage between 1950s and 1960s in Ivrea** ..... 345

Stefano Mais
**Urban Projects and Religious Architecture in Post-War Cagliari: the Sant'Elia Village and its Church (1951-1956)** ..... 376

Patrizia Montuori
**Carlo Boccianti's Churches from the Maremma to the Fucino: not just Houses for the Farmers but Something Strĕnŭus** ..... 405

Riccardo Serraglio
**Untopical Modernity in Neighbourhood Churches by Marcello Canino** ..... 426

Angeliki Bara
**Te Shell of Faith in the City. The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Gio Pont** ..... 453

Rosa Maria Marta Caruso
**Churches by Enzo Fortuna (1921-1979) in Eastern Sicily between 1955 and 1970: Design Processes, Influences and Outcomes** ..... 470

**/ VISUAL**

Giovanni Multari
**Ordinary and Extraordinary.**
**The Experience of Parrish Complex in Dresano** ..... 488

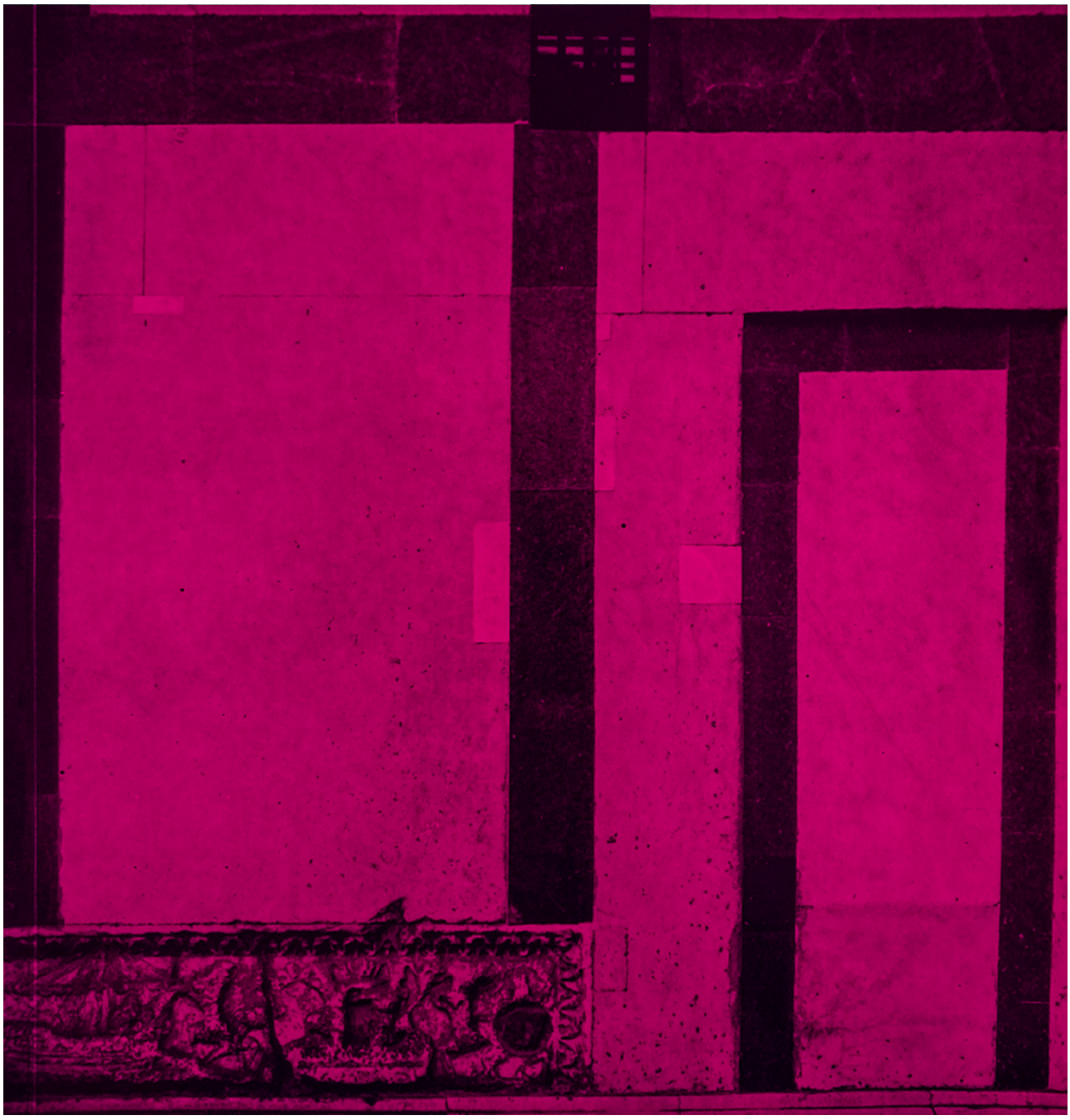
**/ MISCELLANEA**

Nicholas Adams
**A Banned Book and two Articles:**
**The Individual and the Collective at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (1955–1959)** ..... 516

**ERRATA / CORRIGENDA**

Ioanna Angelidou
**The Possibility of an Island: Cold War Berlin as Charged Void, Landscape, and Mirage** ..... 531

Paolo Bortot
**Eigth Forts. Traces of the Modern in Austro-Hungarian Permanent Fortified Works among the Mountainous South-West Borders of The Empire. 1833-1913** ..... 532





**João Alves da Cunha, Andrea Longhi, João Luís Marques, Sofia Singler, Giovanni Bellucci, Raffaella Maddaluno**

# Editorial

CC 4.0
https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/20968
Copyright © 2024 da Cunha, Longhi, Marques, Singler, Bellucci, Maddaluno

Issue 14 of *HPA – Histories of Postwar Architecture* shares the results of the call published in summer 2023 for the international conference "The Churches and the City: European experiences between the 1950s and the 1960s," held in Bologna on 7 and 8 March 2024. Nearly fifty years after the first "National Congress of Sacred Architecture," organised in Bologna in September 1955 by Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro, the theme of architectural and liturgical reform is still fully relevant today, and remains the subject of in-depth study and research involving scholars from various disciplines. That first meeting, at which planners, representatives of public and private institutions, art historians, and academics from Italy and many other countries, both European and non-European, came to Bologna, was followed by many other opportunities for discussion. The journeys of the young architects and the exchange of materials concerning the projects of new churches and works of art that were built at the same time were the subject of exhibitions and publications in dozens of magazines, thus giving great visibility to the theme of modern churches. This theme turned out to be of great interest especially for a new generation of professionals with compositional results that certainly anticipated many of the contents later confirmed at the Second Vatican Council.

The ostensible prescience of this short but extremely vital and rich chapter in the history of contemporary architecture may explain, in part, its enduring appeal among architectural and art historians as well as scholars from aligned disciplines. The short-lived but influential period led to the construction of a conspicuous number of buildings that we could define as "experimental" in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany and many other geographical contexts. Key themes of interest include avant-garde parish complexes' volumetric composition and language, and the simpler details that distinguish their design and image; the particular relationship between architecture and the works of art inserted inside, and the collaboration that developed between architects and artists involved in the project; and, no less significantly, the relationship of buildings of worship with the context understood as a "neighbourhood" and other urban aggregates.

Today, nearly half a century after their realisation, these architectures pose important new questions about their restoration, maintenance, and the cultural value they have now and will be able to convey in the future as symbols of the modern movement. No less considerable are the questions and aspects that these works still have today on a social level, especially in the face of worrying patterns of marginalisation and under-use; these projects were conceived at a time when the participation of the faithful in the ecclesiastical and secular activity of the parish communities which they served was undoubtedly more alive and well established.

Fundamental to ensuring a new, or at least different, critical interpretation, and broadening the historical framework relating to these works, are undoubtedly the archives from whose investigation unpublished results have emerged in terms of both written sources and graphic and iconographic materials. We therefore believe that each of the essays published herein responds to various

themes, among those mentioned above, while also introducing more specific issues particular to each of the cases examined. The essays address a wide range of concerns, spanning from constructive and compositional interpretation to social and historical analysis, and from the criticalities detectable today to the interventions that have modified or altered these architectures.

The essays published in this issue thus propose different readings and in-depth studies that each tell a story of this decisive period in their own terms. The first four texts constitute different models of interpretation with respect to what happened in as many European geographical realities. Andrea Longhi proposes a critical update on the recent historiography of the articulate and complex situation in Italy after the Second World War up to the Second Vatican Council. This is followed by Spain, and in particular what happened in Vigo, during the years of the episcopate of José Delicado Baeza in the essay authored by Esteban Fernández Cobián and Marta Vilas Rodrígues. On the other hand, the contribution of the MRAR – Portuguese Religious Art Renovation Movement with the association between architects, artists and historians is the subject of João Alves da Cunha's essay, while Herman van Bergeijk's essay focuses on the projects presented in the competition for a new Dutch Protestant church in which young designers such as Aldo van Eyck and Herman Hertzberger participated before becoming famous masters of architecture in the second half of the 20th century.

The next contributions unravel, again in European contexts, stories or facts centred on a specific architectural work or designer. From Germany, Anna Kloke presents us with the case of the ecumenical centre of Scharnhorst-Ost in Dortmund and the peculiarities of the spaces conceived from the outset as multifunctional and the conversion they have recently undergone. Also from Germany, Ozlem Balci-Ozturk and Oya Senyurt examine the design of three churches and the application of Brutalist language in 1960s Berlin. From Spain, Alba Arboix-Alió and Josep Maria Pons-Poblet introduce the study of urban peculiarities and the relationship between churches and public space in Barcelona in the 1950s and 1960s, while from neighbouring Portugal, João Luís Marques discusses the peculiarities of the design of religious buildings in the north of the country by architect Fernando Távora. Finally, from England, Lorenzo Grieco interrogates the compositional characteristics and urban relations of two Anglican churches designed by Martin Purdy, while Kate Jordan illustrates the potential and reasons behind recent restoration work carried out in some historic English churches.

In connection with the different international realities mentioned here, the two contributions included in the central section of the journal examine various journals focussed mainly on architecture and religious art, whose significance to the story of 20$^{th}$-century Christian architecture is recognised broadly by critics and scholars. The in-depth study on periodicals from Belgium and France by Chiara Kuijpers, Femke Van der Meulen, Sven Sterken and Stephanie Van de Voorde is followed by the equally rich analysis of a number of Italian magazines

by Laura Lazzaroni.

Finally, from Italy come the contributions included in the third part of the issue. The third section opens with Bologna, with an analysis of the relationship between modern architecture and Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro authored by Giovanni Bellucci, and the monographic analysis by Sofia Singler on one of the best-known Bolognese churches commissioned by Lercaro, designed by Alvar Aalto in Riola di Vergato. Martina Ulbar and Giorgio Nepote Vesin investigate the projects in the city of Ivrea and the links Adriano Olivetti had with various architects. Patrizia Montuori and Stefano Mais, in turn, present two unpublished case studies resulting from recent studies in various archives in Maremma and Fucino, the projects of architect Carlo Boccianti and the case of the San'Elia district in Cagliari. The 'atypical' contribution made by the Neapolitan architect Marcello Canino to some projects of religious buildings in Campania is the subject of the essay by Riccardo Serraglio, while Angeliki Bara has studied some of the churches designed by Gio Ponti and Rosa Maria Marta Caruso has proposed research on some of architect Enzo Fortuna's works in Sicily.

Closing the issue, in the Visual section, is the presentation of a recent project by the firm corvino+multari, described by one of its designers, architect Giovanni Multari, and realised in Dresano in Lombardy. It serves as an effective conclusion that illustrates how the specific typological theme of churches and parish centres, despite many difficulties, is still topical and the object of attention by patrons and planners alike.

**Andrea Longhi**

# 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.**

**/Author**

**Andrea Longhi**
**Interuniversity Department of Regional and Urban Studies and Planning, Politecnico di Torino, Turin, Italy**

Andrea Longhi is a full professor of the History of Architecture in the Interuniversity Department of Urban and Regional Studies and Planning (Politecnico and Università degli Studi di Torino), where he teaches *History and criticism of territorial cultural heritage* and *History of territorial transformations*. He also teaches in post-lauream programs of the Pontificio Ateneo Sant'Anselmo-Pontificio Istituto Liturgico and in the master's courses in *Design of worship buildings* in Sapienza Università di Roma.
He is a member of the scientific committees of *Liturgical International Conferences* of the monastery of Bose (2013-2020), *Congresos Internacionales de Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporánea*, *Architecture Culture Spirituality Forum* (ACSF), ICOMOS PRERICO – National Committee for Places of Religion and Ritual, council member and scientific advisor of *Future for Religious Heritage*.
His research activities concern liturgical architecture and the heritagization processes of religious properties. He is the author of *Storie di chiese, storie di comunità. Progetti, cantieri, architetture* (Gangemi 2017), *Architettura, Chiesa e società in Italia* (Studium, 2010), *Luoghi di culto. Architetture 1997-2007* (Motta, 2008), and editor of *Architettura e liturgia: autonomia e norma nel progetto* (Bononia University Press, 2017). His essays have been published by international publishers such as Skira, Allemandi, Brill, Bohlau, De Gruyter, Oxford University Press, Springer and Bloomsbury Academic.



CC BY 4.0
https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/20571
Copyright © 2024 Longhi

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,

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.



1

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]

2



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]

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.

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).



3

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

---

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

---

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,



4

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).



5

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*.



6

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.

---

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.

## Bibliography


Apa, Mariano. "Franco Maroni. Modernità dello spazio sacro." In *Franco Maroni. Architettura e pluralità dei linguaggi*, edited by Mariano Apa, Domenico Cialfi and Fausto Dominici, 11-104. Roma: Gangemi, 2016.

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

Belluzzi, Amedeo, and Claudia Conforti. *Lo spazio sacro nell'architettura di Giovanni Michelucci.* Torino: Allemandi, 1987.

Benedetti, Sandro. *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee. Il caso italiano*. Milano: Jaca Book, 2000.

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

Blanchet, Christine, and Pierre Vérot. *Architecture et arts sacrés de 1945 à nos jours*. Paris: Archibooks, 2015.

Bordoni, Umberto, 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. Religion, urban planning and demographic change in Post-War Europe,* edited by Sven Sterken and Eva Weyns, 251-279. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022.

Borzomati, Pietro. "La parrocchia." In *I luoghi della memoria. Strutture ed eventi dell'Italia unita*, edited by Mario Isnenghi, Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1997: 67-91.

Boselli, Goffredo, ed. *Chiesa e città*. Magnano: Qiqajon, 2010.

Campobenedetto, Daniele, 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.

Carillo, Saverio. "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.

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

Carillo, Saverio. "Costruire la chiesa. Raffaello Fagnoni: restauro e progetto del sacro." *Il Cristianesimo nella Storia*, no. 33 (2012): 89-115.

Cataldi, Giancarlo. "Il concetto di 'continuità ambientale' in architettura: i progetti di chiese di Saverio Muratori e di Luigi Vagnetti." In *L'architettura dell'"altra" modernità*, edited by Marina Docci and Maria Grazia Turco, 97-109. Roma: Gangemi, 2010.

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

Conforti, Claudia, and Marzia Marandola. "Lo spazio sacro di Giovanni Michelucci. L'architetto e la committenza." In *L'edificio cristiano. Architettura e liturgia*, edited by Virginio Sanson, 71-81. Padova: Messaggero, 2004.

Cozzo, Paolo. *Andate in pace. Parroci e parrocchie in Italia dal Concilio di Trento a papa Francesco*. Roma: Carocci, 2014.

Crippa, Maria Antonietta. "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.

Daprà, Francesca, 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.

De Carli, Cecilia, ed. *Le nuove chiese della diocesi di Milano. 1945-1993*. Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1994.

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

De Carli, Cecilia. "Le nuove chiese," In *Montini Arcivescovo di Milano*, edited by Luca Bressan and Angelo Maffeis, 295-329. Brescia: Istituto Paolo VI, 2016.

De Lucia, Giulia. "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.

De Marchis, Daniele. "Introduzione." In *L'Archivio della Commissione Centrale per l'Arte Sacra in Italia. Inventario*, edited by Daniele De Marchis, Città del Vaticano: Archivio Segreto Vaticano, 2013: 1-88.

De Marco, Vittorio. "La parrocchia." In *La nazione cattolica. Chiesa e società in Italia dal 1958 a oggi*, edited by Marco Impagliazzo, Milano: Guerini, 2004: 181-203.

De Rosa, Gabriele. "La parrocchia nell'età contemporanea." In *La parrocchia in Italia nell'età contemporanea. Atti del II Incontro seminariale di Maratea (24-25 settembre 1979)*, edited by, Gabriele De Rosa and Angelomichele De Spirito, Napoli: Dehoniane, 1982: 15-28.

De Rosa, Gabriele. *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.

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

Debuyst, Frédéric. *Chiese. Arte, architettura, liturgia dal 1920 al 2000*. Milano: Silvana, 2003.

Debuyst, Frédéric. *Elogio di nuove chiese. Una libera sequenza di incontri e di luoghi significativi rivisitati*. Magnano: Qiqajon, 2018.

Della Longa, Giorgio. "L'architettura di chiese in Italia nel XX secolo." In *Architettura e Liturgia nel Novecento. Esperienze europee a confronto*, edited by Giorgio Della Longa, Antonio Marchesi and Massimiliano Valdinoci, 97-112. Rovereto: Nicolodi, 2005.

Della Longa, Giorgio. "La arquitectura religiosa contemporánea en Italia y la experiencia de la Conferencia Episcopal Italiana en su promoción." *Actas de Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporánea*, no. 1 (2007): 106-129, https://doi.org/10.17979/aarc.2007.1.0.5020.

Della Longa, Giorgio and Barbara Fiorini, eds. *Giacomo Della Mea. Architettura sacra 1948-1968.* Pasian di Prato: Lithostampa, 2012.

Dianich, Severino. "Immagine di chiesa: la percezione della *forma ecclesiae* nello spazio della città postmoderna." In *Il corpo del* logos. *Pensiero estetico e teologia cristiana*, edited by Pierangelo Sequeri, Milano: Glossa, 2009: 125-178.

Dianich, Severino. "Linguaggi teologici e linguaggi architettonici." *Vivens Homo*, no. 21/2 (2010): 445-463.

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

Dimodugno, Davide. "L'Ufficio e i progetti: nota storico-giuridica." In *Comunità e progettazione*, edited by Jacopo Benedetti, Roma: Gangemi, 2021: 17-36.

Fernández-Cobián, Esteban. "La arquitectura religiosa española y las revistas extranjeras: el caso de Chiesa e quartiere." In Esteban Fernández-Cobián, *Escritos sobre arquitectura religiosa contemporánea*, 190-211. Buenos Aires: Diseño, 2013.

Focant, Camille, ed. *Quelle maison pour Dieu?* Paris: Cerf, 2003.

Focant, Camille. "Dal tempio alla casa: lo spazio del culto in Spirito e Verità." In *Spazio liturgico e orientamento*, edited by Goffredo Boselli, 87-104. Magnano: Qiqajon, 2007.

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

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

Gallerano, Nicola. "Microstoria." In *Dizionario di Storiografia*, edited by, Alberto De Bernardi and Scipione Guarracino, Milano, Bruno Mondadori, 1996: 682-683.

Gavazzi, Alberto, and Marco Ghilotti. *Luigi Caccia Dominioni, Spazio sacro e architettura*. Bologna: BUP, 2015.

Giannantonio, Raffaele. "L'architettura sacra in Italia e in Abruzzo." In *Echi di Le Corbusier in Abruzzo. Vincenzo Monaco e la chiesa della Madonna della Neve a Roccaraso*, edited by Raffaele Giannantonio. Roma: Gangemi, 2014, 103-158.

Gresleri, Glauco. "L'architettura del Centro studi e la radicalità del Moderno." In *Chiesa e Quartiere. Storia di una rivista e di un movimento per l'architettura a Bologna*, edited by Glauco Gresleri, Maria Beatrice Bettazzi and Giuliano Gresleri, 174-197. Bologna: Compositori, 2004.

Gresleri, Glauco. "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*, edited by Glauco Gresleri, Maria Beatrice Bettazzi and Giuliano Gresleri, Bologna: Compositori, 2004: 226-239.

Gresleri, Glauco, Maria Beatrice Bettazzi and Giuliano Gresleri. *Chiesa e Quartiere. Storia di una rivista e di un movimento per l'architettura a Bologna*. Bologna: Compositori, 2004.

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

Iogna-Prat, Dominique. *La Maison-Dieu. Une histoire monumentale de l'Église au Moyen Âge (v. 800-v. 1200)*. Paris: Seuil, 2006.

Iogna-Prat, Dominique. *Cité de Dieu. Cité des hommes. L'église et l'architecture de la société*. Paris: PUF, 2016.

Kastner, Birgit. "Ridefinire i segni sacri in contesti urbani e rurali: edifici religiosi simbolici e iconici nell'architettura contemporanea." *Area*, no. 147 (2016): 14-19.

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

Knott, Kim. "Spatial Theory and the Study of Religion." *Religion Compass*, no. 2/6 (2008): 1102-1116.

Knott, Kim. "Religion, Space, and Place. The Spatial Turn in Research on Religion." *Religion and Society. Advances in Research*, no. 1 (2010): 29-43.

Lazzaroni, Laura, ed. *La diocesi di Milano e le nuove chiese. 1954-2014*. Milano: Centro Ambrosiano, 2016.

Lebrun, Pierre. *Le temps des églises mobiles. L'architecture religieuse des Trente Glorieuses*. Gollion: Infolio, 2011.

Lercaro, Giacomo. "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.

Longhi, Andrea, 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.

Longhi, Andrea. "Cultura architettonica, vita ecclesiale e associazionismo cattolico dal Dopoguerra al Concilio Vaticano II." In Andrea Longhi, Carlo Tosco, *Architettura, Chiesa e società in Italia (1948-1978),* Roma: Studium, 2010: 99-235.

Longhi, Andrea. "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.

Longhi, Andrea. "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.

Longhi, Andrea. "La chiesa nella città: attualità di un dibattito e prospettive di ricerca internazionali." *Città e storia* VIII/2 (2013): 477-482.

Longhi, Andrea. "Le architetture di Luigi Gedda: committenza e cantieri (1949-1959)." In *Luigi Gedda nella storia della Chiesa e del Paese*, edited by Ernesto Preziosi, Roma: Ave, 2013: 277-302.

Longhi, Andrea. "Sacro, cultura architettonica e costruzione di chiese." In *La Liturgia alla prova del sacro*, edited by Paolo Tomatis, Roma: Edizioni Liturgiche, 2013: 159-214.

Longhi, Andrea. "Sacro, cultura architettonica e costruzione della città contemporanea: chiese nell'Italia del post-concilio." *Historia Religionum*, no. 8 (2016): 43-54.

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

Longhi, Andrea. *Storie di chiese, storie di comunità. Progetti, cantieri, architetture*. Roma: Gangemi, 2017.

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

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

Manenti, Claudia, ed. *Il cardinale Lercaro e la città contemporanea*. Bologna: Compositori, 2010.

Manenti, Claudia. *Luoghi di identità e spazi del sacro nella città europea contemporanea*. Milano: Franco Angeli, 2012.

Manenti, Claudia, ed. *La chiesa nella città a 50 anni dal Concilio Vaticano II*. Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2016.

Manenti, Claudia. "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*, edited by Katherin Bollenbeck, Giorgio Della Longa and Antonio Marchesi, Trento: Efferre, 2018: 23-39.

Manenti, Claudia. *La campagna nuove chiese del cardinale Lercaro*. Bologna: Minerva, 2023.

Marchisano, Francesco. "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.

Meduri, Giuseppe. *Quarant'anni di architettura sacra in Italia. 1900-1940. Le questioni, il dibattito, le polemiche.* Roma: Gangemi, 2016.

Melloni, Alberto. "Cristiani d'Italia. Introduzione." In *Cristiani d'Italia. Chiese, società, Stato. 1861-2011*, 2 voll., edited by Alberto Melloni, vol. 1, Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2011: XI-LVII.

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

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

Moraglio, Massimo. *La cittadella assediata. Parrocchie e nuove chiese a Torino (1945-1965)*. Torino: Trauben, 2008.

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

Noceti, Serena. "Ecclesiologia." In *Dizionario del sapere storico-religioso del Novecento*, 2 voll., edited by Alberto Melloni, vol. I, Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010: 811-841.

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

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

Pennasso, Valerio. "Nuove chiese: dai progetti pilota ai percorsi partecipativi. Nuove proposte." In *Lo spazio sacro e la città contemporanea*, edited by Danilo Lisi, Roma: Gangemi, 2021: 93-97.

Pennasso, Valerio. "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*, edited by Leonardo Servadio. Roma: Tab Edizioni, 2023, 177-186.

Prévot, Maryvonne. *Catholicisme social et urbanisme*. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2015.

Pirro, Michela. "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.

Portoghesi, Paolo. "Lo spazio sacro." In *La chiesa nella città moderna. Architettura, arte e progetto urbano*, edited by Giovanna Quattrone, Milano: Franco Angeli, 2007: 77-83.

Quattrone, Giuliana, ed. *La chiesa nella città moderna. Architettura, arte e progetto urbano*. Milano: Franco Angeli, 2007.

Santi, Giancarlo. *Nuove chiese italiane (1861-2010). Sette lezioni*. Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2011.

Scalesse, Tommaso. "Architettura." In *L'arte cristiana in Italia. Età Moderna e Contemporanea,* edited by Timothy Verdon, Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, 2008: 327- 381.

Serraglio, Riccardo. "Gaetano Rapisardi costruttore di chiese." *Palladio* n.s. XXX, no. 59-60 (2017): 151-158.

Serraglio, Riccardo. "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*, edited by Antonello Scopacasa, 307-313. Berlin: Universitatätsverlag der TU Berlin, 2022.

Sodi, Stefano, ed. *Giovanni Michelucci e la Chiesa in Italia*. Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, 2009.

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

Tanzarella, Sergio. "La parrocchia: vita, morte, miracoli." In *Cristiani d'Italia. Chiese, società, Stato. 1861-2011*, 2 voll., edited by Alberto Melloni, vol. 1, 259-276. Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2011.

Verkaaik, Oskar. "Religious Architecture. Anthropological Perspectives." In *Religious Architecture. Anthropological Perspectives*, edited by Oskar Verkaaik, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013, 7-24.

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

Zito, Carla. *Casa tra le case. Architettura di chiese a Torino durante l'episcopato del cardinale Michele Pellegrino (1965-1977)*. Cantalupa: Effatà, 2013.

Zito, Carla. "L'architettura religiosa," in *Franco Antonelli. 1929-1994*, edited by Paolo Belardi and Marzia Marandola, Milano: Electa, 2023: 45-64.

**Esteban Fernández-Cobián, Marta Vilas Rodríguez**

# Religious Architecture and Urbanism in Vigo During José Delicado Baeza's Episcopate (1969-1975)

INVITED

*Sacred Architecture, Urbanism, Vigo, Spanish Architecture, José Delicado Baeza*

**/Abstract**

**During the 1950s and 1960s, there was a significant urban expansion across much of Europe. Following the end of World War II, the migration of people from rural areas to cities became widespread. New job opportunities arising from industrialization and service sectors, coupled with the pursuit of a higher standard of living, were among the driving forces behind this mass exodus. Cities had to quickly adapt, multiplying infrastructures, generating residential areas, and giving rise to spaces for social interaction and leisure for the new workforce – known as facilities or amenities – which risked being relocated after leaving their places of origin.**

**Religious facilities were among the first to emerge. Within the Catholic Church sphere, the efforts of various European ecclesiastical leaders, in countries such as France, Germany, and Italy, are well-known in this regard. This article highlights the work of Bishop José Delicado Baeza, who during his brief tenure in the Spanish diocese of Tui-Vigo (1969-75) undertook a profound territorial reform that multiplied parish jurisdictions in a city undergoing rapid urban expansion. To this end, previously unpublished documentation from diocesan and municipal archives, as well as from the professional archives of the main architects who collaborated in the construction of churches, has been utilized.**

**/Author**

**Esteban Fernández-Cobián**
**Universidade da Coruña (Spain)**
**https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5290-4357**
**efcobian@udc.es.**

**Marta Vilas Rodríguez**
**Independent Scholar**
**https://orcid.org/0009-0005-7936-8805**
**martavilas@coag.es**

Esteban Fernández-Cobián: Architect, Ph.D., professor at the ETSAC – Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de La Coruña (Spain), he has also taught at several universities in Italy, Chile and Mexico. He studies religious buildings built in the last hundred years, about which he has written a number of academic and informative articles. His monographs include *A Coruña. Guía de arquitectura*, *Fray Coello de Portugal, dominico y arquitecto*, *El espacio sagrado en la arquitectura española contemporánea* and *Arquitectura religiosa del siglo XXI en España*. In 2022 he published the first Spanish translation of Rudolf Schwarz's book "Vom Bau der Kirche". He is a member of the juries of the Premio Internazionale di Architettura Sacra and the Premio Costantino Ruggeri, awarded by the Fondazione Frate Sole (Italy). Since 2007, he has organized the International Congresses of Contemporary Religious Architecture and coordinates the Observatory of the same name. He edits AARC-Actas de Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporánea (https://revistas.udc.es/index.php/aarc/index).

Marta Vilas Rodríguez: Architect by the ETSAC – Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de La Coruña (Spain), he obtained the Diploma of Advanced Studies in the Department of Representation and Architectural Theory of the ETSAC (2011). He works at Vilas Puente Arquitectos, Vigo (var7.blogspot.com.es).



https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/19231
Copyright © 2024 Esteban Fernández-Cobián, Marta Vilas Rodríguez

## Introduction

The parochial division of European dioceses in the second half of the twentieth century and the consequent construction of new churches can be considered a classic theme in the historiography of contemporary religious architecture. The various initiatives taken in this sense by Cardinals Lercaro in Bologna, Pellegrino in Turin or Montini himself in Milan are well known; in Spain, Morcillo in Madrid, Modrego in Barcelona or Bishop Peralta in Vitoria, but also in Portugal and in various European countries. There are, of course, many other interesting cases that are gradually becoming known.

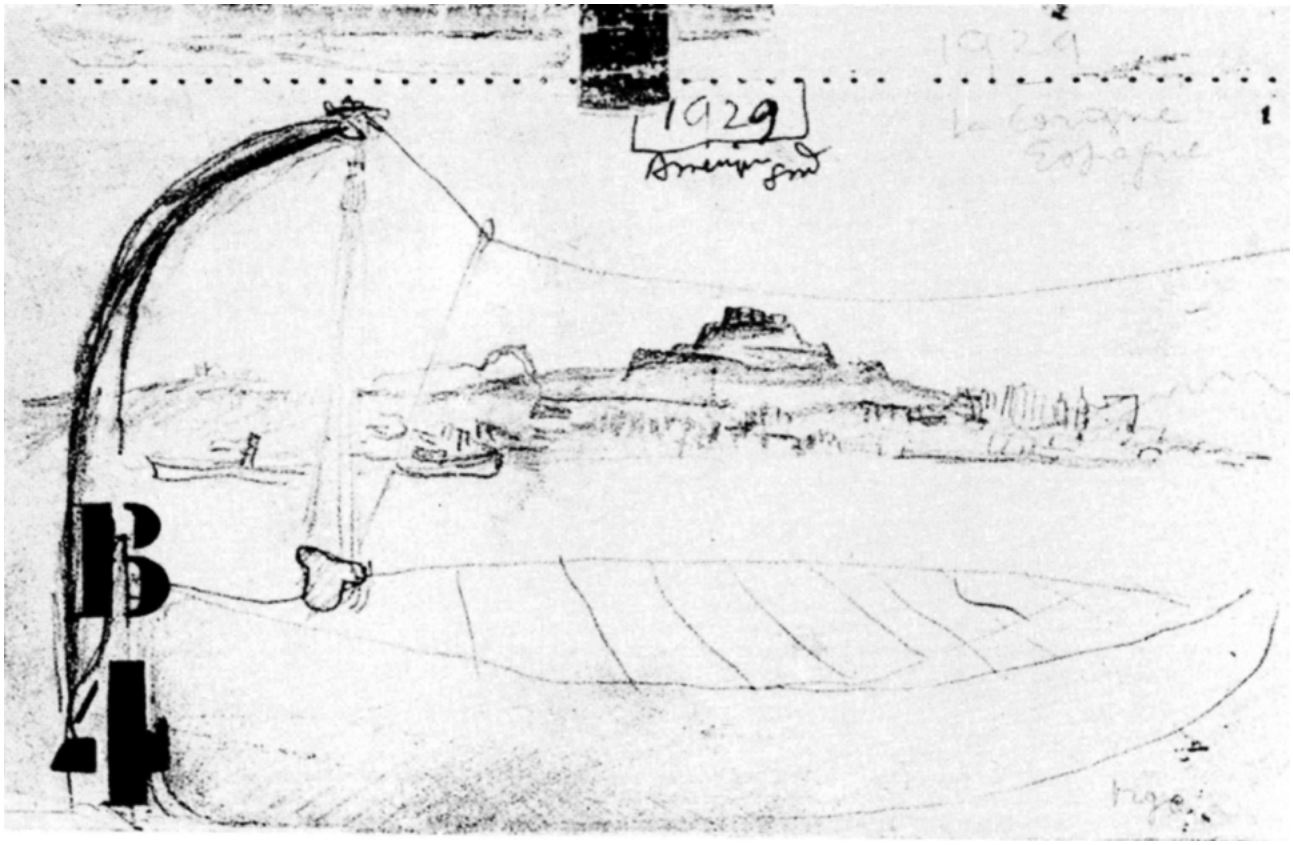
The purpose of this article is to document the work carried out by José Delicado Baeza during the little more than five years that he presided over the Spanish diocese of Tui-Vigo (1969-1975), a small ecclesiastical territory in the north-west of the Iberian Peninsula. In the city of Vigo alone, which at that time had just reached 200,000 inhabitants, fourteen new parishes were created, in response both to the growth of the city as a result of the establishment of one of the poles of industrial development promoted during General Franco's government – which would give rise to the so-called *Spanish economic miracle* – and to the new social sensitivity of the Catholic Church following the celebration of the Second Vatican Council.

## The Territorial Structure of Vigo: The Municipality and the Parish

The urban development of the city of Vigo is closely linked to its magnificent port, whose deep draught made it the main point of departure for Spanish emigration to America at the beginning of the 20th century. It was here that the great transoceanic ships arrived, such as the one that took Le Corbusier to Argentina at the end of 1929 **[Fig. 1]**.

The current municipal area was created in the first half of the 20th century, when the municipalities of Bouzas (1904) and Lavadores (1941) were added to Vigo. It has a unique structure, made up of three very different areas: a rural area that has hardly been transformed by the urban phenomenon, where the old parish structure has survived; a large peri-urban area, where development has been based on filling in the basic parish structure; and an urban area, characterised by the aggregation of neighbourhoods and parishes. From an urban and administrative point of view, Vigo still preserves the division of its territory into eighteen parishes, a vestige of the old ecclesiastical division. This parish structure has undergone various changes over the last century, some aspects of which have survived, while others have been profoundly altered.

The Land Law of 1956 unified all of Spain's urban planning legislation, which was very disparate, systematising planning and establishing an order to solve the problems of Spanish urban planning. It represented a conceptual change in the urban planning criteria applied in Spain until then, as it allowed the growth of new residential and industrial areas through land reserves and directed the development of planned growth through Partial Plans. Between 1964 and 1975,




1

the General Urban Development Plans (PGOU) of the main Galician cities were approved, which, in conjunction with the Partial Plans already in progress, led to modifications of the latter, particularly with regard to the provision of facilities, also known as complementary services.

In 1953, Spain had signed a new Concordat with the Holy See, which ratified the confessional nature of the State and the full recognition of the Catholic Church.[1] In this context,

> places of worship emerged as one of the types of complementary buildings envisaged by the INV. Decree 736/1962 of 5 April 1962 on the construction of religious buildings developed the provisions of the Second National Housing Plan 1961-1976 with regard to this type of service. The purpose of the Decree was to provide religious services in urban centres where at least fifty per cent of the population lived in dwellings under some form of State protection (art. 1). Places of worship could be chapels or parish centres (Fernández-Cobián and Vilas 2012, 62).[2]

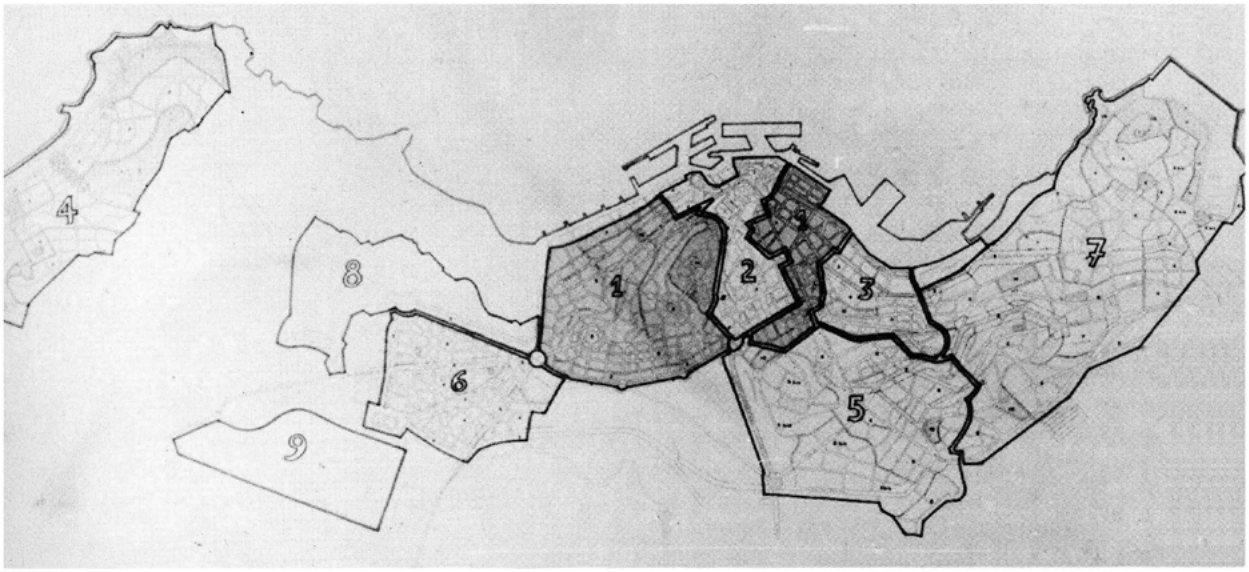
When Bishop Delicado Baeza arrived in Vigo, the city still had no general plan, only a series of sectoral planning instruments that allowed it to continue growing.[3]

1 Stanley G. Payne, *El Franquismo, 2ª parte 1950-1959. Apertura exterior y planes de estabilización* (Madrid: Arlanza, 2005); Rafael Gómez Pérez,. *El franquismo y la Iglesia* (Madrid: Rialp, 1986).

2 Esteban Fernández-Cobián and Marta Vilas Rodríguez, "Los equipamientos religiosos como configuradores del espacio urbano. El caso del polígono de Coya en Vigo (España)," *Dearq 11* (2012): 58-75. https://doi.org/10.18389/dearq11.2012.07 (last accessed October 2024).

3 Until 1969, the following plans were in force: the Plan de Alineaciones y Rasantes by Manuel Cominges (1944); the plans for the sectors between Gran Vía and Conde de Torrecedeira street and between Alfonso XIII street and

Fig. 1
View of Vigo. Le Corbusier, 1929 (source: María Asunción Leboreiro Amaro, *Vigo, puerto y destino. Atlas urbanístico de Vigo*. Vigo: COAG/Fundación Provigo, 2000).




*Planes de ordenación de la postguerra, realizados entre 1943 y 1963 que fueron incorporados por el Plan General de 1971 dentro del suelo urbano*

*1. Proyecto de reforma interior, Ensanche y Extensión de Manuel Cominges (1944)*
*2. Plan de Alineaciones de la zona comprendida entre la Gran Vía del Generalísimo y la calle Conde de Torrecedeira redactado por Pedro Bidagor y Paz Maroto (1948)*
*3. Plan de Alineaciones de la zona comprendida entre las calles de Alfonso XIII y la nueva estación de ferrocarril redactado por Pedro Bidagor y Paz Maroto (1948)*
*4. Proyecto de Ordenación Urbana de la playa de Samil, de Pedro Bidagor y Paz Maroto (1948)*
*5. Plan parcial del sector de Lavadores, redactado asimismo por Pedro Bidagor y Paz Maroto (1958)*
*6. Plan Parcial del sector de la Florida, redactado por José García Saenz-Diez (1959)*
*7. Plan Parcial de Teis, redactado por José García Saenz-Díez (1960)*
*8. Plan Parcial de Coya (1963)*
*9. Zona Franca*

2

With these weak instruments, the city faced the most important decade of its growth – the sixties – and began the next one with a similar perspective, since it was not possible to adopt a general plan to organise the growing interests involved in its development [Fig. 2].

Antonio Ramilo took office as Mayor of Vigo in March 1970. From the outset, he promoted the elaboration of the PGOU, which had been prepared since 1961 by the team led by Gaspar Blein. The plan was presented to the public in the summer of 1970. Subsequently, seven civic organisations requested an external technical report, which was carried out by a team led by Manuel Ribas Piera. The report emphasised that the repeated changes to the plan during its development and the disagreements between the different actors on its content had resulted in a hybrid document without an overall vision. Despite its clarity, the report was not taken into account by the City Council, and on 7 January 1971 Vigo finally had a new PGOU, which for many was "an unfortunate document" [Fig. 3a, 3b].[4]

Once the PGOU had been approved, fifteen action polygons were demarcated

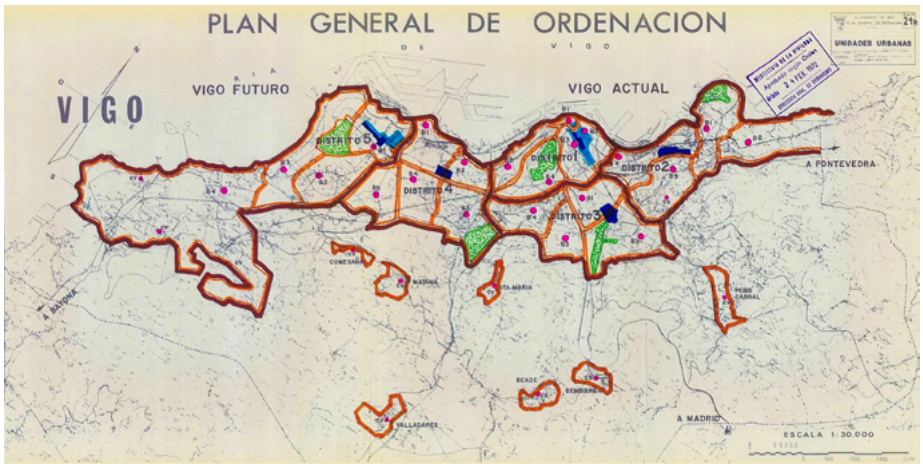
the new railway station, the Partial Plan of Samil beach and the Partial Plan of Lavadores, all four drawn up by Pedro Bidagor Lasarte and José Paz Maroto (1948); the Partial Plans of Florida and Teis, drawn up by the engineer Sáez Díez (1959-1960); the Partial Plan of Coya, drawn up by the INUR of the Ministry of Housing (1963); and, finally, some general building regulations approved by the Ministry of the Interior in 1956 on the proposal of the General Directorate of Architecture and Town Planning (Pereiro 1981).

4 José Luis Pereiro Alonso, *Desarrollo y deterioro urbano de la ciudad de Vigo* (Vigo: Colexio Oficial de Arquitectos de Galicia, 1981), 166.

Fig. 2
Planning in Vigo before the General Development Plan of 1971 (source: José Luis Pereiro Alonso, *Desarrollo y deterioro urbano de la ciudad de Vigo*. Vigo: Colexio Oficial de Arquitectos de Galicia, 1981).




3a




3b

in the urban reserve for the development of Partial Plans. This meant that a large part of the municipal territory was left unstructured and the historical parish network, which was subject to a barely regulated process of completion, was gradually disintegrated.[5]

## Bishop José Delicado Baeza and the Challenge of the Urban Parish

At the same time, Pope Paul VI was working on the same issues. In the Apostolic Letter in the form of a Motu Proprio *Ecclesiae Sanctae* (1966),[6] he recommended the division or distribution of the territory of parishes in which "apostolic activity is difficult or inadequate because of the excessive number of the faithful, the excessive extent of the territory or for other reasons". Shortly afterwards, he returned to the same theme in the Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971),[7] in which he spoke of the urgent need to rebuild the social fabric of cities, creating centres of cultural interest capable of promoting not

5 Xosé Manuel Souto González, *Vigo cen anos de historia urbana (1880-1980)* (Vigo: Xeráis, 1990); María Asunción Leboreiro Amaro, *Vigo, puerto y destino. Atlas urbanístico de Vigo* (Vigo: COAG/Fundación Provigo, 2000); Jesús Manuel González Pérez and Alejandro López González. "La dinámica demográfica y el planeamiento urbano en Vigo desde 1960. Impacto del proceso de industrialización desarrollista", *Anales de Geografía de la Universidad Complutense*, no. 23 (2003): 163-185.

6 Paul VI. *Motu proprio Ecclesiae Sanctae. Normas para la aplicación del Decretos Conciliares*, 1966 https://bit.ly/3O2ulax (last accessed October 2024).

7 Paul VI. *Carta Apostólica Octogesima Adveniens*, 1971 https://bit.ly/48rfRyG (last accessed October 2024).

Fig. 3a, 3b
General Urban Development Plan of Vigo, 1971 (source: María Asunción Leboreiro Amaro, *Vigo, puerto y destino*. Atlas urbanístico de Vigo. Vigo: COAG/Fundación Provigo, 2000).

only religious life, but also human promotion and simple human relations: "It is urgent to rebuild, on the scale of the street, the neighbourhood or the large complex, the social fabric within which men and women can satisfy the just demands of their personality".

In Spain, the Catholic Hierarchy undertook to draw up guidelines for action throughout the national territory to meet the demand for religious facilities generated by the new urban planning, in order to satisfy the needs of the growing urban society. The Church was faced with a huge task and a broad internal debate that had already been launched on several fronts.[8] In this sense, Josef Comblin's book *Teología de la ciudad* (1968) became popular as a working tool for those diocesan leaders who sought to systematise and approach the new urban reality, understood as a sign of the times that the Church was called to discern.[9]

The *Instrucciones para la construcción de los complejos parroquiales* (Instructions for the Construction of Parish Complexes), published by the Archbishopric of Madrid-Alcalá in 1965,[10] approached the construction of parish churches from different angles. The Technical Office of the Archbishopric, directed by Jacinto Rodríguez Osuna, had carried out a complex parish restructuring of the diocese, which attempted to carry out the construction or realisation of more than three hundred new temples.[11] Faced with this enormous task, Archbishop Casimiro Morcillo had asked for the involvement of religious orders in parochial action, an initiative that Delicado Baeza would also implement during the parochial restructuring of the diocese of Tui-Vigo in 1970.

At the same time as increasing the number of parishes, the Church had to provide them with new buildings to house their functions. The Second Vatican Council had ratified the innovative currents of the Liturgical Movement, which postulated the progressive involvement of the faithful in the rites and the various apostolic responsibilities, beyond their mere attendance at Sunday worship. This led to a Copernican shift in the way the physical form of churches was designed, opening the way to a series of typological innovations that sometimes bordered on anarchy. Parish centres evolved from free-standing temples to multifunctional complexes in which the Church rethought its relationship -from power to service, we could say in a very schematic way- with an increasingly pluralistic

---

8 Gabriel Alomar Esteve, "La depuración religiosa y estética de nuestro arte sagrado", *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura*, no. 201 (1958): 31-34; Patronat Municipal de l'Habitatge, Barcelona, *Conversaciones de Arquitectura Religiosa* (Barcelona: Patronato Municipal de la Vivienda, 1965); José MaríaFernández Catón, ed., *Arte Sacro y Concilio Vaticano II* (León: Junta Nacional Asesora de Arte Sacro/Centro de Estudios e Investigación San Isidoro, 1965); Rodolfo García-Pablos González-Quijano,. "Necesidad de establecer órdenes parroquiales integradas en los planeamientos urbanísticos", *Arquitectura*, no. 73 (1965): 33-36. http://bit.ly/3vAt6i4 (last accessed October 2024).

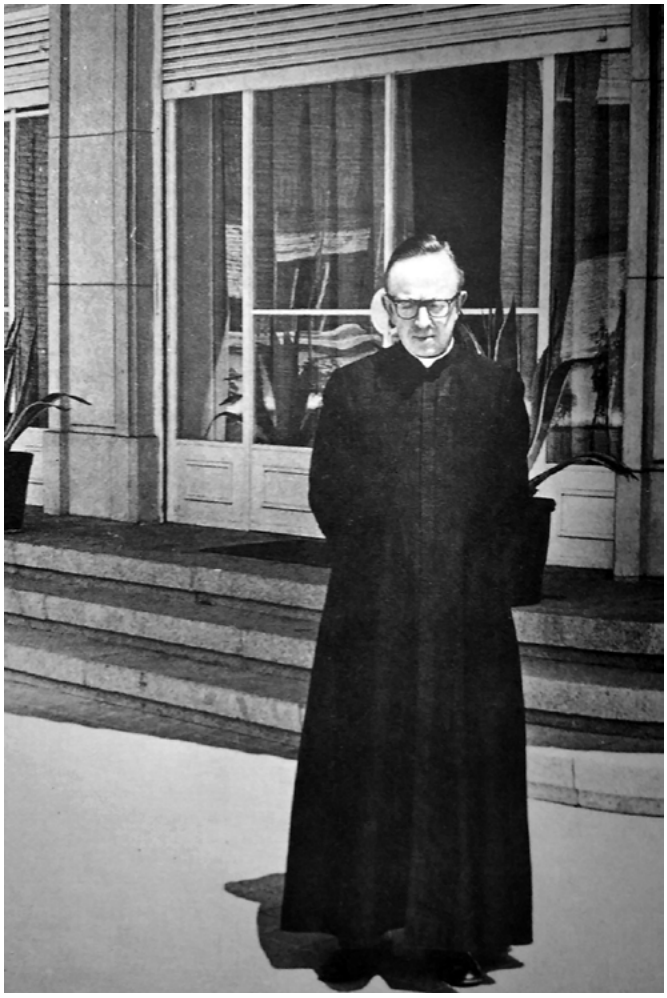
9 Joseph Comblin and Francisco Javier Calvo, *Teología de la ciudad* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 1972) https://bit.ly/3tP6mdv (last accessed October 2024).

10 Archbishopric of Madrid-Alcalá. *Instrucciones para la construcción de complejos parroquiales* (Madrid: Oficina Diocesana de Sociología Religiosa, 1965).

11 Rafael Ramón Saiz, ed., *Madrid-Alcalá, una diócesis en construccion. Exposición sobre las parroquias creadas en la diócesis de Madrid desde 1961 a 1982* (Madrid: Servicio Editorial, 1982); Jesús García Herrero, "El Plan Pastoral de Madrid de 1965. 'La revolución silenciosa' y las iglesias en locales comerciales", *Actas de Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporánea*, no. 3 (2013): 186-193 https://doi.org/10.17979/aarc.2013.3.0.5101 (last accessed October 2024).; Jesús García Herrero, "Iglesias posconciliares de Luis Cubillo en Madrid. La búsqueda del complejo parroquial estandarizado", *ACE: Architecture, City and Environment*, no. 50 (2022): 11545 https://dx.doi.org/10.5821/ace.17.50.11545 (last accessed October 2024)..

society. In fact, during the last years of Franco's dictatorship, these parish buildings became true spaces of freedom.

José Delicado Baeza was appointed Bishop of Tui-Vigo in 1969. Born in Almansa (Albacete) in 1927, after attending the Civic High School, he studied philosophy at the Seminary of Málaga and theology at the Pontifical University of Salamanca. Ordained a priest in 1951, he became a high school teacher, coadjutor of the parish of the Immaculate Conception in Albacete, and diocesan advisor to the workers' movement. In 1952 he was appointed Canon of the Cathedral, Spiritual Director and Professor at the Seminary. As a scholar of the Spanish National Church of Santiago and Montserrat in Rome, he wrote several publications on pastoral and priestly spirituality. Before his appointment as Bishop of Tui-Vigo, he served as Vicar General of the Diocese of Albacete (1964-1969) and, after a brief stay in Galicia, was appointed Metropolitan Archbishop of Valladolid in 1975, where he remained until his retirement in 2002. During his years in Valladolid, he continued his work of construction: new parishes were built, and the archbishopric, the seminary, the diocesan archives, the priests' home and the spirituality center, among others, were renovated or rebuilt. He was also one of the main promoters of *Las Edades del Hombre*, a religious foundation dedicated to the diffusion and promotion of sacred art in the Autonomous Community of Castilla y León. In the Spanish Episcopal Conference, he was Vice-President (1981-1987) and President of the Episcopal Commissions for the Clergy (1978-1981), for Education and Catechesis (1987-1993) and for Universities (1993-1996). He died in 2014 **[Fig. 4]**.[12]



4

In the book of interviews that Mérida published in 1982, the one with Delicado Baeza is by far the most extensive, although not the easiest to understand, and it allows the reader to trace the role that the prelate from La Mancha played in the Spanish hierarchy of the time. For the journalist, the archbishop "is very far from the traditional and conventional image that Spaniards have of a bishop".[13] And she portrays him as a moderate and serious man, attentive to current events, with a presence that combines a young maturity with an approachable and accessible personal style.

12 Archdiocese of Valladolid. "Don José Delicado Baeza, 1927-2014. Vida y obra", *RIV-Revista Iglesia en Valladolid*, no. 207 (2014): monographic issue.

13 Maria Mérida, *Entrevista con la Iglesia* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1982), 152.

Fig. 4
Bishop José Delicado Baeza, 1981 (source: María Mérida, Entrevista con la Iglesia. Barcelona: Planeta, 1982).

Delicado Baeza was 42 years old when he arrived in Galicia. His first challenge was to achieve the acceptance and consolidation of the dual episcopate, which in 1959 had been split between the historic town of Tui and the populous city of Vigo. But the young bishop was a born animator, a person accustomed to teamwork, who tried to give a new rhythm to the pastoral activity of the priests, new and attractive.[14] For him, pastoral activity had to occupy a primordial place, above the preservation of traditions in the Church. Thus, with the aim of applying the spirit of the Second Vatican Council to the unique reality of Galicia, he organized the *Concilio Pastoral de Galicia* (1974-79). Although his move to Valladolid in 1975 prevented him from participating in the completion of the work, the third of the documents of the Pastoral Council would bear the significant title *The Renewed Liturgy in the Pastoral of the Church* (González Gougil 1995).[15]

## Parish Restructuring in 1970

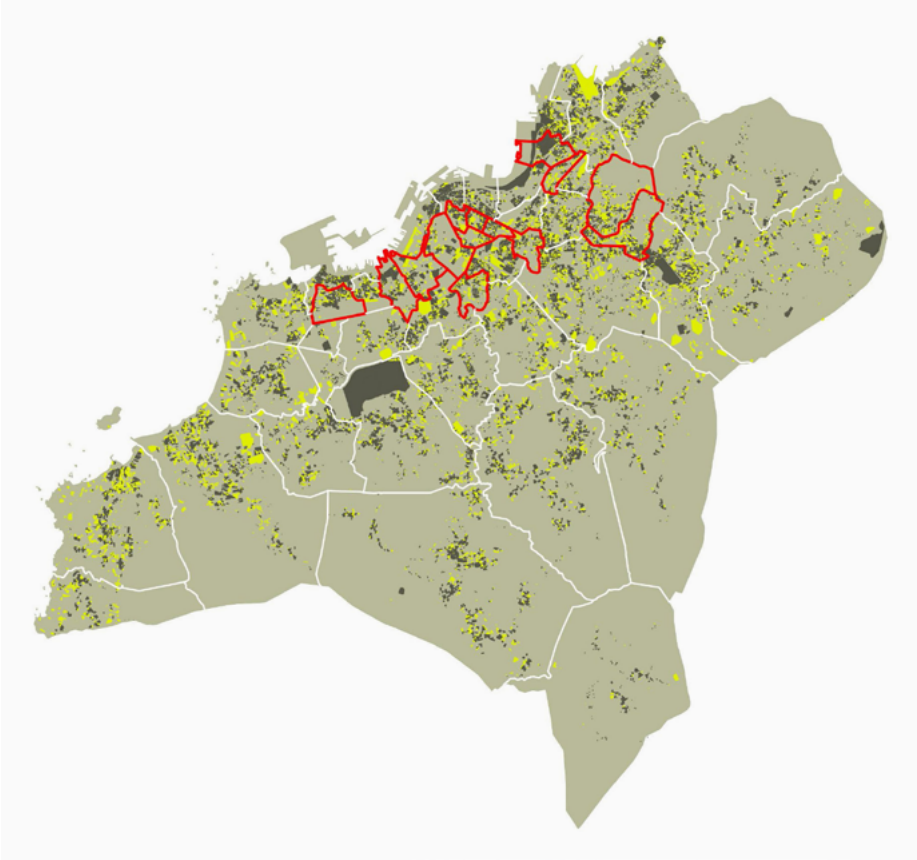
The new ecclesiastical attitude towards society and the primacy of pastoral activity led Delicado Baeza, in 1970, following the conciliar impulse, to decree the construction of fourteen new parishes in the municipality of Vigo. In explaining his decision, he cited the excessive territorial expansion of the existing parishes and the growing number of parishioners as the reasons for modifying the parish network.

On October 31, 1970, Delicado Baeza signed three decrees: the modification of the archpriestly organization of the Diocese of Tui-Vigo, the correction of the boundaries of the parishes of the city, and the creation of fourteen new parishes in Vigo. The first of these aimed to achieve a more effective apostolic work by dividing the diocese into twenty-two archpriesthoods, seven of which corresponded to the territorial scope of the municipality of Vigo. The decree modifying the parochial boundaries affected nineteen parishes in Vigo: of the historical ones, the two in the city center – Santa María and Santiago el Mayor – and the suburban ones of Santa Cristina de Lavadores, San Martín de Coya, San Miguel de Bouzas, Santo Tomé de Freixeiro, San Pedro de Sárdoma, San Salvador de Teis, and San Cristóbal de Candeán. And it affected all those that were built in the 20th century: Sagrado Corazón de Jesús (1902); San Francisco (1904); Inmaculada Concepción, Nuestra Señora de Fátima, and San José Obrero y Santa Rita (1947); San Ignacio de Loyola, Nuestra Señora de las Nieves, San Antonio de la Florida, San Juan Bautista, and Santísimo Cristo de la Victoria (1958). The third decree created fourteen new parishes: San Juan de Avila, San Francisco Javier, Santo Cura de Ars, San Paio, Santa Teresa de Jesús, María Madre del Buen Pastor (la Divina Pastora), Santa Lucía, Inmaculado Corazón de María, María Auxiliadora, Nuestra Señora de la Soledad, Perpetuo Socorro, Nuestra Señora del Rocío, Virgen del Carmen, and San Pablo [Fig. 5].

---

14 José García Oro, *Historia de las diócesis españolas*. Vol. 14. *Iglesias de Santiago de Compostela y Tuy-Vigo* (Madrid: BAC, 2002).

15 Ramiro González Gougil, "A liturxia renovada na pastoral da Igrexa", *Lumieira: revista galega de pastoral*, no. 29-30 (1995): 311-354 http://www.hogarsantamargarita.com/numeros.html (last accessed October 2024).



The prelate's vigorous action attracted the attention of not only the local press, but also the national press. The newspaper *ABC* (11/25/1970) carried the headline: "The new pastoral calls for a reorganization of the parishes. It is necessary to think about the construction of temples that form a body with the buildings". The article included various reflections of the bishop on the new urban pastoral and its implications for religious life. The new urban life appeared here – in the line of Paul VI – as a challenge to Christianity, because "it configures a special type of citizen who can be marginalized from the pastoral action of the Church", since the general or almost generalized urbanization is "one of the factors that most influences the life of men in all aspects" [Fig. 6].

On the same day, in a statement to the newspaper *La Vanguardia* (25 November 1970), he stated:

> Urban parishes must have a human dimension; when the conventional limits are exceeded, religious vitality is inversely proportional to the volume of the population. In the cities there is a need for a pastoral that presupposes knowledge, proximity and dialogue. The multiplication of coadjutors in a parish of larger than normal dimensions is not an effective solution: they end up knowing the same circle of more or less zealous people. The yield is multiplied by dividing the centers of different communities. The ideal capacity of a parish church is 600 seats, and it should be located in the normal meeting places.

Fig. 5
Plan of the parish reorganization of 1970 in relation to the growth of the city. The existing parishes are shown in white, and those where new parishes were created are shown in blue (source: Own elaboration based on the decrees of creation of the new parishes published in the *Boletín Oficial del Obispado de Tui-Vigo*).

Delicado Baeza summarized the problem of new parishes and churches in two concepts: their ideal size and their location in the city. For pastoral action to be effective, he established the ideal size of a parish in a range of four to six thousand inhabitants, and the capacity of a church in six hundred seats. With regard to the relationship with the city, he stated that the Church should anticipate its situation in accordance with the development of the city, and that the possibility of building temples in the basements of buildings should be considered in order to facilitate financing, which he effectively applied to solve the headquarters of several of the newly created parishes, as we will see below.

The Bishop entrusted seven parishes to religious congregations, which offered their churches and the priests they had: San Francisco Javier to the Jesuits, La Divina Pastora to the Capuchins, the Inmaculado Corazón de María to the Claretian Missionaries, María Auxiliadora to the Salesians, Perpétuo Socorro to the Redemptorists, and Virgen del Carmen to the Carmelites. Some of these congregations had recently renovated their churches. In addition, the chapel of the School of the Company of Mary was erected as the seat of the new parish of San Juan de Avila y Santa Juana de Lestonnac, although in this case attended by diocesan priests. The Bishop also opened for public worship the temple that Bishop Eijo y Garay had built on the hillside of the Castro, destining it to the new parish of Nuestra Señora de la Soledad.

It should be noted that although the relationship between urban development and the parish structure had been pointed out by Delicado as a necessary condition for a real link between the structure of the Church and the needs of the citizens, the handing over of the parishes to the religious congregations meant taking advantage of their locations, so that the parish structure had to adapt to the location of the temples and not the other way around. On the other hand, this solution responded to the densification of the urban center, since these buildings were located in the already consolidated city, although their initial locations would have been more peripheral. This was the case of the Jesuit School of Teis, which was integrated into the urban fabric with the growth of Sanjurjo Badía St.; of La Divina Pastora and the Inmaculado Corazón de María, near Plaza de España; of María Auxiliadora and Santa Juana de Lestonnac, near the expansion area of Camelias and Venezuela St.s; and of the Carmelite School in López Mora St., very close to the flourishing center of Las Traviesas.

Of the fourteen new parishes, six needed new parish centers: Santo Cura de Ars, San Paio, Santa Teresa de Jesús, Santa Lucía, Nuestra Señora del Rocío, and San Pablo, in addition to the unfinished temples. In fact, in March 1980, the diocese had to ask the Ministry of Housing for an extension of the aid that had been granted to complete the work on four of them. In some cases, the development of planning facilitated the location of these new buildings, as in the case



Jueves, 12 - 11 - 70 EL PUEBLO GALLEGO VIGO PAGINA 13

SE CREAN 14 NUEVAS PARROQUIAS EN VIGO

SIETE DE ELLAS SE INSTALAN EN LOCALES PROVISIONALES

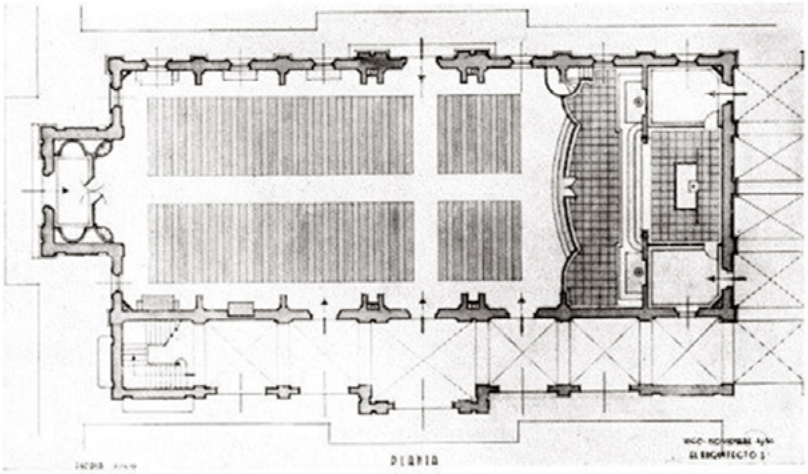
LOS ARCIPRESTES SON ELEGIDOS POR EL CLERO

5.000 FELIGRESES POR CADA PARROQUIA

6

Fig. 6
Article published in the newspaper *El Pueblo Gallego* (12/11/1970) explaining the reorganization of the parishes carried out by Bishop Delicado Baeza (source: Archive of the author).





of Nuestra Señora del Rocío in the Coya neighborhood, Santa Lucía in the Salgueira -within the framework of the Sárdoma Partial Plan-, or the Santo Cura de Ars, which was finally made possible by the PEPRI of the Bailén Action Unit. The parish center of San Paio was built with the authorization of the Ministry to build on land classified in the General Plan as «rustic agricultural land», an authorization granted under exception b) limitation 2ª of Article 69 of the Land Law (BOE 20, January 23, 1973). The parishes of Santa Teresa de Jesús and San Pablo were located on the first commercial floors, thus putting into practice Delicado's statement that it was necessary to consider this possibility. In the case of Santa Teresa, it was feared that there would be a delay in the development of the Lavadores Partial Plan, so a more immediate solution was chosen by purchasing a lot with an unfinished building.

Among this last group of parishes, three -San Paio, San Pablo and Santa Teresa- were separated from the parish of Santa Cristina de Lavadores, which had already lost land to Nuestra Señora de Fátima and San José Obrero in 1947, and to San Juan Bautista and Santa Clara in 1958. The parish of Santo Cura de Ars was separated from that of San Juan Bautista. The territory of the parish of San Martín de Coya had already (1958) generated four new parishes: Perpetuo Socorro, Nuestra Señora del Rocío, Santísimo Cristo de la Vitoria and San Antonio de la Florida. Finally, Santa Lucía de la Salgueira took land from the parishes of Freixeiro, Sárdoma and San José Obrero.

Fig. 7
San Ignacio de Loyola (Church of the School of the Jesuit Fathers, later the seat of the parish of San Francisco Javier). Antonio Cominges, 1951 (source: Archivo Histórico Municipal de Vigo – AHMV, 78/51).

## Peculiarities of the New Parish Demarcations

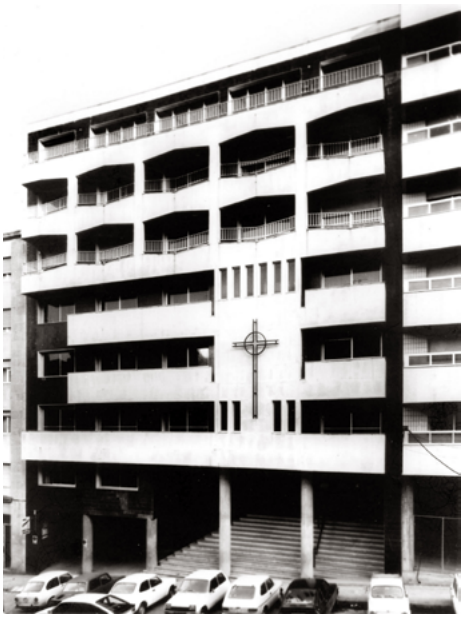
The Jesuits began their work in Vigo in 1916, with a first school in La Molinera building, located in the central street of García Barbón. In 1928 they moved to the outskirts of the city and built a new school in the Bellavista estate, designed by José Franco Montes in 1926. But between 1932 and 1940, after the dissolution of the Society of Jesus during the Republic, the school was requisitioned, and during the Civil War its facilities were used by the national side as a school and military hospital. In 1941, Antonio Cominges designed the extension of the central pavilion of the College, to which a new floor was added, and in 1951, he designed the chapel dedicated to St. Ignatius of Loyola; the first stone was laid on May 6, 1952, and it was inaugurated three years later. This chapel served as the site for the creation of the new parish of San Francisco Javier, while the old school chapel, located parallel to Sanjurjo Badía St., was demolished in 1975 when the entrance to the school was remodeled [Fig. 7].[16]

The Capuchin Fathers settled in Vigo in 1901, in an apartment in Arenal St.. They worshipped in the disappeared convent of Los Remedios, on the same street, using both the chapel of the convent and the parish of Santiago el Mayor, which was under construction. In 1902, they acquired a plot of land in what would become a thriving axis of the city, formed by the streets Urzaiz-Plaza de España-Pizarro, and began to build a new temple themselves. A few days before its inauguration, the Society of Architects of Galicia presented a letter to the City Council asking that it not be opened to the public for safety reasons, since the work had been carried out without plans or technical direction and there had been some collapses. The mayor asked the diocesan architect, Manuel Felipe Quintana, who was also the town's architect, to inspect the work, and when he found no safety problems, the church was inaugurated in 1907. In 1964, the main altar of the temple was modified to face the people and a global restoration was carried out. The good urban location of the church grounds led the Capuchin Fathers to promote a mixed building in 1975, consisting of housing, a parish center and a priest's residence, a project carried out by Jaime Garrido, which meant the demolition of the old church and the filling in of the urban block [Fig. 8a, 8b].

The community of Claretian missionaries arrived in Vigo in 1947. They immediately planned to build a sanctuary dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, with a large tower that would serve as a beacon in the city, and for this purpose they bought a plot of land on Pizarro St.. In 1953, Cominges carried out the project, which was approved by Bishop José López Ortiz. The work began with the excavation of a crypt, which was opened for worship (1954-1958), but the construction of the rest of the temple slowed down until it came to a complete halt. In 1970, Delicado Baeza transformed the crypt into a parish church and the facilities were gradually completed. In 1978, the community approved a project

16 Marta Vilas Rodríguez, "Antonio Cominges Tapias. Obra religiosa en Vigo", *Boletín Académico. Revista de investigación y arquitectura contemporánea*, no. 5 (2015): 27-38. https://doi.org/10.17979/bac.2015.5.0.1036 (last accessed October 2024)..





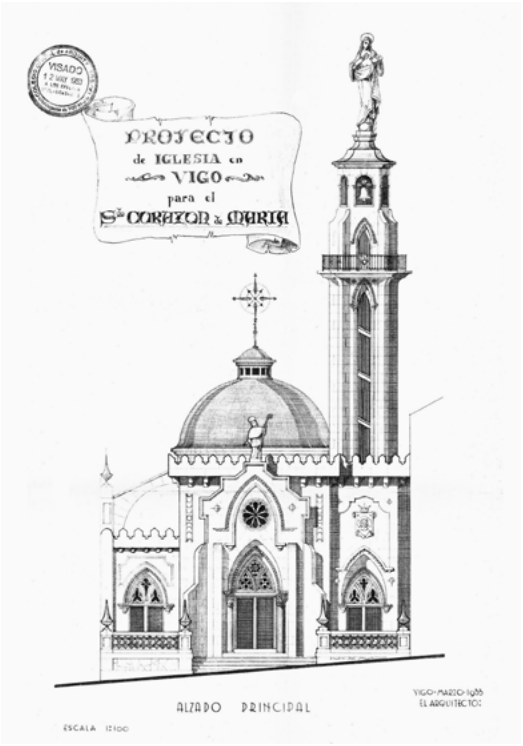
8a 8b

for the entire property, which consisted of the construction of a residence, a priest's house and a parish center, with the church occupying the inner part of the block. The project was designed by Carlos Fernández-Moráis, while the parish operated provisionally in premises located on Caracas St.. The complex was inaugurated in 1982 **[Fig. 9a, 9b]**.

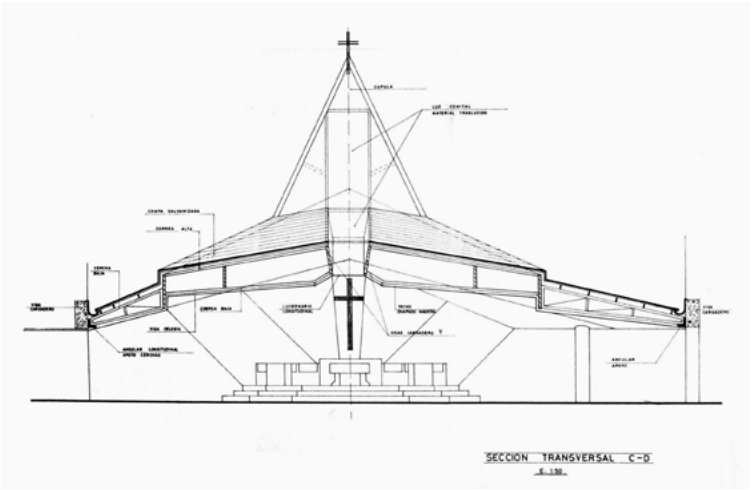
Initially (1894), the Salesian School of Vigo was located in the Arenal neighborhood. Then, thanks to the donation of land by the businessman Leopoldo Gómez Moure, founder of the Círculo Católico Obrero de Vigo, the Salesians moved to the Don Bosco neighborhood, on the northern slope of the Castro hill, and concentrated their work in the new San Matías School, dedicated to professional training. In 1906, the idea of building a new church was entrusted to Joaquín Saldaña. The work progressed slowly and the project was reduced due to budgetary constraints, but it was finally inaugurated in 1943 under the patronage of Maria Auxiliadora. In 1947, the Salesians left Arenal St. and rented their facilities to the Jesuits, who later (1962) gave them to the Diocese. In 1970 the church of María Auxiliadora became the seat of the parish of the same name, and in 1983 it was erected as a Marian sanctuary **[Fig. 10]**.

The land on which the Carmelite church, the rectory and the priests' house are located was donated by Mrs. Paula Gómez Curieses between 1936 and 1939. In 1935, Antonio Cominges drew up a project for a convent on the land, and in the following years he drew up several versions of the project, until in 1951 he signed the final project with the name "Iglesia de Nuestra Señora del Carmen en Las Traviesas". Once the church was finished, work began in 1962 on the tower that houses the image of the Virgen del Carmen. The transformation of the surroundings of the Carmelite church was the result of a series of agreements signed in 1986 between the City Council and the Lagos Silva family, which rearranged the volumes to create a landscaped square with an exit to López Mora St. These agreements were reflected in the PGOU of 1988 through a detailed study, by means of which the urban development use was obtained for the con-

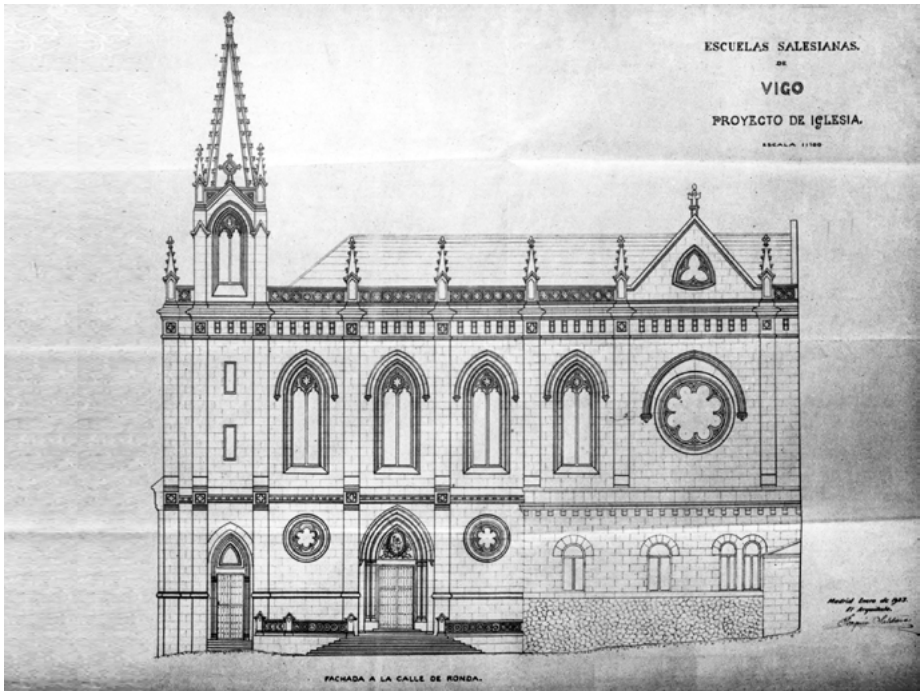
Fig. 8a, 8b
María Madre del Buen Pastor (Divina Pastora) and Capuchin convent. Original building (1907) and current building (Xaime Garrido, 1975) (source: Archivo del Colexio Oficial de Arquitectos de Galicia, Subdelegacíon de Vigo – COAG Vigo, 122/75.




9a




9b




10

Fig. 9a, 9b
Inmaculado Corazón de María. Original project (Antonio Cominges, 1953) and present building (Carlos Julio Fernández-Moráis, 1978) (source:Archivo Histórico Municipal de Vigo – AHMV, 938/53 and Archivo del Colexio Oficial de Arquitectos de Galicia, Subdelegacíon de Vigo – COAG, 1/79, respectively).

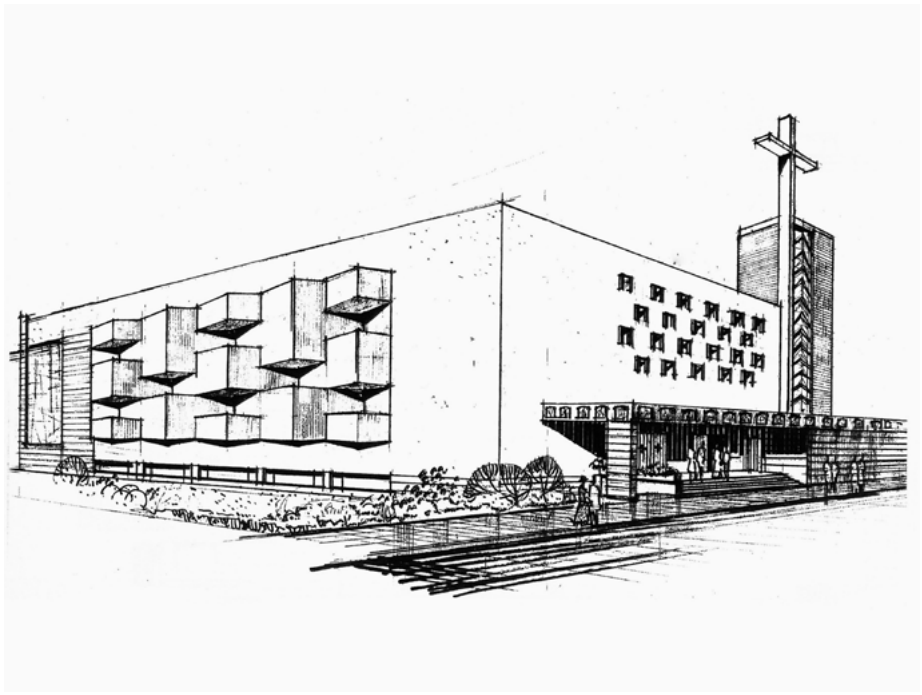
Fig. 10
María Auxiliadora. Joaquín Saldaña, 1923 (source: Archivo Histórico Municipal de Vigo – AHMV, Obras particulares, Box URB-181).

struction of a building attached to the southern party wall of the temple, destined to the community endowment in the form of a parish center and convent of the community. The parish center, designed by Francisco Castro and Pedro Alonso, was inaugurated in 1992 [Fig. 11].

The church and the residence of the Redemptorist missionaries (Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer) were initially located in a building at 34-36 Pi i Margall St., possibly in the same place where the chapel dedicated to St. Clement Mary Hofbauer is currently located, administered by the same community



11



12



13

Fig. 11
Nuestra Señora del Carmen and the new Carmelite convent. Antonio Cominges, 1951 (source: Archivo Histórico Municipal de Vigo – AHMV, 723/51).

Fig. 12
Nuestra Señora del Perpetuo Socorro. Francisco Yáñez and Tomás Pérez-Lorente, 1967 (source: Archivo del Colexio Oficial de Arquitectos de Galicia, Subdelegacíon de Vigo – COAG, 69/67).

Fig. 13
San Juan de Avila and Santa Juana de Lestonnac (Colegio de la Enseñanza). Domingo Rodríguez Sesmero (attributed), 1891 (source: Marta García Filgueira, *Eclecticismo, arquitectura y ciudad en Galicia. La obra de los Sesmero en Vigo*. Vigo: Instituto de Estudios Vigueses, 2014).

in the basement of a residential building designed by Desiderio Pernas. The new parish complex -church, residence and social services- was built on a plot of land in the new Coya estate, which was designated for religious institutions. The project was carried out by Francisco Yáñez and Tomás Pérez-Lorente in 1967 [Fig. 12].[17]



14

The School of the Company of Mary (known as La Enseñanza) was inaugurated in 1891 in the María Berdiales St., and its chapel was blessed in the same year. Although it is not confirmed, it is very possible that the author of the project was the architect Domingo Rodríguez Sesmero.[18] In 1941, the building was modified with the addition of a floor in the left wing and the total modification of the right wing. The school chapel was designated as the seat of the new parish, which was placed under the invocation of San Juan de Avila y Santa Juana de Lestonnac, foundress of the Order. The diocese took charge of it [Fig. 13]. A special case was the temple that Leopoldo Eijo y Garay, Bishop of Tui and later Archbishop of Madrid, had built in the Atalaya del Castro. The bishop, who was born in Vigo, commissioned Antonio Cominges to design a project inspired by the church of the Madeleine in Paris. Cominges signed the plans in 1954, although the project was not completed until 1963. Eijo y Garay died that same year, and on October 9, 1964, his heirs donated the church to the Bishopric of Tui-Vigo. In 1970 the temple became the seat of the new parish of Nuestra Señora de la Soledad, for which the large semi-basement of the building was used as a parish hall [Fig. 14].[19]

For the new parish of San Paio, the chapel of the nursery of the Lavadores neighborhood was temporarily used as a place of worship. In 1972, Desiderio Pernas drew up a project for a new parish center on land that had been declared a rural agricultural area by the PGOU in 1971, so that it could be considered an exception to the restriction on construction established in Article 69 of the Land Act of 1956. The Ministry of Housing approved the project in December 1972, and in February 1973 it received a municipal license. The church was blessed and inaugurated on June 2, 1974, but the glazing of the presbytery was immediately blinded, completely changing the character of the space. In 2007, the architect María Estévez made another substantial modification, reversing the

17 Marta Vilas Rodríguez and Esteban Fernández-Cobián, "Génesis y desarrollo de los cuatro centros parroquiales del polígono de Coya (Vigo, 1953-1981)", *Boletín Académico. Revista de investigación y arquitectura contemporánea*, no. 3 (2015): 15-28 https://doi.org/10.17979/bac.2013.3.0.993 (last accessed October 2024).; Vilas Rodríguez, Marta. "Arquitectura parroquial y desarrollo urbano. Vigo siglo XX". PhD Thesis, Universidade da Coruña, 2018 http://hdl.handle.net/2183/20223 (last accessed October 2024).

18 Marta García Filgueira, *Eclecticismo, arquitectura y ciudad en Galicia. La obra de los Sesmero en Vigo* (Vigo: Instituto de Estudios Vigueses, 2014).

19 Vilas Rodríguez, "Antonio Cominges Tapias. Obra religiosa en Vigo".

Fig. 14
Our Lady of Solitude. Antonio Cominges, 1954 (source: Archivo Histórico Municipal de Vigo – AHMV, 571/58).

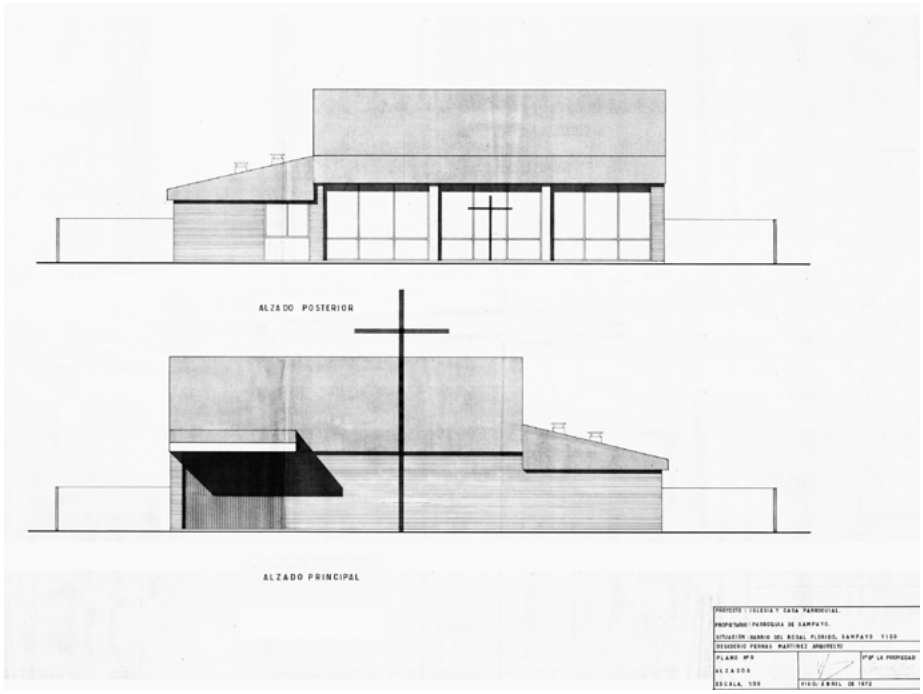
position of the entrance to the church, turning its orientation 180º. In addition, in order to define the new entrance, a body was added over the façade that was previously at the back, a triangular opening was opened over the presbytery, and a new altarpiece created by the painter Fernanda Fernández Suárez was installed [Fig. 15].

Nuestra Señora del Rocío was the second of the parishes created in the area of the Coya estate during the parish reform of 1970. For the time being, the parish seat was located in a place in the same neighborhood of Coya. In 1973, Desiderio Pernas carried out a project of maximums, of which only the church was built.[20] In 2013, the parish abandoned the construction of the rest of the program and ceded the vacant lot to the San Rosendo Foundation to build a residence for elderly dependents. The project designed by Francisco Castro and Pedro Alonso did not retain any traces of Desiderio Pernas [Fig. 16].

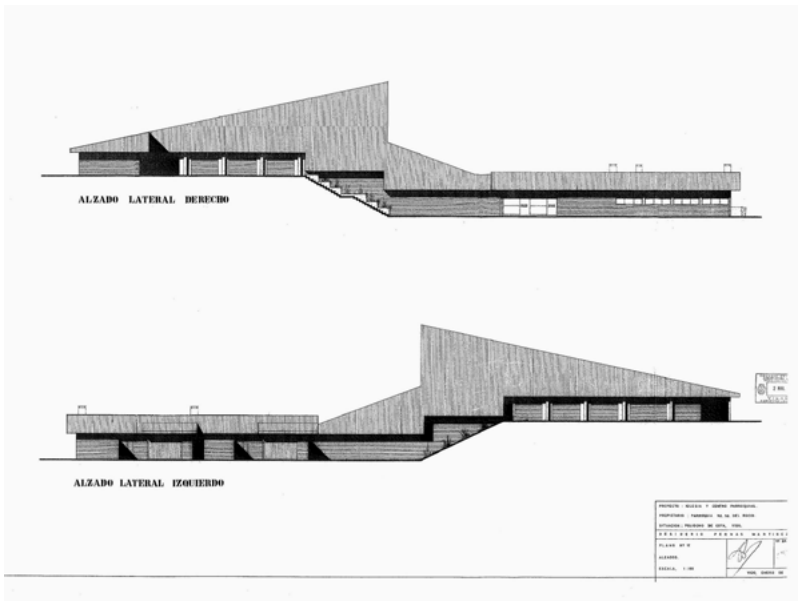
The parish church of Santa Lucia was initially located in a provisional site in A Salgueira, a suburban neighborhood that had begun to urbanize after the construction of a group of union housing. In 1978, the parish priest, Carlos Areán, commissioned Desiderio Pernas and José Manuel Quinteiro to design the church on a plot of land designated for urban development in the Sárdoma Partial Plan. Due to lack of funds, the construction of the parish complex was not completed until 1984 [Fig. 17]. The new parish of Santo Cura de Ars (St. John Mary Vianney) was provisionally assigned the church of San Juan del Monte, a small parish church with a capacity of two hundred people, as its place of worship. The parish owned land at Aragón St., where Desiderio Pernas designed a house (1972) and the parish center the following year. The municipal license was denied because the location of the church did not fit exactly in the land reserve of the Alignment Plan of the Teis sector, incorporated in the General Plan. An exception to the urban development standards was requested in accordance with Art. 46 of the Land Law, and the City Council even provisionally approved the file, but the Ministry returned it, demanding that the complete planning of the block be carried out. The parish had to wait for the final approval of the PERI of the Bailén Action Unit in 1990, while worship took place in the Travesía de Vigo. The architect José María Catalán, who had carried out the design, joined the team of Desiderio Pernas, at that time made up of Quinteiro and López-Ruipérez, as co-author of the new church. Pernas died during this second project, so his participation was limited. The first stone of the parish center was laid in 1996, and the work was not completed until December 1997 [Fig. 18a, 18b].

While looking for a place to build a church, the new parish of Santa Teresa de Jesús celebrated its services in the church of Santa Cristina. The land of the parish was included in the Partial Plan of Lavadores, so two options were considered: to rent another temporary headquarters until the Partial Plan reserve was determined, or to look for a buildable plot of land that was not affected by the Partial Plan. The diocese asked the parish priest, Jesús Cordeiro, to ensure

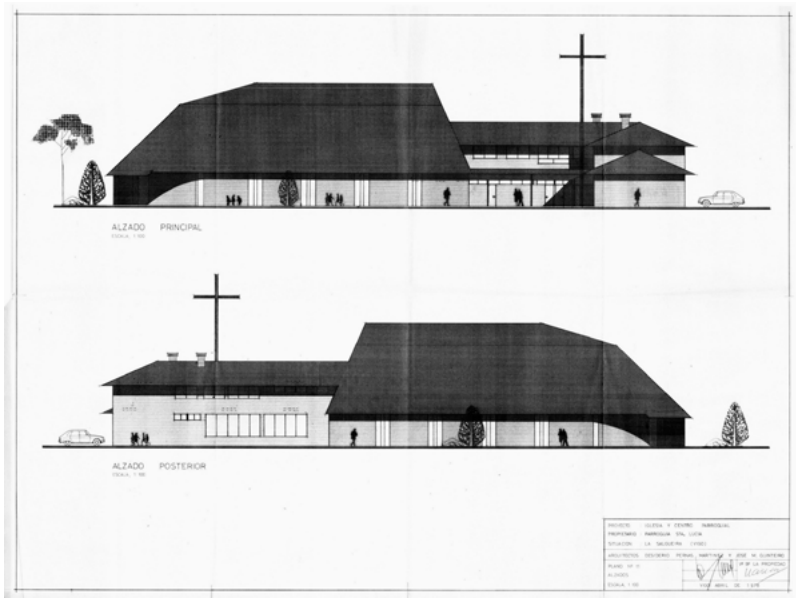
20 Vilas Rodríguez and Fernández-Cobián "Génesis y desarrollo de los cuatro centros parroquiales del polígono de Coya (Vigo, 1953-1981)".




15




16

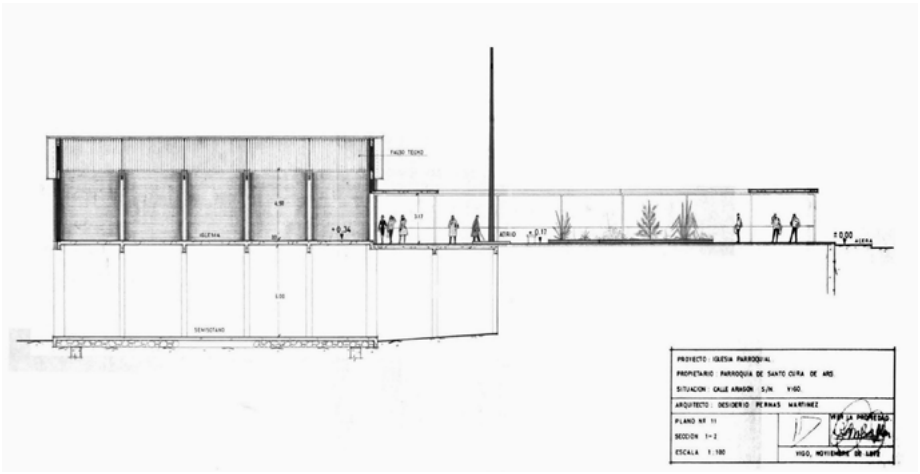



17

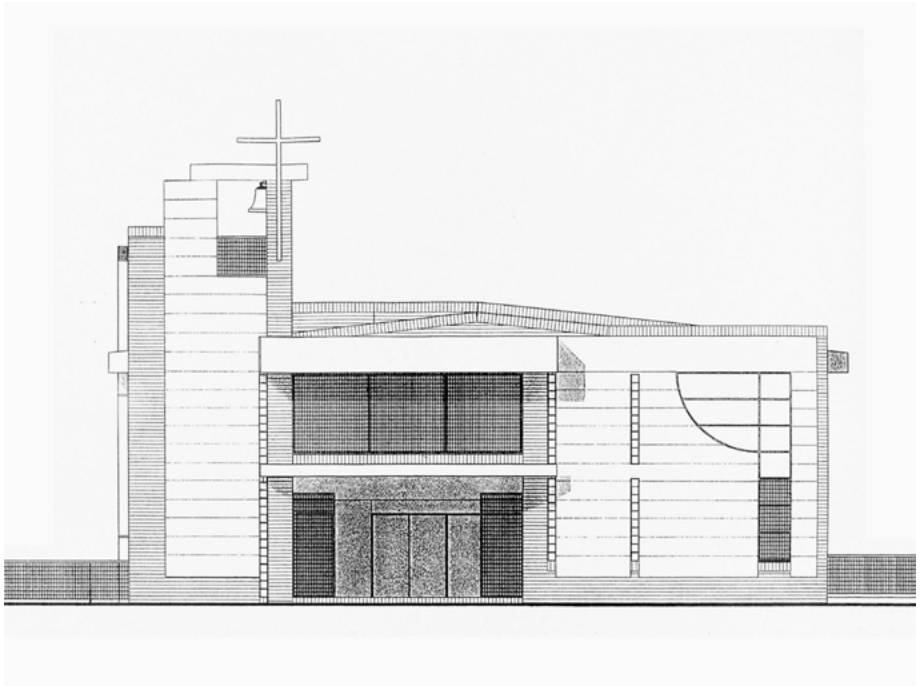
Fig. 15
San Paio de Lavadores. Desiderio Pernas, 1972 (source: Archivo del Colexio Oficial de Arquitectos de Galicia, Subdelegacíon de Vigo – COAG, 88/72).

Fig. 16
Nuestra Señora del Rocío. Desiderio Pernas, 1973 (source: Archivo del Colexio Oficial de Arquitectos de Galicia, Subdelegacíon de Vigo – COAG, 33/73).

Fig. 17
Santa Lucia. Desiderio Pernas and José Manuel Quinteiro, 1978 (source: Archivo del Colexio Oficial de Arquitectos de Galicia, Subdelegacíon de Vigo – COAG, 20/78).



18a



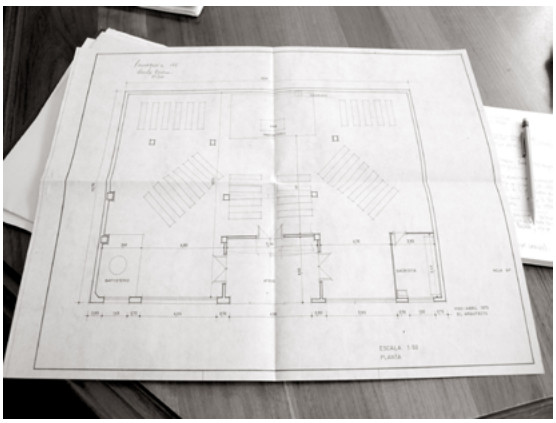
18b

the urban viability of the possible sites, recalling the cases of the parishes of Santo Tomé de Freixeiro – where the Xosé Bar Bóo project was located – and San Martín de Coya, whose work had been paralyzed by the construction of the industrial park of the same name (Fernández-Cobián and Vilas 2012). In 1971, it was decided to purchase a building under construction at 271 Ramón Nieto Avenue. Alberto Cominges drew up the project to complete the building according to its purpose, and it was inaugurated in 1973. Subsequently, in 1991, a complete (and risky) remodeling of the interior of the building was carried out without the intervention of technicians, in order to eliminate the pillars of the liturgical space and change its orientation **[Fig. 19a, 19b]**.

Finally, the parish of San Pablo had the opportunity to acquire the first floor of a residential building, with the corresponding patio and half of the mezzanine, located at 130 Andalucía St. Until then, it had been using the chapel of the Franciscan Mothers of the Divine Shepherdess as a place of worship. In 1974, the architect Alberto Cameselle gave a positive report on the purchase, and the parish priest at the time, Daniel Bermúdez, asked the bishop to authorize the pur-

Fig. 18a, 18b
Santo Cura de Ars. Original project (Desiderio Pernas, 1972) and current building (Desiderio Pernas, José Manuel Quinteiro, Pedro L. López and José María Catalán, 1995) (source: Archivo del Colexio Oficial de Arquitectos de Galicia, Subdelegacíon de Vigo – COAG, 69/73 and VI952027, respectively).





19a

19b

chase. Between 1974 and 1979, it was necessary to raise extraordinary funds to complete the work. Thus, in 1974, the Bishopric signed a first loan to carry out the work of furnishing the premises; later, it requested a subsidy from the Ministry of Housing, which was granted in June 1976. In January 1977, the parish received a new subsidy from the diocese, and in 1979, the entire debt was cancelled. The case of this parish is a good example of the economic difficulties of building a new church for the humble parishes of the barrios. There is no record in the diocesan archives of any other project related to this intervention (author, date, etc.), although in 1987 the parish acquired a single-family house in Couto de Arriba, in the neighborhood of San Roque (next to the church of San Pablo), to be used for charitable and apostolic services [Fig. 20].

## Religious Architecture between 1969 and 1975: A Change of Cycle

At the end of the sixties, Spanish architecture was experiencing the effects of the disorientation caused by the crisis of modern architecture and the period of immediate reaction. All this at a time when Spanish society's access to knowledge of what was being produced outside our borders was almost complete.[21] The same happened in religious architecture, which, once freed from its corsets and with the mentality of openness that came from the Second Vatican Council, was at an optimal moment of its development. In Spain, however, signs of its relative loss of importance as an innovative typology could already be seen, at the same time as a larger group of architects, some of them linked to development companies, began to take charge of projects, a process that had already begun in the previous period.

In 1971, Miguel Angel Baldellóu made a general approach to the architecture being done in Galicia at that time, in which he stated:

Fig. 19a, 19b
Santa Teresa (no author, 1973) (source: Archive of the Diocese of Tui-Vigo).

21 Antón González-Capitel Martínez, *Arquitectura española años 50-años 80* (Madrid: MOPU, 1986).



> The number of Galician architects has practically doubled since 1965. The newcomers have managed to form a coherent front in the face of common problems (...) Arriving in Galicia, they were confronted with a reality that was far from euphoric, and they accepted the situation and tried to improve it. (...) Making architecture in Galicia is a conscious alternative. The tendency to stay close to the training center, which had been very strong until then, began to change and a common programmatic spirit appeared, giving coherence to architecture from explicit and obvious approaches.[22]

Despite the general decline in the construction of parish buildings in Spain – and Europe – in the early 1970s, the Diocese of Tui-Vigo had to commission several churches in Vigo, since, as we have seen, six of the fourteen newly created parishes were not to be located in temples already built. It is possible to speculate about the singular accumulation of commissions to Desiderio Pernas – San Paio de Lavadores in 1972, and the Santo Cura de Ars and Nuestra Señora del Rocío in 1973 – but what seems clear is that, in addition to being the architect who built the most in the city at that time, his office was able to combine economy of means and speed in the construction of his buildings, which perfectly suited the urgency and lack of means of the diocese **[Fig. 21]**.

Undoubtedly, the economic precariousness of a Church in need and with no financial resources took its toll on the projects of the architects who worked for it at the time. In the case of Pernas, the parish center of Nigrán was not built and the parish complex of Nuestra Señora del Rocío was only partially built; later, misguided interventions mutilated other projects, such as the church of San

22 Miguel Angel Baldellóu Santolaria, "Panorama de la arquitectura actual en Galicia", *Hogar y Arquitectura*, no. 96 (1971): 17-53.

Fig. 20
San Pablo (no author, 1974)
(source: Archive of the author).




Paio, and urban planning difficulties halted the construction of the parish center of Santo Cura de Ars, which was to be resumed years later with a new project in which Pernas collaborated with other architects. Only the church of Santa Clara remained intact in its bare essentials [Fig. 22a, 22b].

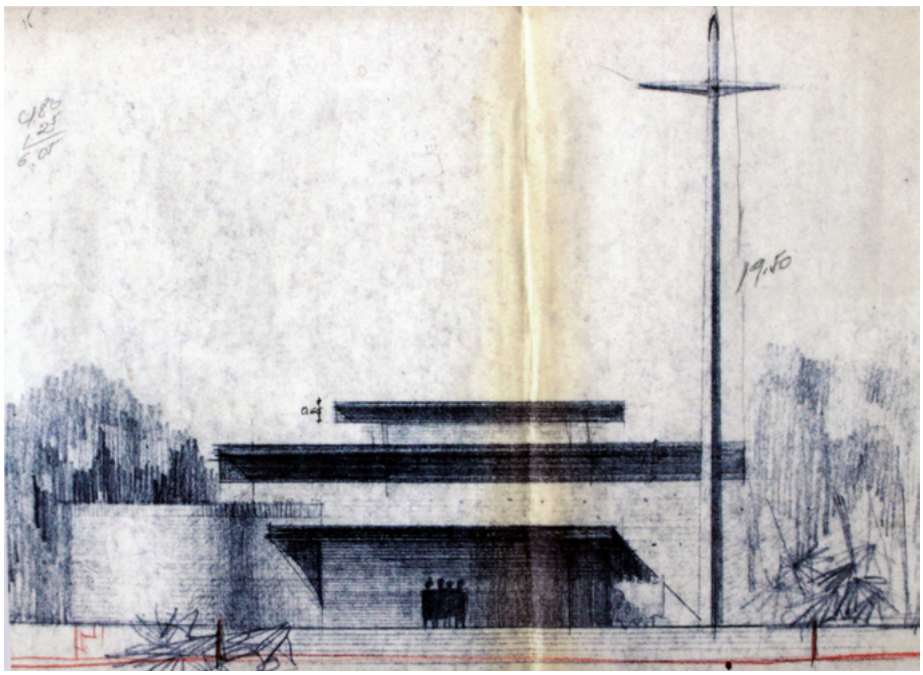
Many of the new parishes were located in buildings that had been constructed in previous years. It is true that Bishop Delicado Baeza requested the collaboration of the religious orders to take charge of some of them, but in general the construction of parish buildings was slow and suffered from the growing problems of financing. Many of these parishes began in temporary spaces, and although the legal consideration of parish buildings as institutions had facilitated the acquisition of land, this issue eventually led to a change in the architectural model (Fernández-Cobián 2005).[23]

On the part of the Diocese of Tui-Vigo, the creation of new parishes was a difficult process, closely linked to the urban development of the city, in which the parish, that defined physical territories, was gradually replaced by the ecclesiastical parish, capable of creating communities that were increasingly independent of territoriality.

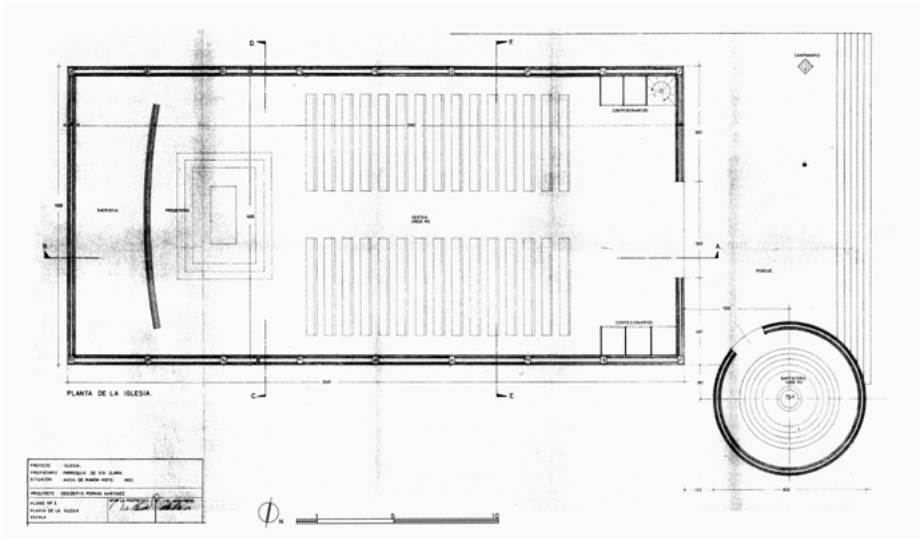
In any case, the new parish buildings that accompanied the process of parish subdivision promoted by Bishop José Delicado Baeza continued to be the center of a territorial structure deeply rooted in the Galician subconscious. Therefore, the multiple perspective offered by the study of parish architecture -observing in parallel its evolution in the three architectural, urban and ecclesiastical aspects-

Fig. 21
Location of the parish centers of the new parishes created in 1970 (source: Own elaboration from Google Earth).

23 Esteban Fernández-Cobián,. *El espacio sagrado en la arquitectura religiosa contemporánea* (Santiago de Compostela: Colexio Oficial de Arquitectos de Galicia, 2005).



22a




22b

allows the construction of a complex and plural account of the development of the city of Vigo during the last decades of the 20th century, which establishes a very useful framework for understanding the architecture of the city and opens the possibility of delving into the trajectories -little studied- of the architects who faced the religious program at this historical moment.

Fig. 22a, 22b
Santa Clara, Desiderio Pernas Martínez, 1968 (source: Archivo del Colexio Oficial de Arquitectos de Galicia, Subdelegacíon de Vigo – COAG, 53/68 and Archivo Histórico Municipal de Vigo – AHMV, 4231/68).

## Bibliography


Alomar Esteve, Gabriel. "La depuración religiosa y estética de nuestro arte sagrado", *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura*, no. 201 (1958): 31-34.

Archbishopric of Madrid-Alcalá. *Instrucciones para la construcción de complejos parroquiales*. Madrid: Oficina Diocesana de Sociología Religiosa, 1965.

Archdiocese of Valladolid. "Don José Delicado Baeza, 1927-2014. Vida y obra", *RIV-Revista Iglesia en Valladolid*, no. 207 (2014): monographic issue.

Baldellóu Santolaria, Miguel Angel. "Panorama de la arquitectura actual en Galicia", *Hogar y Arquitectura*, no. 96 (1971): 17-53.

Comblin, Joseph and Francisco Javier Calvo. Teología de la ciudad. Estella: Verbo Divino, 1972.

*Conversaciones de Arquitectura Religiosa*. Barcelona: Patronato Municipal de la Vivienda, 1965.

Fernández Catón and José María, ed., *Arte Sacro y Concilio Vaticano II*. León: Junta Nacional Asesora de Arte Sacro/Centro de Estudios e Investigación San Isidoro, 1965.

Fernández-Cobián, Esteban. *El espacio sagrado en la arquitectura religiosa contemporánea*. Santiago de Compostela: Colexio Oficial de Arquitectos de Galicia, 2005.

Fernández-Cobián, Esteban and Marta Vilas Rodríguez. "Los equipamientos religiosos como configuradores del espacio urbano. El caso del polígono de Coya en Vigo (España)," *Dearq 11* (2012): 58-75.

García Filgueira, Marta. *Eclecticismo, arquitectura y ciudad en Galicia. La obra de los Sesmero en Vigo*. Vigo: Instituto de Estudios Vigueses, 2014.

García Herrero, Jesús. "El Plan Pastoral de Madrid de 1965. 'La revolución silenciosa' y las iglesias en locales comerciales". *Actas de Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporánea*, no. 3 (2013): 186-193.

García Herrero, Jesús. "Iglesias posconciliares de Luis Cubillo en Madrid. La búsqueda del complejo parroquial estandarizado", *ACE: Architecture, City and Environment*, no. 50 (2022): 11545.

García Oro, José. *Historia de las diócesis españolas*. Vol. 14. *Iglesias de Santiago de Compostela y Tuy-Vigo*. Madrid: BAC, 2002.

García-Pablos González-Quijano, Rodolfo. "Necesidad de establecer órdenes parroquiales integradas en los planeamientos urbanísticos", *Arquitectura*, no. 73 (1965): 33-36.

Gómez Pérez, Rafael. *El franquismo y la Iglesia*. Madrid: Rialp, 1986.

González-Capitel Martínez, Antón. *Arquitectura española años 50-años 80*. Madrid: MOPU, 1986.

González Gougil, Ramiro. "A liturxia renovada na pastoral da Igrexa", *Lumieira: revista galega de pastoral*, no. 29-30 (1995): 311-354.

González Pérez, Jesús Manuel and Alejandro López González. "La dinámica demográfica y el planeamiento urbano en Vigo desde 1960. Impacto del proceso de industrialización desarrollista", *Anales de Geografía de la Universidad Complutense*, no. 23 (2003): 163-185.

Leboreiro Amaro, María Asunción. *Vigo, puerto y destino. Atlas urbanístico de Vigo*. Vigo: COAG/Fundación Provigo, 2000.

Mérida, María. *Entrevista con la Iglesia*. Barcelona: Planeta, 1982.

Payne, Stanley G. *El Franquismo, 2ª parte 1950-1959. Apertura exterior y planes de estabilización*. Madrid: Arlanza, 2005.

Paul VI. *Motu proprio Ecclesiae Sanctae. Normas para la aplicación del Decretos Conciliares*, 1966.

Paul VI. *Carta Apostólica Octogesima Adveniens*, 1971.

Pereiro Alonso, José Luis. *Desarrollo y deterioro urbano de la ciudad de Vigo*. Vigo: Colexio Oficial de Arquitectos de Galicia, 1981.

Ramón Saiz, Rafael, ed. *Madrid-Alcalá, una diócesis en construccion. Exposición sobre las parroquias creadas en la diócesis de Madrid desde 1961 a 1982*. Madrid: Servicio Editorial, 1982.

Souto González, Xosé Manuel. *Vigo cen anos de historia urbana (1880-1980)*. Vigo: Xeráis, 1990.

Vilas Rodríguez, Marta. "Antonio Cominges Tapias. Obra religiosa en Vigo". *Boletín Académico. Revista de investigación y arquitectura contemporánea*, no. 5 (2015): 27-38.

Vilas Rodríguez, Marta and Esteban Fernández-Cobián. "Génesis y desarrollo de los cuatro centros parroquiales del polígono de Coya (Vigo, 1953-1981)". *Boletín Académico. Revista de investigación y arquitectura contemporánea*, no. 3 (2015): 15-28.

Vilas Rodríguez, Marta. "Arquitectura parroquial y desarrollo urbano. Vigo siglo XX". PhD Diss., Universidade da Coruña, 2018.

João Alves da Cunha

# MRAR – The Portuguese "Religious Art Renovation Movement" (1954-1969) and the Changes in the 20th Century Religious Architecture in Portugal

INVITED

*Religious Architecture, Modern Architecture, Sacred Art, Renovation, Portugal*

**/Abstract**

**Founded in 1954, the MRAR – Religious Art Renovation Movement was the product of the will of a group of architects, artists and historians, such as Nuno Teotónio Pereira, João de Almeida, Nuno Portas, Diogo Pimentel, Luíz Cunha, Manuel Cargaleiro, José Escada and Vitorino Nemésio, who were committed to giving religious buildings in Portugal greater dignity and artistic quality, in a formal opposition to the maintenance of traditionalist models.**

**For fifteen years, the MRAR made a significant contribution to the Church's and country's cultural renewal through an artistic, political and pastoral programme that constituted the best example of religious and cultural intervention of an elite who operated an effective renewal of religious buildings, as well as an anthropological and sociological appreciation of liturgical space. After it came to an end, the high quality of architectural and theological discussion of religious buildings provided by MRAR was never repeated in Portugal.**

**/Author**

**João Alves da Cunha**
**Lisbon, Portugal | CEHR – UCP**
**(Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa –**
**Universidade Católica Portuguesa)**
**joaoalvesdacunha.arq@gmail.com**

Architect by the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Lisbon - FAUL (1998) and Master in Rehabilitation of Architecture and Urban Centers by the same university (2003). He holds a PhD in Architecture History at FAUL (2014) with the thesis "MRAR – The Religious Art Renovation Movement and the Golden Years of Religious Architecture in Portugal in the 20th century", work distinguished by FAUL with the Professor Manuel Tainha Award, corresponding to the best PhD in Architecture (2013-2014), and published by Universidade Católica Editora in 2015. He is a lecturer and author of several books and articles in the field of religious architecture. Since 2010, has organized meetings and exhibitions of architecture and religious architecture. He is a researcher at the Centre for Studies in Religious History of the Portuguese Catholic University (CEHR-UCP), where he has collaborated in research projects such as "The Catholic Church and the modern city" (2015) and "Dominicans. Portuguese Art and Architecture. Dialogues with Modernity" (2018).



CC BY 4.0
https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/20573
Copyright © 2024 João Alves da Cunha



1

Lisbon (1954). A group of young architects and students of architecture at the School of Fine Arts, who had become outraged with the architectural expression of the religious buildings of the last decade, decided to found the MRAR – Religious Art Renovation Movement, thus creating a vehicle for their desire to fight for greater dignity and artistic quality of religious architecture and sacred art in Portugal, while opposing traditionalist architectural models that characterized recent religious buildings in cities like Lisbon and Oporto.

The complex political, cultural and ideological context that led to the foundation of MRAR had begun taking shape almost half a century before, in 1910, the year the first republic was established in Portugal. After the monarchy ended, the republican government began its efforts to rid the country of the Catholic Church in Portugal, by banning worship, closing seminaries, expelling priests and religious orders, and nationalising their assets, which made the Holy See cut diplomatic relations with Portugal.

However, the political and economic developments of the nation, far from prospering, endured a decade and a half of serious crises, revolt and protest, which only ended with the coup of 28th May, 1926 and the creation of a military dictatorship, which, in 1933, became the "Estado Novo" regime, and was focussed on the President of the Council of Ministers, António de Oliveira Salazar.

One of the first measures taken by the new government of the second republic was to authorise the re-establishment of the Catholic Church in Portugal, which led Pope Pius XI, in 1929, to nominate D. Manuel Gonçalves Cerejeira, who was a former colleague of Salazar, as the new Cardinal-Patriarch of Lisbon, starting a relationship of proximity that would make the restoration of the Catholic Church in Portugal possible. In order to achieve this task, amongst other works, one of Cerejeira's first decisions was to erect a large church in the capital, the first to be built in two decades, dedicated to Nossa Senhora de Fátima **[Fig. 1]**, who

Fig. 1
Church of Nossa Senhora de Fátima, Lisbon, 1938, architect Porfírio Pardal Monteiro. External view (*Revista do Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos*, no. 7, 1938, p. 211).

was the focus of increasing devotion since the first apparitions in Cova da Iria in 1917. To implement the project, he called upon the regime's most favoured architect, Porfírio Pardal Monteiro, who had made a significant contribution to the renovation of Portuguese architecture in the 1930s, taking advantage of the knowledge that he had acquired through trips abroad and contacts with architects from other countries.

The author of numerous works in the capital, he was recognised for the solidity, sobriety, functionalism and modernity of his buildings, features that also characterised the new Church of Nossa Senhora de Fátima, a building of large dimensions, set at the top of one of Lisbon's new avenues, the reflection of a Church that no longer hid away, but rather one looking to regain its previous status.

Architecturally speaking, Pardal Monteiro rejected historical styles, such as the Neo-Romanesque or the Neo-Gothic still present in Portuguese architecture, and finding inspiration in the work of his French friend and colleague, August Perret, architect of the well-known Church of Notre-Dame de Raincy, he designed a church with clearly modernist facades, which won an award from Lisbon City Council in the year of its inauguration, 1938, and published the following year in the famous architectural magazine *L' Architecture d'Aujourd'Hui*.

Despite the notoriety obtained among the cultural elite, the architect's choice was not immune from strong opposition from the more conservative sectors of Portuguese society, forcing the Cardinal to write a letter in defence of the new church's architecture.

"When building the new Church of Nossa Senhora de Fátima, we wanted it to fulfil three criteria: for it to be a church, a modern church, a beautiful modern church. (…)

As for being modern, we could not imagine it being anything else. All artistic forms of the past were modern in their time. The Church of our days should translate, as much its sacred nature and the cultural purpose allow, the expressions of contemporary art and techniques. Copying artistic forms blindly from other times is a work of artistic archaeology; however, it is certainly not the work of living art.

As for being beautiful, (…) if it were not beautiful, it could not even be considered a good church. Any church, because of its nature and purpose, (…) is necessarily a work of art".

> This letter did not go unanswered. In 1939, by Tomaz Ribeiro Colaço, director of A Arquitectura Portuguesa e Cerâmica e Edificação Reunidas, who took the lead in objecting to modernism in religious architecture, published the following in the magazine:
>
> All of Lisbon is softly confessing that the new church is very ugly; but nobody says it out loud for fear of upsetting such or such person, and especially your Eminence. (…)
>
> The new church is ugly, most ugly. (…)

> To demonstrate that it is ugly, all one has to do to prove that it lacks one feature that would be essential to its beauty: the new church has no «Portugueseness.

What had just begun to be a promising period for Portuguese religious buildings was nearing its end. A year later, Oliveira Salazar organised the great Exhibition of the Portuguese World in Lisbon, and to best enhance «*Portugueseness*», he used architecture to promote his ideal of the nation, creating the "National Style", historically and derogatorily also known as "Português Suave" (name of a famous brand of Portuguese cigarettes).

This new "style" was immediately applied in the construction of a major new square in the capital, Praça do Areeiro, which became the architectural model to be adhered to and which led to the censorship of other stylistic expressions, especially those inspired by the Modern Movement.

From here, the "National Style" spread throughout the country, however, it was in the greater Lisbon area that it was most significantly used, an excellent example being the set of buildings on Avenida Sidónio Pais, close to Eduardo VII Park, winner in 1945 of the same Municipal Architecture Award that was previously attributed to the Church of Nossa Senhora de Fátima.

Faced with the Regime's new architectural preferences and fearing the potential consequences for the Church if he started an aesthetic confrontation, Cerejeira chose to relinquish the defence of modernity in his religious buildings, in order to ensure good relations with the government.

This decision started a time of revivalism and nationalism in religious architecture, the most famous examples of which were the three churches built in the capital, dedicated, not coincidentally, to three famous Portuguese Saints: Santo Condestável (1946-1951), by architect Vasco Regaleira, in Campo de Ourique; São João de Deus (1949-1953), by architect António Lino, in Praça de Londres; and São João de Brito (1951-1955), another project by architect Vasco Regaleira, this one at the top of Avenida da Igreja, in the Alvalade neighbourhood.

For MRAR, 1951 was year zero. That year, when the Santo Condestável church was inaugurated, the Catholic newspaper *Novidades* published an illustration of the facade of the church that would be built in Alvalade on its front page, the future São João de Brito church **[Fig. 2]**.

Faced with this prospect, the young architect and militant of the JUC (Catholic University Youth) Nuno Teotónio Pereira, motivated by the defence of Christian virtues that he found in modern architecture, opposing the lack of architectural truth of the "National Style", decided to organise a petition that classified the


PUBLICAÇÃO DOMINICAL — ANO XV— 26 D

ARTE RELIGIOSA PORTUGUESA

O que vai ser em Lisboa

a igreja de S. João de Brito

Ouvindo o arquitecto Vasco Regaleira

Nestes últimos tempos tem-se notado, no nosso País, uma grande preocupação construtiva.

O desejo de construção abrange também o sector religioso.

E assim que presentemente temos, em Lisboa, construídas ou em construção, numerosas igrejas modernas, testemunhos vivos de uma forte e saudável renovação espiritual.

Estão neste caso as igrejas de Nossa Senhora de Fátima, de Santo Eugénio, do Santo Condestável, de S. João de Brito, isto sem se falar das novas capelas, entre as quais ocupa lugar de relevo a dos Santos Apóstolos, pelo seu tipismo.

Algumas destas igrejas não correspondem, no entanto, inteiramente, a um simples desejo de construção e expansão.

Surgiram para satisfação das necessidades espirituais dos bairros novos e, de certo modo, em compensação de outros, da Baixa, que tiveram de ser demolidas, em virtude das exigências do tráfego ou da vitória do princípio de que a Baixa deverá ser uma zona sobretudo comercial.

Na Baixa foram demolidas as igrejas de S. Julião, do Socorro e, agora, a da Conceição-Nova.

Muito haveria a dizer sobre esse princípio de que a Baixa deve ser uma zona sobretudo comercial, centro de Lisboa. Se muitos o consideram assente, muitos outros entendem que não tem base.

É muito discutível que o critério urbanístico adoptado, neste caso, desde Duarte Pacheco, pela Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, seja o melhor ou o único possível. Pelo menos, muitas outras câmaras de outras capitais entendem as coisas diversamente.

Assim, segundo o plano urbanístico do Município de Roma, os bairros antigos devem ser respeitados nos seus valores e nas suas características.

Não se mandam deitar igrejas ou palácios abaixo só para satisfazer modernas necessidades, pois atende-se a que um tal critério levaria à quebra da historicidade.

Quando se nota a necessidade de um novo centro industrial ou comercial, procede-se à construção de um novo bairro, em local apropriado.

Foi já nesta ordem de ideias que Mussolini planeou a sua Nova Roma, que não chegou, no entanto, a concluir. Mas ainda se erguem para os céus, a ocidente de Roma, poderosos troncos de travessamentos de edifícios.

Não faz sentido que, enquanto, por um lado, se preservam e restauram os monumentos medievais, se proceda, com uma verdadeira política de besta-baixo em relação aos templos barrocos de Lisboa.

Acaso a arte renascentista, barroca e neo-clássica será inferior, à românica, à gótica, à manuelina?

* * *

Mas não é este o assunto que hoje desejamos abordar. Hoje prende-nos a atenção a futura igreja de S. João de Brito que em breve surgirá ao fundo do Bairro de Alvalade, a oriente do Largo Frei Heitor Pinto, entre a Avenida de Roma e a Avenida do Aeroporto.

A este notável empreendimento arquitectural ficará ligado, de forma inesquecível, o nome do Senhor Cardeal Patriarca, D. Manuel Gonçalves Cerejeira.

O projecto do novo templo é da autoria do sr. arquitecto Vasco de Morais Palmeiro (Regaleira).

Desejando proporcionar aos leitores das «Novidades» o conhecimento das características da nova igreja de S. João de Brito, natural era que nos dirigíssemos a este distinto arquitecto.

Recebeu-nos na sua residência, à R. de S. Bernardo, com lhaneza e cortezia cativantes. Feitos os primeiros cumprimentos e explicado o motivo da visita, entrou-se no assunto.

(Continua na 4.ª página)

FOI UM PADRE

A PESQUI

É graças à aviação e à fotografia aérea que a arqueologia pôde desenvolver as suas pesquisas e obter resultados em geral ignorados do público. Pouca gente sabe, por exemplo, que é ao Padre Poidebard, da velha-guarda aeronáutica, antigo oficial observador da guerra de 1914-1918, que se devem os consideráveis progressos realizados pela arqueologia.

Quando, em 1925, o R. P. Poidebard se encontrava na Síria colaborando com os arqueólogos que tinham descoberto no deserto os restos de construções datando da época romana e desapareci-

2

Fig. 2
Church of São João de Brito, Lisbon, 1955, architect Vasco Regaleira. 1st version (*Novidades – Letras e Artes*, 26 August 1951).

architecture of the proposed building to be contrary to the spirit of the neighbourhood and of the Catholic Church itself.

> We are residents of Alvalade and future parishioners of the parish of São João de Brito. (…) We all recognise that the architecture of the new church of S. João de Brito, by its appearance, is consistent neither with the present time nor with the general environment of the Alvalade neighbourhood. (…) It seems to us that, if the proposed project is erected, it will be like a body without a soul. (…) Under these conditions, the undersigned respectfully ask your Eminence to order the modification of the project of the S. João de Brito church, in such a way that the new religious building has the beauty, spirituality, clarity of design, dignity and the elevation that constructions of this nature demand.

At the same time, Nuno Teotónio Pereira met João de Almeida, a young student of architecture and future seminarian, who had been working as a trainee at the famous magazine *Art Sacré* in Paris since 1949 with the well-known Dominican priests Marie-Alain Couturier and Pie-Raymond Régamey, and later in Switzerland with the architect Hermann Baur, designer of numerous churches, and who was very interested in bringing to Portugal the modern religious architecture that he saw and drew in his travels through France, Germany and Switzerland, nations that formed the vanguard of religious architectural renewal.

Supported by some colleagues, the two young men were received by Cardinal Cerejeira to present the petition, achieving the amendment of Vasco Regaleira's original project. However, the most significant consequence of this initiative was the creation of a small group that began to meet regularly to discuss the status of contemporary religious architecture.

Encouraged by the news that João de Almeida had brought back, they quickly decided to set up an exhibition that would deal with the subject directly, criticise the churches being built and present new solutions.

They called it the "Contemporary Religious Architecture Exhibition", and it opened in April, 1953, in the gallery of the church of São Nicolau, in the centre of Lisbon. In the small catalogue, it read:

> When we see that, in the majority of the most recent churches, the spirit of the Gospel has been forgotten (…) a clarification and a revision of concepts are needed, so that the architecture can show the world the true face of Christ's Church. It depends on the Christian public if that face remains egregiously disfigured or all its purity is revealed.

The great success and support obtained by the exhibition encouraged the young group to go further, and, the following year, create the MRAR – Religious Art Renovation Movement, which was organised and motivated to fight for truly modern art and religious architecture. Initially consisting of eleven members, soon joined by another four, their very diverse backgrounds (architects, painters, historians and priests) soon proved to be one of MRAR's greatest strengths.



The first years were mainly dedicated to extending their knowledge in the field, but also in the education of the general public. They published articles in newspapers and magazines, organised courses and meetings, and new exhibitions were held, such as "Arte Sacra Moderna", "Paramentaria Moderna" and "Novas Igrejas na Alemanha", shows that made it possible for the Portuguese public to come into contact with some of the works that most directly influenced and inspired the members of MRAR.

Through its Bulletin, which was published with some irregularity between 1957 and 1967, MRAR contributed both to the cultural renewal of the Church in Portugal, as well as to the collective awareness of the serious issues that were suffocating the country, politically, socially and culturally.

However, this dynamic (both educational and editorial) was not matched by consistent artistic and architectural production, which was limited, either due to cultural resistance or economic difficulties, to the church of Santo António, in Moscavide (1956, by João de Almeida and António Freitas Leal, with works by Lagoa Henriques, José Escada and Manuel Cargaleiro), and the church of Nossa Senhora de Fátima, in Águas, near Penamacor (1957, by Nuno Teotónio Pereira, with intervention of Frederico George and works by António Lino, António Luís Paiva and Euclide Vaz).

These two buildings were erected in the first phase of the movement, which corresponded to the 1950s, an era in which MRAR had yet to reach a conclusion about a modern proposal for Portuguese religious architecture.

For this reason, they also appreciated and disseminated a third work, the chapel of Nossa Senhora de Fátima (1958, by Manuel Nunes de Almeida, with sculpture by Barata Feyo), despite being designed by an architect not associated with MRAR. Moscavide church **[Fig. 3]**, near the Patriarch's residence, reflects a significant and conscious gesture towards the renewal of religious architec-

Fig. 3
Church of Santo António, Moscavide, 1956, architects João de Almeida and António Freitas Leal, with works of Lagoa Henriques, José Escada and Manuel Cargaleiro. External view (MRAR archive).



ture by the Cardinal, who commissioned the design of the church from João de Almeida, who, in turn, requested the collaboration of fellow MRAR founder and newly-graduated architect António de Freitas Leal, to develop the work.

This decision gave rise to a unique building in the history of the Portuguese religious architecture, , characterised by its essentially sober and functionalist modern style, but mainly by its proximity to Swiss architecture, imported by João de Almeida from the projects on which he worked with Hermann Baur.

Its simple interior was based on the "*Guidelines for Building Churches According to the Spirit of the Roman Liturgy*", from the Liturgical Commission of the Fulda Catholic Bishops, published in 1955 by João de Almeida in the Lisbon Seminary magazine, *Novellae Olivarum,* and it surprised the public with its complete subordination to the centrality of the altar, which for the first time in Portugal was placed away from the back wall, as well by the limited number but high-quality works of art by renowned young artists, a practice that was repeated later in the various churches associated with MRAR.

The second church that opened during this period, in Águas, 200 miles from Lisbon, was designed by Nuno Teotónio Pereira's, who tried to combine tradition and modernity, creating a contemporary building carefully related to the surrounding environment, establishing a harmonious relationship [Fig. 4].

Liturgically and in comparison with the Moscavide church, he proposed a much more traditional organisation of the assembly, slightly open in a V shape, to create a convergence that highlighted the importance of the altar, which was also placed away from the back wall.

The third work emerged the following year, even further from the capital and very close to the Portuguese border with Spain, approximately 320 miles from Lisbon. The small chapel, which was directly linked to the architecture of the

Fig. 4
Church of Nossa Senhora de Fátima, Águas, Penamacor, 1957, architect Nuno Teotónio Pereira, with intervention of Frederico George and works by António Lino, António Luís Paiva and Euclide Vaz. External view (MRAR archive).



Modern Movement, was characterized by a parallelepiped structure with a very sober interior, where modern art works coexisted with the traditional liturgy.

At the beginning of the 1960s, when the MRAR architects began receiving commissions to design small churches across the country, from the three proposals tested, they chose the second, Águas, and adopted its liturgical and architectural principles as the "Portuguese way" to build a church. Or, as Avelino Rodrigues, one of the seminary members of MRAR, wrote in the article "*A construção de igrejas modernas e a responsabilidade do clero* ", published in *Novellae Olivarum,* no. 154, July 1958:

> In Portugal, we can distinguish the beautiful liturgical spaces of «Santo António» of Moscavide, and of the Águas church. (…) The second has a trapezoid plan, with the sanctuary on the smaller side and seems more adapted to the Portuguese environment.

This choice, which was not exclusive to religious architecture, was part of the new architectural theory that was starting to take place, known as the "Revision of the Modern Movement". It advocated a less globalised vision of architecture, more attentive to local and regional traditions and settings.

In Portugal, the "Revision" had important leaders like Fernando Távora and Álvaro Siza Vieira, who were both very close to MRAR, and was unreservedly accepted by Portuguese architects after the publication of the famous survey of Portuguese popular architecture, which revealed the wealth and variety of Portuguese buildings and confirmed that it was very different from the repeated models of the Modern Movement or the scenographic architecture of "National Style". The first MRAR architect to start building in the 1960s and implementing this new paradigm was António Freitas Leal, with the design of a small chapel in Figueira, in southern Portugal, dedicated to Nossa Senhora de Fátima **[Fig. 5]**.

Fig. 5
Chapel of Nossa Senhora de Fátima, Figueira, Vila do Bispo, 1961, architect António Freitas Leal. External view (MRAR archive).



Inaugurated in 1961, it boasted a number of characteristics that would become typical of MRAR: simple and discrete architecture symbolising a rejection of monumentality, on a scale and proportion that was on a par with what was around it, contemporary design that was strongly influenced by vernacular architecture, construction using local materials combined with concrete, many smooth and homogeneous surfaces in stone or plaster painted white.

The interior, which was characterised by few but very fine works of sacred art, as well as an atmosphere dictated by natural light and organised according to functional and pastoral purposes, was divided in two distinct and clearly separate areas: the sanctuary and the nave. In the nave, the assembly was distributed longitudinally in relation to the altar, which was the most prominent element of the chapel, due to its isolated position and bare surroundings. Between these two areas was the ambo, which reappeared as a place of major importance and significance in liturgical celebration.

This way of designing and devising a religious building was repeated by the same architect in the church of Nossa Senhora da Piedade, in the village of Vidais, 80 miles north of Lisbon. The church, was opened in 1963, was also discreet in its relationship with the surroundings, while clearly demonstrating its function, particularly via the presence of a remarkable bell tower. Once again, the interior was very sober space that was focused on the altar, where the careful design of all liturgical furniture could be seen.

Liturgically speaking, the space was obviously functional, with the assembly set out in a line in front of the altar and ambo. For pastoral and theological reasons, the baptistery was positioned near the main door, outdoors, at the base of the bell tower, and the images of the patron saints, purposely absent from the shrine, were placed to welcome worshippers at the entrance.

The following year saw the inauguration of the church of São Simão, designed by architect José Maya Santos, in the village of Barco, 170 miles from Lisbon. This building, which used local stone and concrete as the main construction material, remained faithful to the MRAR concept.

Fig. 6
Church of São Mamede, Negrelos, Santo Tirso, 1965, architect Luiz Cunha. External view (MRAR archive).





7 8

As in the previous works, and similar to what had been done in the churches of Moscavide and Águas, the bell tower was located some distance from the main body of the church, in this case, at one end of the churchyard. The baptistery was, once again, in the location preferred by MRAR: in the transitional area between the outside and inside, as a reminder that one enters the Church via an initial baptism. Inside, the same features: the altar as focal point, processional assembly, few decorative elements, and carefully studied natural light.

Three new churches were built in 1965: one in the North and two in the central region of the country. São Mamede **[Fig. 6]**, at Negrelos, 220 miles from Lisbon, was one of the first works of architect Luiz Cunha, who came to devote almost all his professional work to the Church. Strongly influenced by the vernacular architecture of Northern Portugal, the church was built according to traditional techniques, with stone masonry and wooden roofs, but following the contemporary interpretation of Luiz Cunha. The great attention to detail and the enormous creativity and artistic ability of this architect could also be seen in the interior of the church, equally dominated by both stone and wood.

Closer to Lisbon, a mere 90 miles away, architect Diogo Lino Pimentel designed the church of the Dominican Seminary of Olival **[Fig. 7]**. As a building open to the local population, its architecture was very domestic in character-like, transmitting to the community the idea that the church was also their home, or God's people home, as was said at that time. The intention was to make the church a very familiar place, with the bell tower being similar to a chimney.

The interior, which was covered by a wooden roof reminiscent of traditional ones, was very sober and focussed on the altar surrounded by modern works of sacred art by the artists Maria do Carmo D'Orey and Espiga Pinto and carefully designed liturgical furnishings.

Just 10 miles away, in the newly founded city of Fátima, Luiz Cunha designed another church, this time for the Dominican Convent. Due to the lack of good architectural references that could inspire the church's design, the architect

Fig. 7
Church of the Dominican Seminary of Olival, Aldeia Nova, Ourém, 1965, architect Diogo Lino Pimentel. External view (MRAR archive).

Fig. 8
The Tree of Jesse and the Last Supper, artist Ferdinand Gehr, Church of Nossa Senhora do Rosário, Dominican Convent, Fátima, 1965 (photo by the author).

took the option of trying to build one. The result was the first church in Portugal built from exposed concrete, and possibly still the most accomplished religious building in Fátima, sixteen years on.

The interior was organized in a very peculiar way, with the altar in the centre, between the two opposite assemblies (one Dominican and the other for visitors), seeking to create a single community gathered by Christ around the altar.

In terms of the presence of modern art, it is worth mentioning the painting of the Eucharistic Chapel's ceiling featuring the Tree of Jesse and the Last Supper, the only work by the famous Swiss artist Ferdinand Gehr to be found in Portugal [Fig. 8].

As can be seen, in the first half of the 1960s, the MRAR architects were able to put all the theory they studied and learned the previous decade into practice; however, this only occurred in small towns, away from Lisbon and far from the centre of political power and the Regime's censorship.

Building a modern church in a big city, and particularly in Lisbon, was yet to be achieved. The first step towards this end came in 1962, in the architectural competition for the future church of Sagrado Coração de Jesus, in the centre of Lisbon, which was won by the architects Nuno Teotónio Pereira and Nuno Portas, with a radically new urban proposal and truly modern architecture.

With this victory, MRAR saw its position bolstered, but even more so the following year, when the Second Vatican Council confirmed, via the approval of the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* Constitution, that the Church could use modern languages, including architectural ones, or as stated in article 123,

> The Church never considered a style as his own, but accepted the styles of all times, according to the nature and condition of peoples (…)
>
> The art of our own days, coming from every race and region, shall also be given free scope in the Church.

With these new directives issued by the Holy See, it was no longer possible to deny the construction of modern churches in every city, large or small, and MRAR architects were starting to be invited to design these new projects.

The first of these churches opened in August 1969, in Paço de Arcos, just 3 miles from Lisbon. Built according to João de Almeida's plans, the church of Sagrada Familia [Fig. 9] displayed all the characteristics of the early churches of MRAR, but now adapted to the new urban context and scale. Continuing to resist temptations to monumentality, the building exchanged a rural appearance for a clearly urban facade. In terms of its exterior, it was expressive and dynamic volume, enriched by greater functionality.

The needs of new urban populations led the Church to create parish complexes, where a number of social services were at the city's disposal. This was the realisation of one of the Second Vatican Council's intentions, which led the Church to relate with the world in a new way, working with and for it, and not just praying away from it.

Often, these services led to the duplication or more of the area traditionally





9 10

occupied by the church. In Paço de Arcos, the parish complex developed on different floors, benefiting from the slope of the terrain.

The church was built only using modern techniques, as was common practice in the large constructions in cities, and boasted new materials, such as concrete, which were unembellished, literally expressing the Truth they found expressed in the Gospels.

Its interior, which was defined by the great dynamics of the plan and elevations, maintained the central position of the altar and the clear separation between the sanctuary and assembly. In terms of the latter, in order to achieve the unity of large congregations, inspiration was found in Le Corbusier's Firminy church, with the balcony functioning as a natural continuation of the lower level seats.

A few months later, the church of Nossa Senhora da Assunção opened in Almada, a town that faces Lisbon, on the other side of the Tagus River. Designed by Nuno Teotónio Pereira and Nuno Portas, it repeats the features of the church of Paço de Arcos.

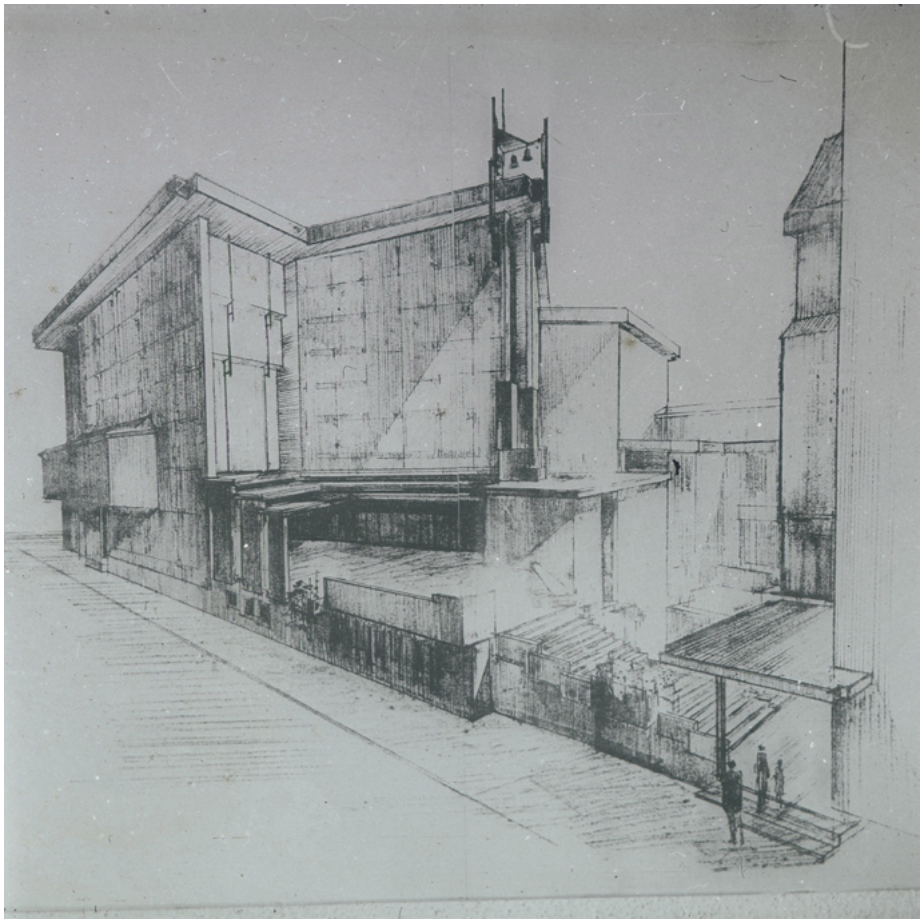
Inside, special mention goes to artist José Nuno da Câmara Pereira's work in concrete on the back altar wall, and the way the light was crafted to intensely dramatic effect [Fig. 10].

However, it was only in the following year, 1970, that these two architects inaugurated the MRAR's most renowned work: the church of Sagrado Coração de Jesus, in Lisbon, the result of the 1962 competition, which brought together, on a small plot, a wide range of facilities and services, such as a conference hall, theatre and cinema, a library, a medical room, a social centre, a small religious congregation residence, a kindergarten, a shop, a restaurant, etc., in addition to the church, which remained as the dominant element of the complex.

The radical novelty of this project was related to the way the construction connected with the city, reflecting the relationship that the Church should have with the society. In urban terms, the church could no longer present itself as the Temple or a Monument, a symbol of power that dominated the city, but rather a church that serves, open to the world, characterised by its acceptance and participation in the life of the world.

Fig. 9
Church of Sagrada Família, Paço de Arcos, 1969, architect João de Almeida. External view (MRAR archive).

Fig. 10
Church of Nossa Senhora da Assunção, Almada, 1969, architects Nuno Teotónio Pereira and Nuno Portas, with work by artist José Nuno da Câmara Pereira. Inside view (MRAR archive).



The Church of Sagrado Coração de Jesus **[Fig. 11]** was built within the urban quarter, as a normal street building. Instead of occupying the centre of the plot, dominating the surrounding urban area, as was the norm, the buildings were positioned at the edges, freeing the centre, which became part of the city. A street traversing the plot was opened, thus creating a church that was part of everyday life and one that sought to be ever relevant.

Inside, the church was a surprisingly calm place, despite the dynamism of multi-nucleus design. This was the result of the materials chosen and how they were used, the relations between surfaces and empty spaces, of how the intensity of natural light was controlled and the use of the minimal elements necessary for maximum expression **[Fig. 12]**.

The vast assembly, which was divided into two levels, was set up length-ways in front of the altar, the predominant feature of the presbytery, upon which a ray of light shone to highlight its importance, clarifying the hierarchies of the space, and at the same time, giving it an aura of transcendence.

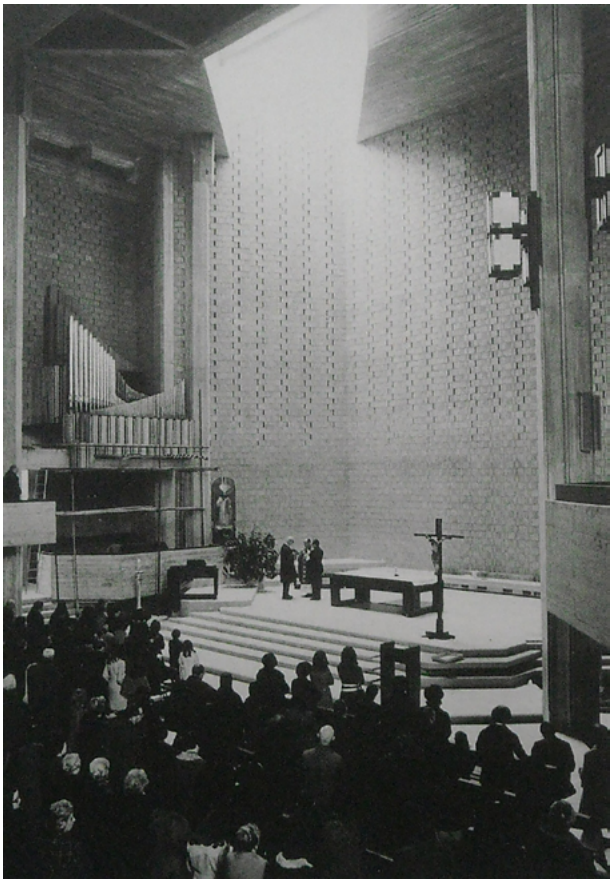
This church was almost iconoclastic, due to the almost total absence of images. Here, the art was the architecture itself; the materials and textures, the light and shade, which made it possible to relate the interior of this church with those of the large Cistercian abbeys, such as Alcobaça, and integrate this contemporary building into the history of religious architecture. It was no coincidence that in 2010 the church of Sagrado Coração de Jesus was classified as national heritage, in public recognition of its true quality and value.

Fig. 11
Church of Sagrado Coração de Jesus, Lisbon, 1970, architects Nuno Teotónio Pereira and Nuno Portas. External view (MRAR archive).

In 1972, three other churches followed in its footsteps, displaying the same characteristics of the MRAR family. These were the church of Nossa Senhora da Conceição, a project by architect José Maya Santos, located in Queluz, two and a half miles from Lisbon; the church of São Jorge de Arroios, in Lisbon city centre, which was designed by the architects Alzina de Menezes and Erich Corsépius; and the church of Sagrado Coração de Jesus, in Oporto, which was another of architect Luís Cunha's design.

However, around these years, new times have arrived, in the Church and in the world. Times deeply touched by the events of the end of the previous decade. The concepts of the MRAR in relation to church building were also being questioned, being replaced by new ideas that took advantage of the way that was paved by MRAR.

As for the movement itself, its history had already come to an end. With the end of the Second Vatican Council, in 1965, and with the movement's initial objectives achieved, the MRAR slowly began to wind down and reached its end in 1969.



12

In a time of strong secularisation, the MRAR proclaimed an artistic, pastoral and political programme in Portugal that constituted the best example of religious and cultural intervention of an elite that operated an effective renewal of religious buildings, as well an appreciation of the anthropological and sociological dimensions of liturgical space.

The role of the MRAR in the process of affirmation and consolidation of modern religious architecture in Portugal was essential. However, the theological and aesthetic care and debate for religious architecture and art provided by MRAR over almost two decades was never to be repeated in Portugal.

Fig. 12
Church of Sagrado Coração de Jesus, Lisbon, 1970, architects Nuno Teotónio Pereira and Nuno Portas. Inside view (MRAR archive).

## Bibliography


Cerejeira, D. Manuel Gonçalves. "A nova igreja de Nossa Senhora de Fátima." *Revista Oficial do Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos*, no. 7 (November-December 1938): 185-186.

Colaço, Thomaz Ribeiro. "Arquitectura e religião – Carta aberta de Tomaz Ribeiro Colaço ao Sr. Cardeal Patriarca de Lisboa." *A arquitectura portuguesa e cerâmica e edificação reunidas*, no. 47 (February 1939): 19-22.

da Cunha, João Alves. "João de Almeida: da Europa Central ao MRAR." In *João de Almeida: Arquitectura, Design, Pintura*. Lisboa: Fundação Medeiros e Almeida, 2012, 8-9.

da Cunha, João Alves. *MRAR – Movimento de Renovação da Arte Religiosa e os anos de ouro da arquitetura religiosa em Portugal no século XX*. Lisboa: Universidade Católica Editora, 2015.

da Cunha UNHA, João Alves, and João Luís Marques, eds., *Dominicanos, Arte e Arquitetura Portuguesa: diálogos com a Modernidade*. Lisboa: Edição CEHR-UCP/Instituto S. Tomás de Aquino, 2019.

de Almeida, João. "Documentário eclesiástico sobre a construção de Igrejas." *Novellae Olivarum*, no. 117, (December 1954): 313-314.

de Vasconcelos, Flórido. "A nova Igreja do Santo Condestável – uma obra impura." *Cidade Nova*, no. 5 (May1951): 309-311.

"Directivas para a construção das igrejas segundo o espírito da liturgia romana." *Novellae Olivarum*, no. 121 (January 1955): 1-7.

"Église Notre-Dame de Fatima à Lisbonne." *L'Architecture D'Aujourd'Hui*, no. 5 (May1939): 34-35.

França, José-Augusto. *A arte em Portugal no século XX (1911-1961)*. Venda Nova: Bertrand Editora, 1991.

Pereira, Nuno Teotónio. "A Arquitectura Cristã Contemporânea." *Ala*, no. 67 (January 1947): 2-4.

Pereira, Nuno Teotónio. "Arquitectura Religiosa". *O Comércio do Porto*, 6 December 1953.


## Archive Sources


Pereira, Nuno Teotónio [Folheto] *Exposição de Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporânea*. Lisboa, April 1953. (Accessible at Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian – Biblioteca de Arte).

Pereira, Nuno Teotónio *MRAR – Estatutos*. Lisboa, December 18, 1954 (Accessible at Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian – Biblioteca de Arte).

Portas, Nuno *[Carta aos sócios]*. November 9, 1966 (Accessible at Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian – Biblioteca de Arte).

**Herman van Bergeijk**

# A Curious Competition for a Protestant Church in the Netherlands

INVITED

*Structuralism, Competition, Church Building, Aldo van Eyck, Herman Hertzberger*

**/Abstract**

**In recent years various scientific studies have been published focusing on church building in the Netherlands in the post-war period. From an international perspective, however, the certain developments remain if not unknown at least underexposed. One of them is a competition for a Reformed Church in 1963 between architects that would set their mark on architecture in the Sixties and Seventies. Although the location was not within a major city, but on the outskirts of a smaller one, it highlights a crucial moment, or as Belgian architectural historian Marc Dubois, echoing Geert Bekaert, called it, 'a pivotal moment' in the history of the Netherlands heralding the end of the ecclesiastical pillarization. This article offers an accurate reconstruction of the competition, that was held between different architects who would later be considered as the main exponents of the Structuralist movement.**

**/Author**

**Herman van Bergeijk**
**Faculty of Architecture (TU Delft)**
**H.vanBergeijk@tudelft.nl**

Herman van Bergeijk studied art and architectural history in Groningen and Venice. He holds a Ph.D. of the State University in Groningen. For many years he worked as a freelancer in Italy, Germany, the U.S.A. and China. From 1995 till 2020 he taught at the Faculty of Architecture of the Technical University in Delft. Currently he teaches in Xiamen, China. He has published many articles and books on various architectural topics. Since years he has specialized himself in the study of Dutch architecture in the 20th century focusing on the period before the 2nd World War. Next years he hopes to publish an edition of the notebooks of Herman Hertzberger.

https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/20557
Copyright © 2024 Herman van Bergeijk

"The only legitimate basis of creative work lies in the courageous recognition of all irreconcilable antagonisms that make our life so enigmatic, so burdensome, so fascinating, so dangerous, so full of hope" (Joseph Conrad)[1]

"The artist's territory is the world in its unbroken wholeness" (Rudolf Schwarz)[2]

In recent years various scientific studies have been published focusing on church building in the Netherlands in the post-war period.[3] From an international perspective, however, the certain developments remain if not unknown at least underexposed. One of them is a competition for a building for the Reformed Church in 1963 between architects that would set their mark on architecture in the sixties and seventies. Although the location was not within a major city, but on the outskirts of a smaller one, it highlights a crucial moment, or as Belgian architectural historian Marc Dubois, echoing Geert Bekaert, called it, "a pivotal moment" in the history of the Netherlands heralding the end of the ecclesiastical pillarization.[4] This article offers an accurate reconstruction of the competition.

Shortly after the end of World War II an institution was founded by the Dutch Reformed Church on the "de Horst" estate in Driebergen near Utrecht with the intent to refresh the relationship of church and society and to tackle the growing secularization in a professional manner **[Fig. 1]**. The institution constituted of an academy with a boarding school and a sociological research institute and organized regularly study days. It was in a woody area and named *Kerk en Wereld* (Church and World) and its goal was to provide courses in order to train pastors and teach other people how to understand the Bible in a more modern way.[5] In 1957 the Van der Leeuw Foundation in Amsterdam, named after the Dutch religious philosopher Gerardus van der Leeuw (1890-1950), had the purpose of being a meeting center of art and church. The traveling exhibition had "to contribute to clarifying the problem of church building". The exhibition had the significate title "Ark – 10 years of church building" and presented national and foreign examples of modern church building. The event was to be seen in

1 Quoted in: Fred R. Karl, *Joseph Conrad: Three Lives* (New York: Farrar, 1979), 540.

2 Quoted in: Wolfgang Pehnt and Hilde Strohl, *Rudolf Schwarz. Architekt einer anderen Moderne* (Ostfildern: Hatje Verlag, 1997), 12-13.

3 See: Rob Dettingmeijer, "De kerk uit het midden: van godshuis tot een of ander huis. Het belang van de kerken in de Wederopbouw," *Bulletin KNOB*, no. 1 (2002): 1-15; Sander de Jonge, "Kerkarchitectuur na 2000. Het ontwikkelen van grensverleggende typologieën vanuit het samenspel tussen liturgie, architectuur en duurzame ontwikkeling," (PhD Diss., Katholieke Universiteit Brabant, 2002); Marisa Melchers, *Het nieuwe religieuze bouwen. Liturgie, kerk, en stedenbouw* (Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura, 2014); Herman Wesselink, "Een sterke toren in het midden der stad: Verleden, heden en toekomst van bedreigde Nederlandse kerkgebouwen," (PhD Diss., Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2018).

4 Marc Dubois, "Primal Image of all Architecture. Churches in Belgium and the Netherlands after 1950," in *European Church Architecture*, 1950-2000, ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock (Munich/Berlin/London/New York: Prestel, 2002), 123.Geert Bekaert, *In een of ander huis. Kerkbouw op een keerpunt* (Tielt/Den Haag: Lannoo, 1967), 90-93.

5 For this institution see: Maarten van der Linde, *Werkelijk, ik kan alles. Werkers in kerkelijke arbeid in de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk 1945-1966* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 1995).



1

Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Groningen. When the architectural critic and writer Jacobus Johannes Vriend (1896-1974) saw the exhibition, he concluded that "the emotional language of architecture in Protestantism is, as a rule, hard to find because such an expression is alien to its essence".[6] The exhibition clearly reflected that. Six years later, in 1962, in honor of its tenth anniversary, the foundation organized a competition for the design of a radical new church design for their site in Driebergen. The driving force behind the event was the reverend Willem Gerard Overbosch (1919-2001), who strived towards a reformation of the liturgical practice. One of the reasons was that in the beginning of the year 1962 the architect Jacobus Johannes Pieter Oud had criticized severely the architectural situation in the Netherlands and in particular the state of church building stating that it was without any inspiration. In his eyes church building had to be "holy".[7] The article was like a wakeup call and the Van der Leeuw Foundation wanted to investigate if a new kind of church could be designed where art played a crucial role. The selection of the architects for the competition was curious as none of them had showed any inclination towards deeper felt religious sentiments. Some of them were raised in a family where religious values counted, like Van Stigt, but most of them were explicitly agnostic but both the undation and Institution agreed that they wanted something not traditional but a solution that would be seen as in correspondence with the times, more contemporary than conventional. The choice of the architects for the competition was debatable but, in the end, proved to be in hindsight a very interesting one. By concentrating on a young generation with a drive towards innovation the organizing foundation tried to give a new impulse to church building.

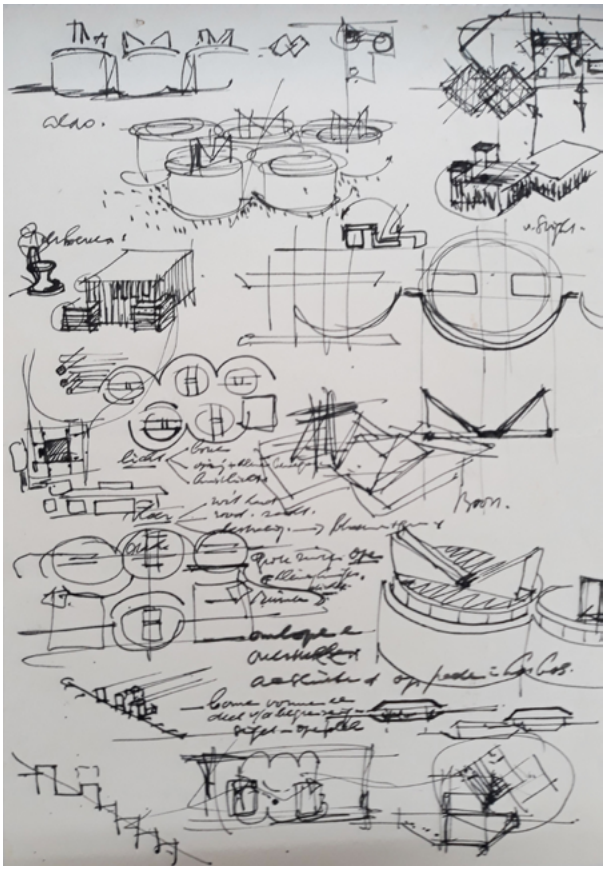
6 J.J. Vriend, *Reflexen – Nederlands bouwen na 1945* (Amsterdam: Moussault's, 1959), 152.

7 See: Jacobus Johannes Pieter Oud, "Het carnaval der architecten," *De Groene Amsterdammer*, February 10, 1962.

Fig. 1
Photo of the competition site (source: Nieuwe Instituut di Rotterdam – NI, Archive Boon).




2



3

The institution *Kerk en Wereld* had built in 1962 a new seminar building on their premises designed by the architect Karel Frederik Sijmons (1908-1989), but he declined to participate in a competition because he saw himself not as an avant-gardist, but as belonging to the elder generation who already had built many churches.[8] Something new was sought for. Seven relatively unknown and young architects were after some discussions invited: Piet Blom (1934-1999), Gert Boon (1921-2009), Aldo van Eyck (1918-1999), Herman Hertzberger (1932), Jelle Jelles (1932-2003), Joop van Stigt (1934-2011), and Jan Verhoeven (1926-1994). All of them played a major role in the history of the architectural magazine *Forum* and were considered later as belonging to the Structuralist movement in the Netherlands. In fact, it was a get-together of architects who to a large extent shared the same views and who regularly came together to discuss their projects for the competition. They were thus aware of each other's proposal **[Fig. 2]**. None of them, however, had deep religious feelings and any experience in church building although several months before Van Eyck had been asked to design the Pastor Van Ars Church in The Hague, so he had the opportunity to work on two church projects at the same time.[9] It took courage for the organizers to choose for these architects. The total fees for the jury members were

Fig. 2
Program booklet of the competition (source: Nieuwe Instituut di Rotterdam – NI, Archive Bakema).

Fig. 3
Drawing of Jelles of the various entries (source: Nieuwe Instituut di Rotterdam – NI, Archive Jelles).

8 Karel Lodewijk Sijmons (1908-1989), known for his publications on modern Protestant Church building, was initially on the shortlist but he had already built several churches and for this reason declined an invitation.

9 For the history of the Van Ars Church see: Annemarie van Oorschot and José ten Berge-de Fraiture, eds., *Pastoor van Ars, Monument van Aldo van Eyck* (The Hague: Ars Architectuur Comité, 2015); Francis Strauven, *Pastoor Van Ars Church, The Hague. A timeless sacral space by Aldo van Eyck* (Cologne: Aldo+Hannie van Eijck Stichting, 2022).

calculated at 4200 Dutch guilders, that for all the architects and artist on 24.000,50. The total amount of the event, excluding a possible realization of one of the projects was 56.695,12 Dutch guilders.

It was the intention of the foundation that each architect would work together with an artist and strife towards the integration of all arts in one building. A dispensation could be given if motivated, as was written in the program booklet **[Fig. 3]**. The jury of the competition was initially composed of the artist Chris de Moor, the theologian Conrad Willem Mönnich, the pastor N. van Gelder and the architects Jaap Bakema, whose office had designed a church in Schiedam in 1957 and another one for the new town of Nagele in 1961, and Gerrit Rietveld. Later the jury member Mönnich was replaced by the theologian, art connoisseur and member of the Van der Leeuw Foundation H.R. Blankesteijn (1929-2015) and the architect Henk Brouwer (1920-1970) was added. Rietveld had received the commission to design a religious centre in Uithoorn in 1961. It was his only church. He died shortly after the result of the competition was presented. Both Bakema and Brouwer were professors at the Delft University of Technology. The main question for the foundation was if in their apostolary centre, which had to be strongly focussed on the world outside the church, something like a classical church should be built. In the end the brief of the competition was that the space had to be flexible: during the week there had to be room for about 30 people, but on Sundays for ten times more. Van Eyck's design, with the motto Wheels of Heaven, was regarded unanimously as the best by both the jury and the other participants, even if Rietveld also appreciated the project of Jelles. He probably admired the influence of Mies van der Rohe in the simple construction details. With his asymmetrical project with shifted circles Van Eyck's proposal best suited the assignment of the Van der Leeuw Foundation, which had not prescribed either a building type or any particular form of liturgy but had left much room for interpretation. An exhibition of the plans and models, arranged by the artist Dick Elffers and held from the 24th of April till the 24th of May 1964 in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, had the title "Vis à Vis" **[Fig. 4]**. Photos in the archive of the writer and journalist Rein Blijstra in the Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam (NI) give a good impression of the arrangement of the projects. The poster was, like the one of the exhibition De Ark in 1957, also designed by Elffers **[Fig. 5]**. For many of the visitors the exhibition might have been difficult to understand but many newspapers and magazines gave a detailed description of the projects[10] **[Fig. 6]**. The exhibition was also shown in other locations. For every exhibition venue a discussion evening with the architects was scheduled. It was the breakthrough of structuralism in architecture




4




5

Fig. 4
Poster of the exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum, 1964.

Fig. 5
Poster of the exhibition on church building, 1957.

10 "Door andere ogen: enkele persstemmen over Vis à vis," *Katholiek Bouwblad*, no. 31 (1964): 324-325.

even if some architects, like Van Eyck, had searched for solution that were not structuralist in intent. Van Eyck had made a name for himself with his design for the Orphanage in Amsterdam, that was finished in 1960. The international world of architecture was immediately convinced of its importance. Many influences came together in this building. As Van Eyck said: "that's what happens when you can't choose between a Parthenon, Pantheon, Galla Placidia, San Spirito, Vierzehnheiligen church, Zonnestraal, or mud Pueblo Village".[11] Ever since his trip, together with Bakema, to the Pueblos in New Mexico in 1962 Van Eyck had become fascinated with circles placed in a non-hierarchical way in order to create special places in his architecture. Before that time, he used round forms especially in the many playgrounds that he designed in Amsterdam.


„Vis-à-vis"

Boeiende tentoonstelling over de hedendaagse kerkenbouw in het Stedelijk Museum te Amsterdam

In documentatie blijven de katholieken achter

Televisie als spreekbuis voor jonge cineasten?

Na de vruchtbare jaren kentering in korte film

Kerk in ontwerp

## The different proposals

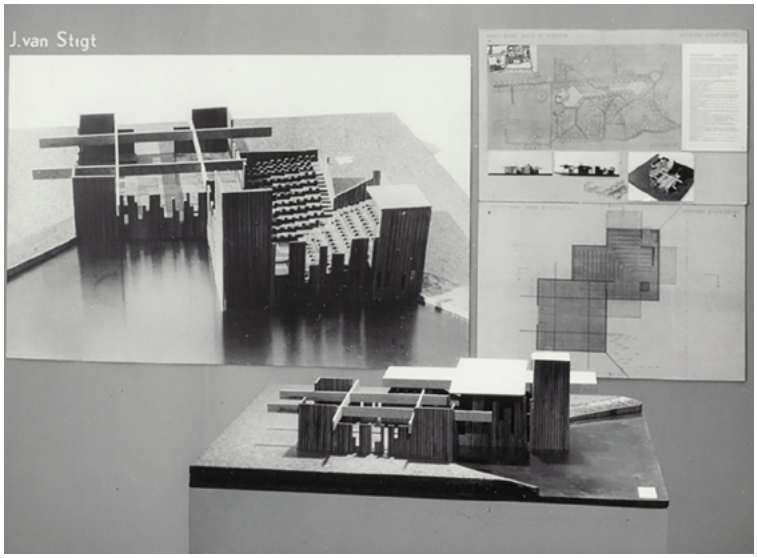
Piet Blom, who had in October 1962 won the Prix de Rome prize, did not decline to participate in the competition but decided to do nothing. In a long letter from which we cite here in extenso he explained his opinion to the organizers:

> "I can't do anything different from what I did, nothing. I consider myself a member of a church without a world; that is the world without a church. Surely it is the world of God. It is full of holy sacraments. But we don't see them as long as we don't sanctify them. Yet only man is able to sanctify them; in fact, it is his typical human need. Because the church is incapable of helping me sanctify the sacraments, there are not even clear words like yes and no to exchange. Kick the people out of the church; then they must sanctify what is worth sanctifying. Since hell and heaven are thought in time, we encounter good and evil during our life. It is very common to be in heaven as many days of our life as possible. That's how I want to be; that's how I want to build. I can't fucking do that, and that's because it is forbidden in the regulations, because they stipulate: make it like this: there is church and world, there is private life and public life, there is the social and anti-social world. Because one material is used to experience the other as a spatial result, it has become impossible for me to build anything. Literally, then, I refuse any assignment until I may build 'the church' – until I may begin on the everyday heaven".[12]

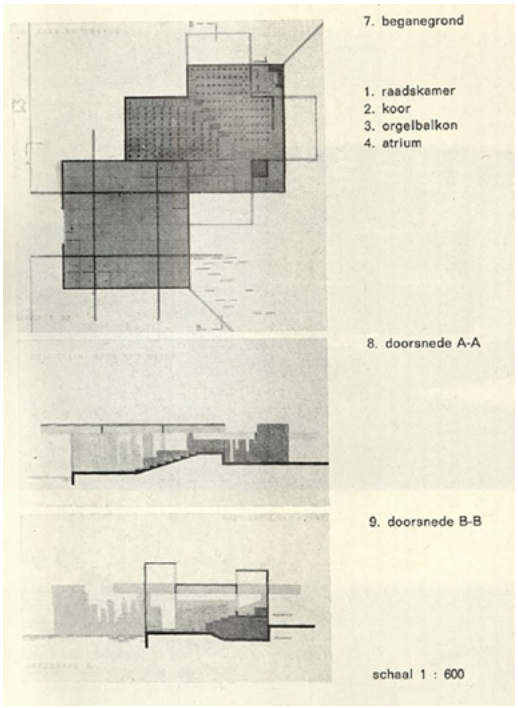
11 Quoted in: Marinke Steenhuis, ed., *Joop van Stigt, architect. Werken vanuit een flexibele structuur 1960-1985* (Amsterdam: SDO, 2014), 24.

12 See the jury report in the archive of Bakema in the Dutch Architecture Institute (NI), BAKE, d60. The report was published in: "Zes 'kerken in ontwerp,'" *Bouwkundig Weekblad*, no. 15 (1964): 165-179.

Fig. 6
Article on the exhibition in 1964 in *De Tijd – Maasbode*




7




8

Blom thus takes a particular point of view that is determined by his principles. His contribution – if we can call it that – embodies a fundamental critique of the church in Dutch society at that moment. His letter testifies to his uncompromising character and attitude, but the particular value of the statement of this wayward architect was not fully understood and taken into account. His 'nothing' was, however, not seen as an entry although it was very conceptual.

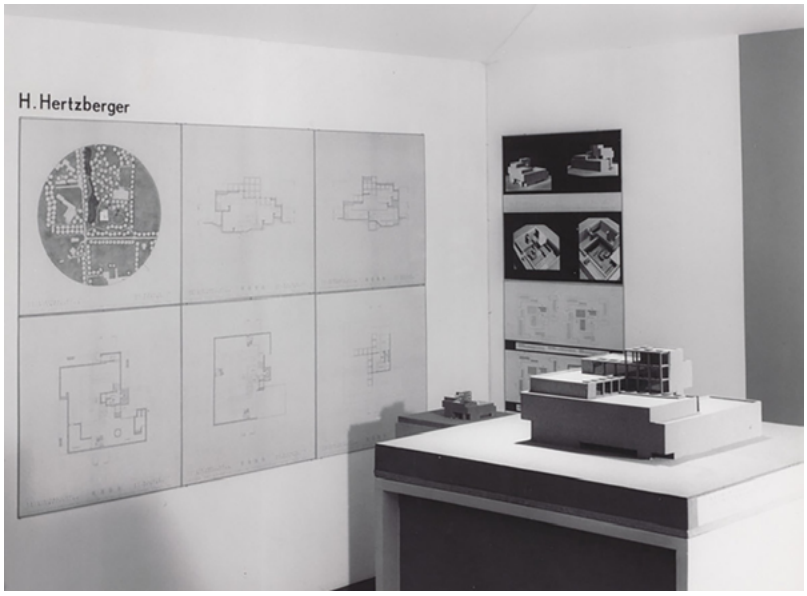
Joop van Stigt, the youngest of the contenders, had been an overseer of the Orphanage building of Van Eyck in Amsterdam. He also had worked for Gert Boon. Already in his early plans, made during his studies, Van Stigt had noticed that the configuration of two squares that were interlinked and partially overlapped each other offered many possibilities for a flexible use independent of the program **[Fig. 7]**. Also his proposal for the church in Driebergen was determined by this view but, as he stated 'it is a little madness to create a center of silence in this time when people are afraid of silence'.[13] Van Stigt envisioned a partially cross-shaped church to which an open atrium had to connect **[Fig. 8]**. The building had to be dark as the earth with the roof directing the light. The projecting ceiling connected inside and outside. Both spaces of the church had to have the same bar grid. Light would be reflected by the pond against the ceiling within the building. He wanted to see the building constructed entirely from railway sleepers that he considered closely related to the trunks of the surrounding forest. The amphitheatrically designed seats were also made of this material: raised pile heads from the floor. He considered loosely placed chairs and benches as alien creatures in a room destined as a church. The walls were, like the floor to be made of wood. The unity of material had to be clear. The inner space was

Fig. 7
Photo of the part of Van Stigt in the exhibition (Nieuwe Instituut, Archive Blijstra)

Fig. 8
Drawings of the project of Van Stigt in *Bouwkundig Weekblad*.

13 Quoted in: "Kerk is meer schuilhut dan monument," *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, January 23, 1965.

conceived in such a manner that both with 10 or with 100 persons in it the relation between the player and the audience would be an organic whole. Everybody had to be included. The seclusion had dominate here, which, also due to the used material gives it something stiff and unyielding. The atrium had to be an in-between space where one could meet each other. The architect had again showed his obsession with the creation of structures built using a grid system. In 1966 he would summarize his views in the words: "I strongly believe in Laws. In the architectural image, in which there is a balance between construction and space distribution, between wishes and economic possibilities. This now is the architectural image with which this time will manifest itself".[14] The project had a certain severity and heaviness to it. There was hardly any flexibility. The jury had a harsh verdict and also disapproved the fact that the contender did not have the opinion that his work could be completed with the help of a visual artist. Van Stigt thought that the architecture should be enough. In his explanation he wrote: "The things you make as an architect must be as complete as the painter's canvas or the sculptor's sculpture. You can only speak of architecture when the work is complete, without additions from a visual artist".[15]




9

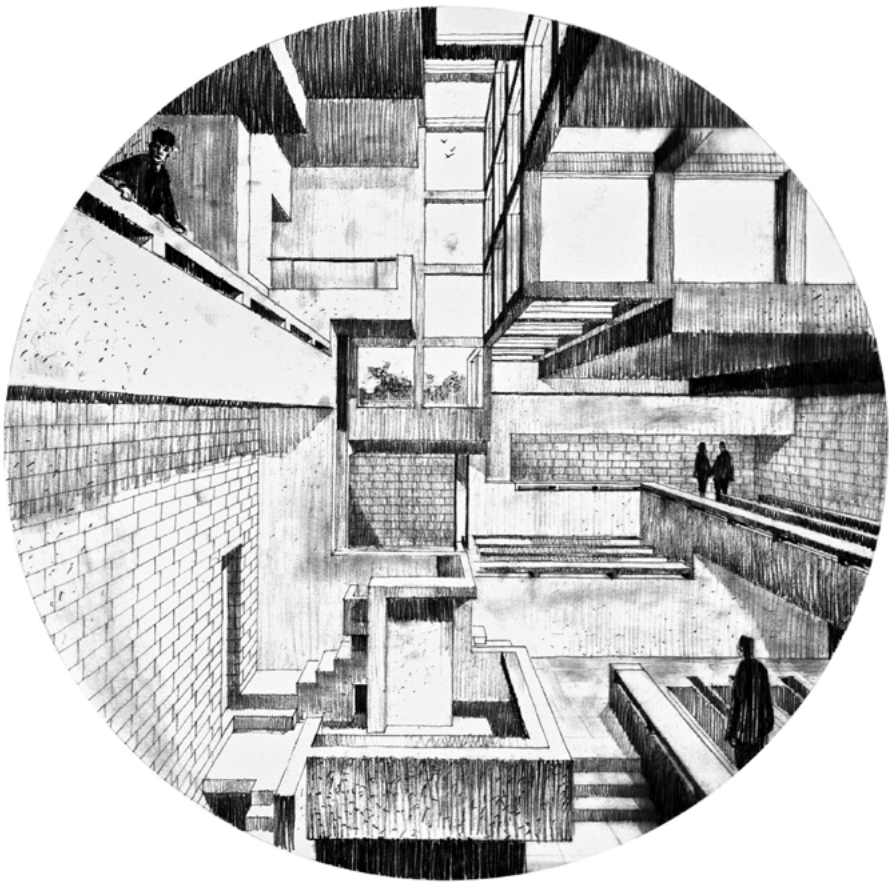
With his student housing in Amsterdam and the Montessori school in Delft, Herman Hertzberger had already made a name for himself as a talented architect in 1963. He declined the involvement of an artist by pointing out in advance that he declined any visual moment outside his architecture. "In my architecture I try to be the visual artist". His project perfectly fits in his oeuvre, in between the Montessori school and the designs for the schools in Badhoevedorp and Wassenaar that remained unbuilt.[16] Whereas in Delft the space is developed horizontally in his church for Driebergen the interior shows different levels that are built up spirally and that permit diagonal sightlines **[Fig. 9]**. We do see the same box-like roof lights as in his school in Delft. But the typical characteristics of the architectural language of Hertzberger are already clearly recognizable. The whole church is based on the use of a module of 1.5 by 1.5 meters. The stepping and shifting spaces form a series of occupiable corners and places permitting diagonal views. There is no vantage point from which the whole space can be seen. The spatial development narrows if one goes upwards. Seats can

14 Steenhuis, *Joop van Stigt, architect. Werken vanuit een flexibele structuur 1960-1985*, 32.

15 See explanation in the archive of Van Stigt, in the Dutch Architecture Institute (NI), STIG 333-1.

16 For Hertzberger's oeuvre, see: Robert McCarter, *Herman Hertzberger* (Rotterdam: NAi010, 2015).

Fig. 9
Photo of the section of Hertzberger in the exhibition (source: Nieuwe Instituut di Rotterdam – NI, Archive Blijstra).



10

be placed on each level if needed. One can sit by oneself or in a group. By this fragmented placing of the audience Hertzberger undermined the idea of the church as a place of the collective. He stressed more the creation of intimate areas from where one could listen to the church service. He wants a conversation church and not a sermon church. The space should have, what he called, a diaphragmatic character, but should not lead to a labyrinth feeling or a sense of lost. It should be suitable for any group size. In fact, he wanted to give the choice to the visitors of the church to decide themselves in which measure they would like to participate in the service. This freedom of choice lead to the articulation of space and the breakdown of a unified space.

Hertzberger showed his talent in his proposal, showing that for him architecture had to create different places where people could see and could be seen. The round perspective drawing of the interior shows that very clearly [Fig. 10]. This interior did not meet up to the expectations of the Catholic church builder André Thunnissen (1921-2014), who wrote that on the outside "it had a lively and moving silhouette, but inside a fear of emptiness […] had led to fragmentation". This fragmentation led to "fantastic perspective and spatial views" but 'an interplay between the pulpit and the viewing balconies higher up' was lacking.[17] In his explanation Hertzberger underlined that in his design 'he did not start from a the idea of a meditation centre, because then one immediately ends up

Fig. 10
Perspective of the interior of the project of Hertzberger (source: Nieuwe Instituut di Rotterdam – NI, Archive Hertzberger).

17 A.W.P. Thunnessen, "Bewuste en gewilde onzekerheid," *Katholiek Bouwblad*, no. 31 (1964): 323.




11



12

with all kinds of demands that people want to make of a church, while he is of the opinion that you cannot put a church in a certain program' He even went one step further, ' stating 'we really need to make a church out of everything we do'.[18] The jury asked themselves if the building was as plastic as the designer had intended. The involvement of an artist would have softened the initial idea that had driven Hertzberger. From the side of the theologians there was the critique that the building would have been 'so intense in form, that it does not allow for liturgy'.[19] There were two main speaking places, a platform on which one or

Fig. 11
Photo of the section of Jelles in the exhibition (source: Nieuwe Instituut di Rotterdam – NI, Archive Blijstra).

Fig. 12
Photo of the model of the project of Jelles (source: Nieuwe Instituut di Rotterdam – NI, Archive Blijstra).

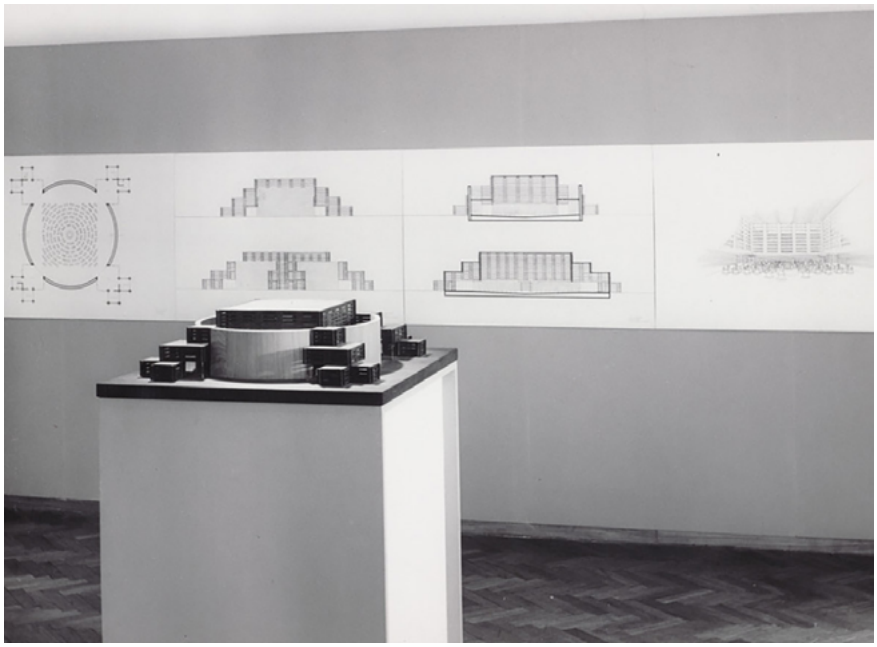
18 Quoted in: "De Kerken zijn niet meer overtuigd van wat ze willen," *Twentsch dagblad Tubantia*, October 31, 1964..

19 "Zes 'kerken in ontwerp'", 171.

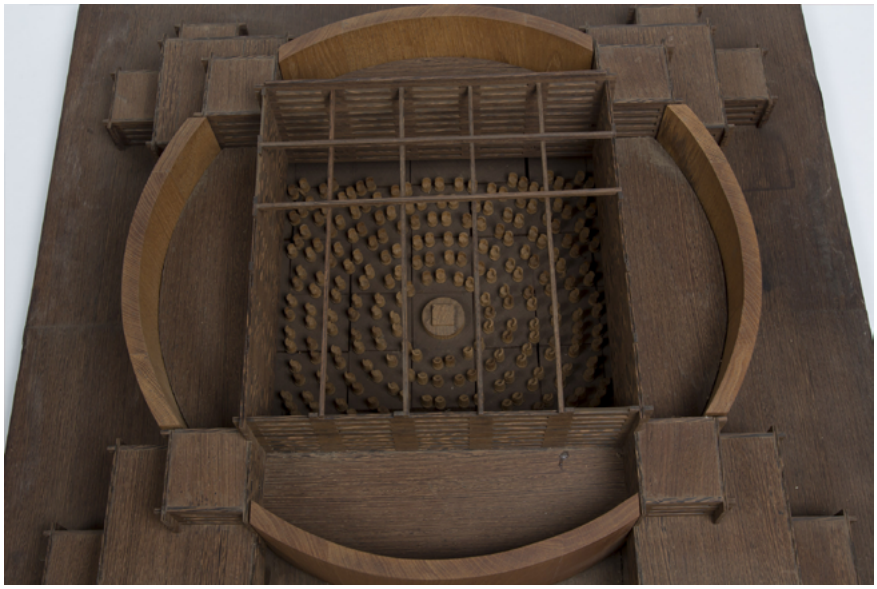
more lecterns could be placed and a higher pulpit. This gave several different opportunities to address the audience. The jury appreciated the architectonic ability and admitted that it was sublimely composed but wondered if there was enough 'relaxation' in the design, that could have liberated the way towards a greater lucidity. The central space would be almost mystical and lightened only by the cubic roof light.

Evert Jelle Jelles, who grew up in Indonesia, finished his studies in Delft with J.H. van den Broek and Cornelis van Eesteren, both exponents of the Modern Movement. Jelles admired the functionalist principles, and he was especially influenced by the work of Jan Duiker, whose archive he saved from destruction. He usually combined those principles with the visible use of wood and (concrete) brick and the configurative coupling of square floor plan elements, a form comparable to cell structures. His proposal for the church was conceived as an open pavilion in the clearings between the wooded areas. His chapel has four glass walls, creating, as it were, a covered open space in the forest. One could as it were look through the pavilion. A far overhanging square roof with a roof light in the middle dominated the project. This determined the main structure that divided and connected the roof girders and the double uprights. Transparency had become thus almost a religious factor. There were two small annexes attached to the church area where the necessities for the service could be kept and a toilet could be installed. The architect stated that he wanted to make 'almost nothing', an open place in the forest with a shelter of minimal means that took in regard the surrounding plants. With his symmetrical construction of thin vertical columns and horizontal planes, Jelles created not a fascinating, dynamic sign in the space, but rather an architectonic, transparent structure in which the interior is completely subordinate to the exterior [Fig. 11]. An enormous metal roof covered the pavilion that contained an upper and lower church. The simplicity of the design and the constructive detailing appealed to some of the jury members, but others were more sceptical about its religious impact.

This place of stillness had to be a place for many activities and possibilities, from church service to a place of repent, of communication between the people, either as group or as individuals. The jury had many problems with the intentions and said that the optimal shelter with a minimal boundary lead to the opposite effect. The open place in the forest was taken over by the building and yet shelter did not provide any privacy or possibility to concentrate [Fig. 12]. The boundary between outside and inside was reduced as much as possible, but the jury was hesitant in their opinion if this was a good thing. They asked themselves if 'a view on the world' is analogous to "a sight of the forest". They nevertheless appreciated the refraining from any formal exuberance. For his project Jelles worked together with his wife, the visual artist Nienke Jelles-Schepers, who coloured the glass. The transparency of the architecture does not lead to an intensification of the experience, only the glass windows give the place some mystical significance. Jelles addresses the openness of the church to the surrounding world.



13



14




15

Fig. 13
Photo of the section of Verhoeven in the exhibition (source: Nieuwe Instituut di Rotterdam – NI, Archive Blijstra).

Fig. 14
Photo of the model of the project of Verhoeven (source: Nieuwe Instituut di Rotterdam – NI, Archive Verhoeven).

Fig. 15
Photo of the section of Boon in the exhibition (source: Nieuwe Instituut di Rotterdam – NI, Archive Blijstra).

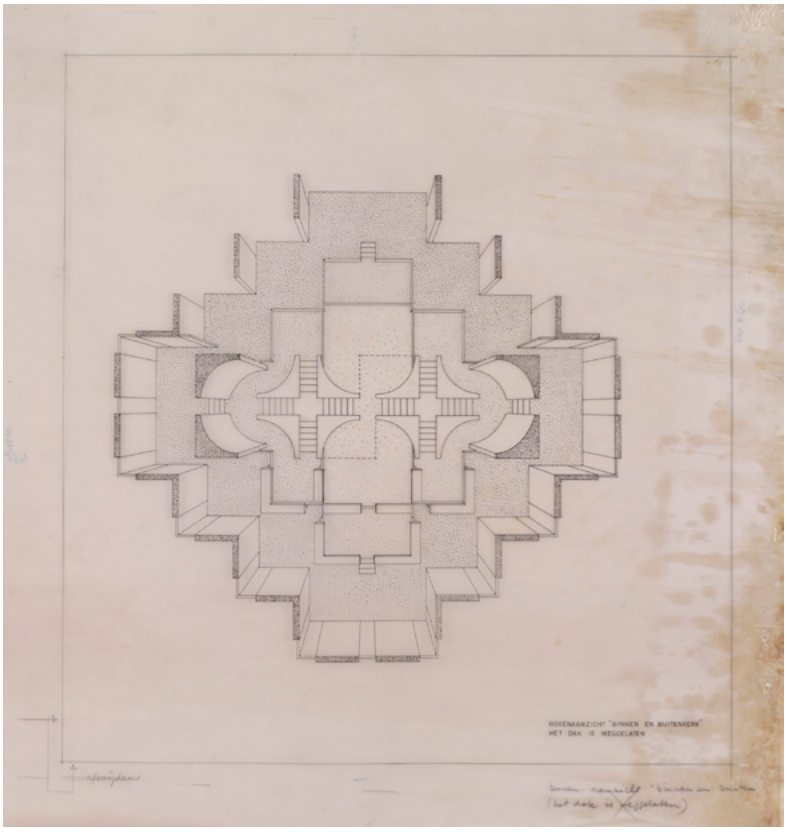
The only architect who was not from Amsterdam was Jan Verhoeven.[20] He had studied at the Academy of Architecture in the capital with Van Eyck but shortly after finishing his studies opened an office in Amersfoort. He had designed already several housing projects. The meeting place is central in almost all of his designs with complex geometric structures. For him, the relationship between the individual and community is crucial and based on equality. In his proposal for Driebergen circle and rectangle determine the lines of the structure in which one would not so much recognize a church when viewed from the outside but rather a temple. Inside, the communion table is exactly in the center of the round main shape and around it are placed loose chairs, not in rows, but irregularly distributed in the space. It is precisely these chairs that affect the ecclesiastical character of the space [Fig. 13]. They are designed so heavily that everyone sits alone in the church. Perhaps the architect also intended to give this extreme individualism a chance – but again: in a church people sit together: as a community. He wanted the pastor not on a pulpit but to sit among the people present. The jury appreciated the honesty and frankness with which this proposal for church building is presented, but nevertheless had several points of criticism. They found the space less suitable for their starting point, namely a certain liturgical mobility or flexibility. The structured light within the high wooden walls was not found very convincing in relation to the designer's objectives [Fig. 14]. He had wanted to create a sort of All-Space but the architecture was too self-complacent. The chosen space does not have many expressive possibilities. The play with the form of circles and squares did not lead to a liberating end goal. The sculptor Edvard Zegers and his wife Loekie Zondag had participated in the conception of the proposal and Edvard was responsible for the model and the design of the chairs.

Gert Boon made a proposal together with the painter Joost van Roojen, who would work later also with Van Eyck and Hertzberger, and the sculptor Carel Visser. He was with Verhoeven the ones who had adhered fully to the requirement to work together with other artists and strife towards a synthesis of the arts. Boon believed that the religious and the non-religious are not to be divided and that people could enter without any particular intention. "The place where normal things happen becomes the 'altar' when the moment is appropriate. And what had become altar becomes the place for normal things" [Fig. 15]. Clearly Boon had envisioned a church that could also be used for catholic or other kind of services, but the designer above all stressed that he had chosen to design an "inhabitable thing". That thing, constructed out of bricks, had to be the space for everything, or at least, everything that had a religious purpose. Later he called it in a German explanation: the heart.[21] It was not there to divide inside and outside but to unite. The structure is the altar which contains an inner and outer apse, a vestibule, the font, an inside and outside doxal, the pulpit, an inner and

20 For Verhoeven, see: Mette Zahle, ed., *Jan Verhoeven, 1926-1994. Exponent van het structuralisme* (Rotterdam: Bonas, 2012).

21 See the explanation in the archive of Boon in the Dutch Architecture Institute (NI), BOON k81-10.

outer triforium, the clocks and more. The designers opted for a habitable altar, in which and around which the inside and outside will and can always change as in a game or like a theatrical proscenium. This altar was a screen that functioned as a dividing feature between inside and outside. A sort of tent hovered over it covering only a part of the outside space. As the newspaper *Het Vrije Volk* wrote: "Boon made a remarkable combination of lower church and upper church, twelve high pillars, as it were, contained in a core block box with symmetrically arranged glass balconies around".[22]



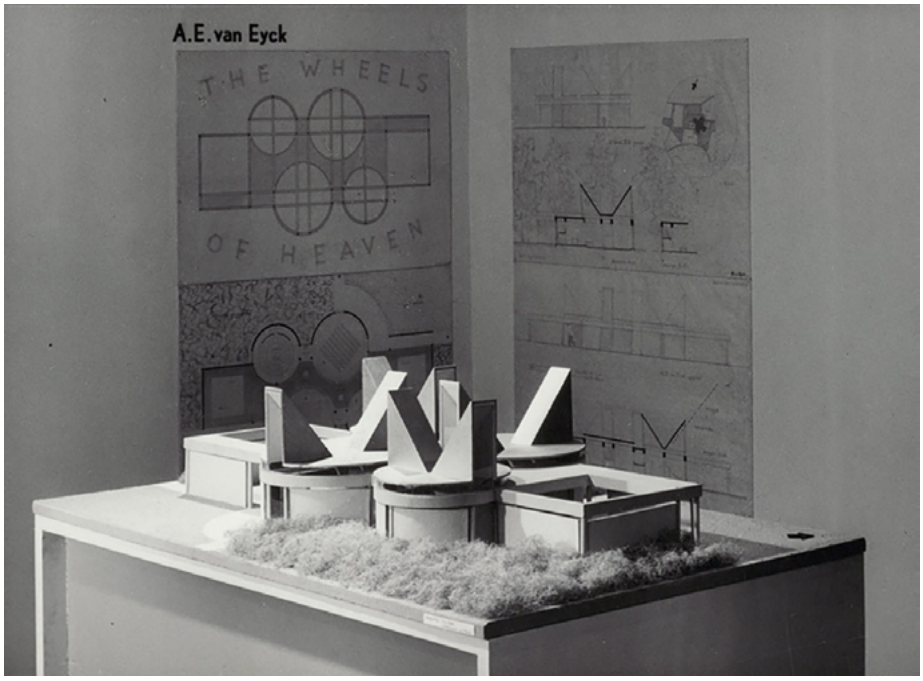
The jury felt that everything in this design had become too much a space for play. In her opinion, the ordinary, everyday, was given much less chance than intended. It is constantly flooded and dominated by this architecture. The visual arts have acted as a catalyst for architectural thought. However, the jury was of the opinion that "the plastic power of the architectural threatens to level the plastic in its own sense" **[Fig. 16]**.[23] His project shows that Van Roojen made a pattern for the floor design and that Visser made some sculptures and had an influence on the general appearance of the "altar" that certainly was an impressive feature of his proposal. Also, the kaleidoscopic drawings were interesting and showed his interest for a structuralist approach. Vriend, writing for the progressive weekly *De Groene Amsterdammer*, was sceptical about the possibilities of creating something new in light of the complexities of the times. He was, however, of the opinion that 'despite all the (enormous) differences of opinion, the six designs have one thing in common: a complete break with all traditional and routine notions. The designs primarily do not aim at an aesthetically "successful" design but at breaking open into a new world of thought'. He was especially critical about the design of Boon. He wrote: "I really cannot take Boon's plan seriously as it is all too dominated by the influences of modern sculpture (Carel Visser). He clearly shows that his origin from the *Forum* group sticks annoyingly to his work".[24] As a sort of explanation for his design Boon had written a poem that was ridiculed by Vriend, and not only by him. After the completion of the competition Boon would keep on working on his plan that

22 "Zes architecten praten en denken over kerk en maken ontwerp," *Het Vrije Volk*, April 28, 1964.

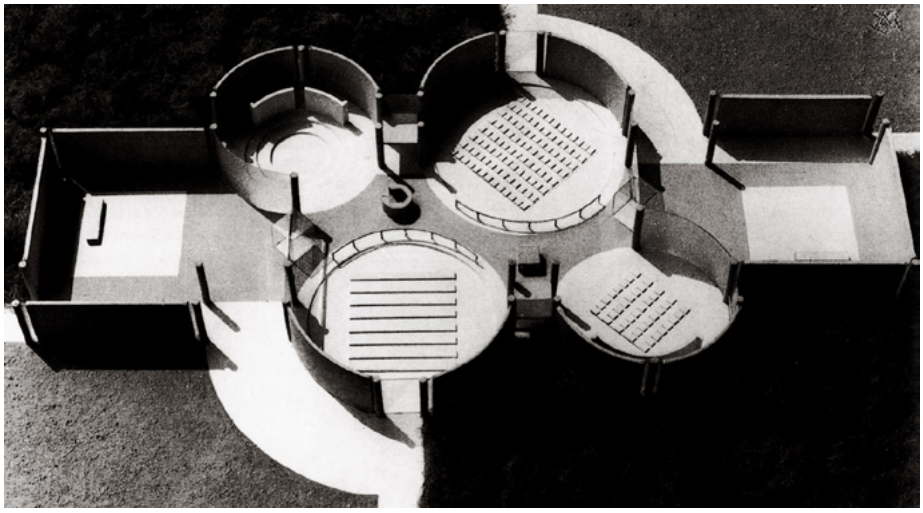
23 "Zes architecten praten en denken over kerk en maken ontwerp".

24 J.J. Vriend, "Vis-à-vis – een kerk in ontwerp," *De Groene Amsterdammer*, May 2, 1964.

Fig. 16
Drawing of the plan of the project of Boon (source: Nieuwe Instituut di Rotterdam – NI, Archive Boon).




17



18

was, however, never executed.[25] Later in his life he would complain: "We have them, thousands of plans, on paper, cupboards full, all of which failed. There is always some reason or other, or endless deliberations, or wanting too much; it's called unfeasible".[26]

Van Eyck, the oldest of the invited architects but the one with the most prestige, who was born in Driebergen named his project poetically The Wheels of Heaven **[Fig. 17]**. It was never executed. Nevertheless, the design has had a major influence on the evolution of Dutch church building. This time Van Eyck had not chosen for a strong configurative ground plan like in the case of the Orphanage in Amsterdam. The design of his church consists of a rectangle with bulging circles on all four corners of 12.5 and 10 meters in diameter respectively. The different circles had their own atmosphere and could be used for

Fig. 17
Photo of the section of Van Eyck in the exhibition (source: Nieuwe Instituut di Rotterdam – NI, Archive Blijstra).

Fig. 18
Photo of the model of the project of Van Eyck, without the roof (source: Nieuwe Instituut di Rotterdam – NI, Archive Blijstra).

25 See: Hans Ibelings, *Gert Boon* (Amsterdam/Montreal: The Architecture Observer, 2013), 30-32.

26 www.somewhereiwouldliketolive.con/2015/10/gert-boon.html (Last view August 2024).

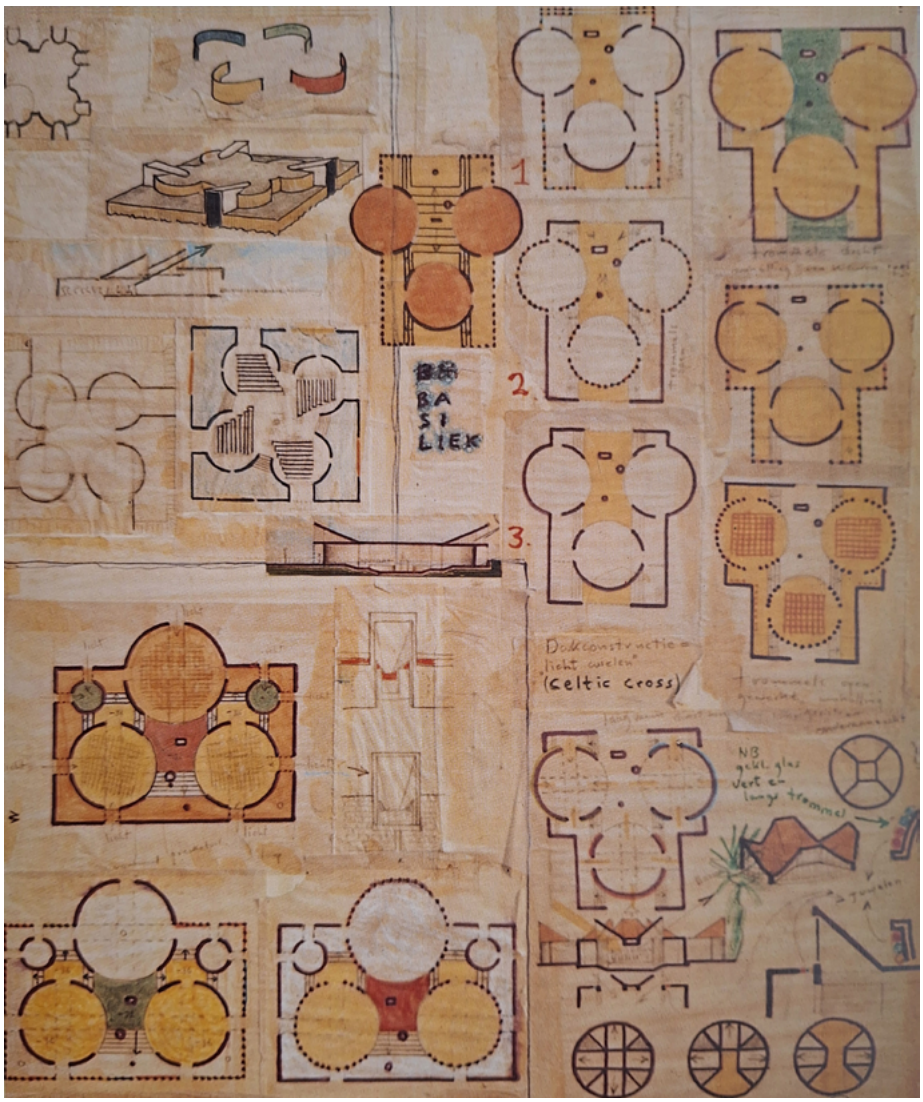
various meetings. Skylights illuminate the circles. From below this gave the image of four gears interlocking, hence the name Wheels of Heaven. On the floor plan there is a 'road' between these 'wheels', which connects the building from door to door and continues into the park on both sides. The two gaps between the "way" and the "wheels" give space to the two liturgical focal points: a place for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (commemorating Christ's Last Supper) and a place for the sermon **[Fig. 18]**.

Van Eyck's design ensures that there are various points in the church on which attention can be focused. Depending on the seat, each visitor would experience the space or church service in their own way. Van Eyck had written a poetic text explaining his design. He had created a place where during the weekdays only a few churchgoers could worship and on Sunday a couple of hundreds, a 'space, in which takes shape, what is available in space of faith and unbelief, sin and grace, doubt and hope'.[27] His proposal gave way for Van Eyck to think about, what he called, twin phenomena "as inside-outside, open-closed, far-near, alone-together".[28] The project illustrated how that could be achieved. Important to understand Van Eyck is to know that his father was a well-known poet and later professor of Dutch language and literature in Leiden. Aldo had received his education in England and spent the wartime in Switzerland were he became friends with art historian Sigfried Giedion and his wife. There he became acquainted with modern abstract art that highly influence him. The way that he explained architecture was always in a poetic way with much attention for the values of abstract art. The explanation of his project reveals this in a clear manner. It was an opportunity to illustrate how his poetry could be used to empower the spiritual qualities of his project. For Van Eyck horizontal movement was fundamental for understanding his project that in crux was a place of transition, a "doorgangshuis" (House of Transition), as it was called in the report of the jury, where one could be alone or together with others. In the projects of the other invited architects it had become a moment of stasis and reflection, only Hertzberger had translated the concept of elevation and freedom of positioning oneself on a chosen level, but in a vertical way. A comparison of the plans of the different competitors show that the relation with the world has been dealt with in different ways.

Whereas almost all contenders had chosen to design a central space with smaller rooms, or stairs woven around it, Van Eyck was the only one who propose a totally different scheme, in which one moves through the church. He had taken the liberty in interpreting lyrically the wishes of the foundation. In contrast to Van Stigt, Verhoeven and Jelles, who had all made proposals in which there is no place for doubt, no uncertainty, Van Eyck had opted for a completely different solution. Already in his text he envisioned his attempt to break down

27 Quoted in: Francis Strauven, *Aldo van Eyck. The Shape of Relativity* (Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura, 1998), 487.

28 Vincent Ligtelijn and Francis Strauven, eds., *Aldo van Eyck. Collected Articles and Other Writings 1947-1998* (Nijmegen: SUN, 2008), 476.




hierarchies and to give the visitors different choices. Between tall trees of cylindrical concrete columns; between these, screen-like walls and low over column and wall, a frame work of concrete beams spanning horizontally and carrying four circular skylight structures, the configuration of which seen from below, he named “The Wheels of Heaven”, a potent metaphor with both religious and secular connotations, that is evoked by the ground plan, that Van Eyck drew multiple times in his presentation drawings. The four circles together have two points of focus. They are situated in the undulating “path” which passes through the entire building from door to door and beyond through the courts into the park and which seem to be dictated by the cover of the regulations of the competition. One “encounters” two essentially ambivalent places: one for the sacrament of Lord’s Supper, the other for the spoken word. As to the complex diagonality, he thinks it assists the idea of multi-centrality. The seating arrangement (only a suggestion) exploits the various implicit directions such that each person may experience the same space in a different way according to which group he chooses – including proximity, according to individual inclination, accentuating the personal power of decision. Where the diagonals cross there is, for once just space! One of the circles is amphitheatrical; it can be used for small

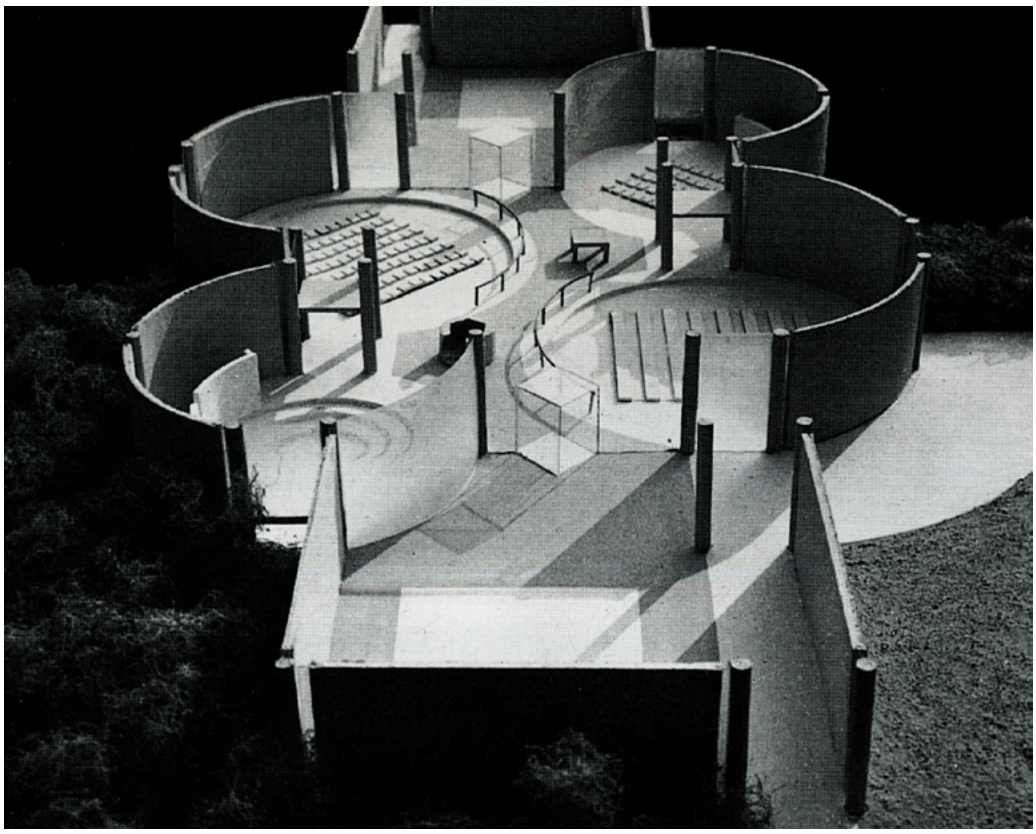
Fig. 19
Panel with the drawings of the ground plan of the project of Van Eyck

gatherings during wedding days, baptisms, marriages or choir. The other three circumscribe mildly without asserting their centres. The chapel opens upwards suddenly different directions taking in the treetops but also downwards here and then towards the soil. In-between it tends in-wards – churchwards – and is translucent rather than transparent. This is what Van Eyck clarified in his explanation.[29] Already with his evocative language Van Eyck had added something special to his proposal and given power to his design. In a way the core of his proposal consisted of a path that led through the church. With Hertzberger he was the only architect who considered movement as an important issue in the experience of the qualities of the space, as a social phenomenon. Both want, in their own but authentic way, to free themselves from the conventions of the static church but did not arrive at a solution for a new kind of church. One seeks to ascend – the staircase is a characteristic meeting place in all of Hertzberger's work, and the path that, while avoiding obstacles and distractions, must be taken in order to get through to the experience. In the other projects the church has just become an assembly room where one can listen to the sermon, while looking at nature, as in the case of Jelles, or being oriented towards what can happen in the inside space. The lightning in each project is totally different but Van Eyck is the only one that gave it a mystic and mysterious value.

Beyond the entries on two sides and the configuration of the volumetric elements, the simplicity of the proposal of Van Eyck becomes apparent when one studies the many drawings that he made of the project [Fig. 19]. The in fact paradoxical desire for both openness and seclusion of an open church, as the institute clearly imagined itself, was sublimely met by Van Eyck. Four cylinders of different sizes form the core of the building. Light only comes in from the windows in the huge triangular dormers – tree grabbers or squirrel windows as they were poetically called - that give the building its particular and remarkable silhouette [Fig. 20]. In the middle of the diagonal pathway through the building stands the elevation of the pulpit that is clearly visible from each circle. In contrast to the proposals of the other contenders Van Eyck has chosen for a one storey solution. One of his inspiration sources that is acknowledged on one of the colourful competition panels is the basilica. This was considered as the archetype for such buildings of faith. The Wheels of Heaven project can be regarded as an illustration of that what Van Eyck will shortly later call "labyrinthine clarity". This should not be confused with what the American architect Robert Venturi was pleading for, namely contradiction and complexity. In his famous book, published in 1966, he criticises the idealisation of the primitive and the elementary, in addition to the favouring of simplicity over diversity. With his project Van Eyck had already given an alternative to this view. This alternative can also be considered as a critique of the orthodox architecture of the modernists of the previous generation. As the art historian István Szénássy wrote, the use of round forms was still in an early stage.[30] He was afraid that too much liberty with the round

29 Vincent Ligtelijn, ed., *Aldo van Eyck, Works* (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1999), 122.

30 István Szénássy, *Architectuur in Nederland, 1960/1967* (Amsterdam: Scheltema & Holkema, 1969), 148.



20

line could lead to a fashionable mannerism. This was the case with some Italian architects like Paolo Portoghesi or Marcello d'Olivo, but Van Eyck was capable of integrating the circle or the circle segment in his architectonic language.

In his piece in the daily newspaper *De Tijd – Maasbode* the architecture reviewer discussed the different projects and concluded:

> "The last word has not yet been spoken about the architectural problems. One can only admire the love and dedication with which the architects have devoted themselves to the subject. A church for the ecumenical community is growing and that is a great profit, because these churches could have been designed within a catholic context. One is looking for a primal church".[31]

The architects had on the one hand sought for new forms but on the other, and more important, they were also looking for a way to change the relationship between the clergy and the dedicated visitors who would be in search for a closer connexion between the church and the world.

Shortly after the exhibition in Amsterdam the magazine *Bouw*, published among other by the building industries and the Bouwcentrum (Building Centre) in Rotterdam, where the exhibition would be held in November later that year printed a severe critique by the architect Anne Buffinga (1929-1969). His article "Impulsen voor kerkbouw" (Impulses for church building) intended to be a contri-

Fig. 20
Photo of the model of the project of Van Eyck, with roof (source: Nieuwe Instituut di Rotterdam – NI, Archive Blijstra).

31 Marius van Beek, "«Vis-à-vis». Boeiende tentoonstelling over de hedendaagse kerkbouw in het Stedelijk Museum te Amsterdam," *De Tijd - Maasbode*, May 16, 1964.

bution to the discussion on church building and took the exhibition not as a point of departure but as the conclusion of his reflections on the topic. He started with a discussion of different modern churches in which the chapel of Ronchamp of Le Corbusier remained a point of reference. He spoke very highly of this chapel. According to him Le Corbusier "had succeeded in finding an expressive form for a church building without leaning against traditional, accepted forms". Lesser positive he was about the proposals of the architects for the competition in Driebergen to which he only dedicated one page of his five-page article. The one of Boon he saw as the result of a "total misunderstanding". "This is just sterile and impotent artistry". "Hertzberger's terraced church would have a place in Baroque or with Frank Lloyd Wright – only more brilliantly. Now it's Spielerei [a Gimmick]". Also of the other projects Buffinga does not speak positively. Jelles had created nothing but an aesthetic grid, Van Stigt a meeting room but not one for a community, Verhoeven conformed to a Calvinistic tradition. Only Van Eyck was considered as an authentic proposal, "he has not taken the liberty of juggling the liturgy but has concentrated on the immediately comprehensible; being together, going to this meeting before God, making the interdependence visible".[32] Clearly Van Eyck hit a sensitive spot in the eyes of Buffinga.

What did the representatives of the Roman Catholics in the Netherlands think about the competition? The mouthpiece of the catholic architects, the *Katholiek Bouwblad*, dedicated attention to the proposals and the exhibition but their optic was different. The engineer V. van Hezik discussed the event. He does not criticize the proposals, but merely repeats the information that was given at the exhibition. He does state that the Roman Catholic world should also think about organizing something like this in order to achieve a renewal in church building. In his view "whoever enters the church 'practices' himself inside, which means: hearing the proclamation and celebration the communion at the table, celebrating the dialogue with the Lord in songs ad prayer". He admitted that a church with a clear door and threshold fits this vision. His opinion distinguishes itself from that of the architects that participated in the competition because they saw the threshold as an in-between that should facilitate the passing from the outside to the inside. A critique of the Catholic church building had already been formulated by the Belgian art critic K.N. Elno who stated provocatively that attention from abroad for Dutch church building was due to a 'rich variety of failures'. He had wondered why renowned modernist architects such as Rietveld, Maaskant or Van Eyck had not designed churches. According to him Dutch Roman Catholic church building was too inward looking.[33]

The outcome of the competition showed a broad range of interpretations of the brief. There is not really a common denominator in the projects. Although for the architects involved in the event the competition had been an crucial experience in clearing their thoughts about the spirituality of architecture and as such

32 A. Buffinga, "Impulsen voor kerkbouw. Bijdrage tot de discussie over hedendaagse kerkbouw naar aanleiding van de tentoonstelling Vis-a-vis," *Bouw*, no. 24 (June 1964): 852. See also the critique in: "Zes architecten praten en denken over kerk en maken ontwerp".

33 K.N. Elno, "Huidige Nederlandse kerkbouw in een Vlaams vizier," *Kunst en religie*, no. 2 (1961): 25-28.

it was a fundamental moment in the history of those architects which would later be considered as exponents of Dutch structuralism, a rather vague term, that tried to define architects whose work showed only some similarities.[34] Some of them, like Jelles and Van Eyck would explore the possibilities of church building further without taking into account any change in the liturgical service. But in general, the repercussions were minimal. The Netherlands were anyways moving towards a more secularized society, in which the churches were losing their political power. They were in crisis. Besides, strictly spoken, the results of the intended collaboration between architect and artist may not have been what the foundation had imagined. Some of the participants had rejected such collaboration from the beginning and entirely, while others were convinced that the architect himself was the principal artist and the beauty of the space could not be enhanced by a collaboration with an artist. Van Eyck profiled himself as an architect-poet who sought to realize beauty by himself. In the 'sculptural' project of Boon the influence of the artist was the most visible. Blom was the only one who fundamentally criticised the position of the church in the world of that moment. The Reformed theologians Hans Blankesteijn and Willem Overbosch, who had both been involved in the competition for the church in Driebergen, had already objected to the location of many new Protestant churches. In their book *A hut to hide in. Churches of now and of Morgen* (1964) they wrote that post-war urban planning had not always worked out well for the location of new churches. Due to the compartmentalized structure of the neighborhoods, the various church denominations had a difficult time to find suitable locations for their new meetinghouses. When different churches were located close to each other, then according to the two theologians that was one cynical symbol of the division between the denominations. Blankesteijn and Overbosch believed that a Protestant church building should adjoin a street or square near homes and a shopping center. [35] In that regard the Church in Driebergen would have been a bad litmus test. However, the event was an important moment in the work of almost all participants even if the impact on the course of church building was relatively marginally. The project of Van Eyck was recommended by many and considered to be the most promising for the questions and desires of the foundation, it never came to execution due to the bankruptcy on the Institution *Kerk en Wereld*. It did, however leave its traces, in his design of the Van Ars Church in the Hague and in the Sonsbeek pavilion in Otterlo in 1965 where circled spaces were conspicuous features that permitted visitors to find privacy in a public space.

34 See: Arnulf Lüchinger, *Structuralism in Architecture and Urban Planning* (Stuttgart: Krämer Verlag, 1980); Wim J.A. van den Heuvel, *Structuralism in Dutch architecture* (Rotterdam 010 Publishers, 1992); Bernhard Denkinger, *Die vergessenen Alternativen. Strukturalismus und brutalistische Erfahrung in der Architektur* (Berlin: Jovis, 2019).

35 Hans R. Blankesteijn and Willem G. Overbosch, *Een hut om in te schuilen. Kerken van nu en morgen* (Baarn: Bosch en Keuning, 1964).

## Bibliography


Bekaert, Geert. *In een of ander huis. Kerkbouw op een keerpunt*. Tielt/Den Haag: Lannoo, 1967, 90-93.

Blankesteijn, Hans R., and Willem G. Overbosch. *Een hut om in te schuilen. Kerken van nu en morgen*. Baarn: Bosch en Keuning, 1964.

Buffinga, A. "Impulsen voor kerkbouw. Bijdrage tot de discussie over hedendaagse kerkbouw naar aanleiding van de tentoonstelling Vis-a-vis," *Bouw*, no. 24 (June 1964): 852.

de Jonge, Sander. "Kerkarchitectuur na 2000. Het ontwikkelen van grensverleggende typologieën vanuit het samenspel tussen liturgie, architectuur en duurzame ontwikkeling." PhD diss., Katholieke Universiteit Brabant, 2002.

"De Kerken zijn niet meer overtuigd van wat ze willen." *Twentsch dagblad Tubantia*, October 31, 1964.

Denkinger, Bernhard. *Die vergessenen Alternativen. Strukturalismus und brutalistische Erfahrung in der Architektur*. Berlin: Jovis, 2019.

Dettingmeijer, Rob. "De kerk uit het midden: van godshuis tot een of ander huis. Het belang van de kerken in de Wederopbouw." *Bulletin KNOB*, no. 1 (2002): 1-15.

"Door andere ogen: enkele persstemmen over Vis à vis." *Katholiek Bouwblad*, no. 31 (1964): 324-325.

Dubois, Marc. "Primal Image of all Architecture. Churches in Belgium and the Netherlands after 1950." In *European Church Architecture, 1950-2000*, edited by Wolfgang Jean Stock. Munich/Berlin/London/New York: Prestel, 2002.

Elno, K.N. "Huidige Nederlandse kerkbouw in een Vlaams vizier." *Kunst en religie*, no. 2 (1961): 25-28.

Ibelings, Hans. *Gert Boon*. Amsterdam/Montreal: The Architecture Observer, 2013, 30-32.

Karl, Fred R. *Joseph Conrad: Three Lives*. New York: Farrar, 1979.

"Kerk is meer schuilhut dan monument." *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, January 23, 1965.

Ligtelijn, Vincent, ed. *Aldo van Eyck, Works*. Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1999.

Ligtelijn, Vincent, and Francis Strauven, eds. *Aldo van Eyck. Collected Articles and Other Writings 1947-1998*. Nijmegen: SUN, 2008, 476.

Lüchinger, Arnulf. *Structuralism in Architecture and Urban Planning*. Stuttgart: Krämer Verlag, 1980.

McCarter, Robert. *Herman Hertzberger*. Rotterdam: NAi010, 2015.

Melchers, Marisa. *Het nieuwe religieuze bouwen. Liturgie, kerk, en stedenbouw*. Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura, 2014.

Oud, Jacobus Johannes Pieter. "Het carnaval der architecten." *De Groene Amsterdammer*, February 10, 1962.

Pehnt Wolfgang, and Hilde Strohl. *Rudolf Schwarz. Architekt einer anderen Moderne*. Ostfildern: Hatje Verlag, 1997.

Steenhuis, Marinke, ed. *Joop van Stigt, architect. Werken vanuit een flexibele structuur 1960-1985*. Amsterdam: SDO, 2014, 24.

Strauven, Francis. *Aldo van Eyck. The Shape of Relativity*. Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura, 1998, 487.

Strauven, Francis. *Pastoor Van Ars Church, The Hague. A timeless sacral space by Aldo van Eyck*. Cologne: Aldo+Hannie van Eijck Stichting, 2022.

Szénássy, István. *Architectuur in Nederland, 1960/1967*. Amsterdam: Scheltema & Holkema, 1969.

Thunnessen, A.W.P. "Bewuste en gewilde onzekerheid." *Katholiek Bouwblad*, no. 31 (1964): 323.

van Beek, Marius. "«Vis-à-vis». Boeiende tentoonstelling over de hedendaagse kerkbouw in het Stedelijk Museum te Amsterdam." *De Tijd - Maasbode*, May 16, 1964.

van den Heuvel, Wim J.A. *Structuralism in Dutch architecture*. Rotterdam 010 Publishers, 1992.

van der Linde, Maarten. *Werkelijk, ik kan alles. Werkers in kerkelijke arbeid in de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk 1945-1966*. Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 1995.

van Oorschot, Annemarie, and José ten Berge-de Fraiture, eds. *Pastoor van Ars, Monument van Aldo van Eyck*. The Hague: Ars Architectuur Comité, 2015.

Vriend, J.J. *Reflexen – Nederlands bouwen na 1945*. Amsterdam: Moussault's, 1959, 152.

Vriend, J.J. "Vis-à-vis – een kerk in ontwerp." *De Groene Amsterdammer*, May 2, 1964.

Wesselink, Herman. "Een sterke toren in het midden der stad: Verleden, heden en toekomst van bedreigde Nederlandse kerkgebouwen." PhD diss., Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2018.

Zahle, Mette, ed., *Jan Verhoeven, 1926-1994. Exponent van het structuralisme*. Rotterdam: Bonas, 2012.

"Zes architecten praten en denken over kerk en maken ontwerp." *Het Vrije Volk*, April 28, 1964.

"Zes 'kerken in ontwerp." *Bouwkundig Weekblad*, no. 15 (1964): 165-179.

**Anna Kloke**

# The Church in the Camouflage of Mass Housing Construction. The Ecumenical Centre of Scharnhorst-Ost in Dortmund

ARTICLE

*Parish Centres, Ecumenism, Urban Development, Large Housing Estate, Second Vatican Council*

**/Abstract**

**Located in the densely populated industrial region of western Germany, the Scharnhorst-Ost Ecumenical Centre is an example of the important social and urban function of parish centres, especially in the newly built social housing estates of the post-war period. Like many of the church buildings erected after the Second Vatican Council and influential Protestant Church Building Conferences such as that in Darmstadt in 1969, Scharnhorst, deliberately eschewed a traditional church building scheme as an expression of the desire for reform. They also decided to build two neighbouring churches as an ecumenical centre, which opened in 1974 after three years of construction. As the focus was to be on diaconal work, great importance was attached to the suitability of the parish centre's architecture for everyday use. The aim was to contribute to the development of social structures in the estate through interfaith life support and a wide range of educational and leisure activities. The new pastoral concept was also to be reflected in the architecture, which was to be designed as an open, low-threshold meeting place for everyone, and also to blend in with the urban context through deliberate simplicity.**

**The Scharnhorst ecumenical community centre is part of a dense network of church buildings in the region, many of which are currently under threat of demolition or closure. Especially in cases such as Scharnhorst, where the conceptual qualities outweigh the directly perceived aesthetic or spiritual qualities, the public communication of the conceptual strengths is important both for the protection of this historical heritage of the region, for the preservation of its urban function, and for the preservation of the socially integrative communities located here.**

**/Author**

**Anna Kloke**
Technical University of Dortmund
anna.kloke@tu-dortmund.de

Anna Kloke has been a research associate at the Chair of History and Theory of Architecture at the Technische Universität Dortmund since 2015. As part of her habilitation, she is currently researching the "Internationale Bauausstellung Emscher Park" (International Building Exhibition Emscher Park) and its director Karl Ganser, supported by a scholarship from the "Stiftung Deutscher Architekten" (Foundation of German Architects).

From 2019 to 2022, she took part in the research project "StadtBautenRuhr". The research project of the Technical University of Dortmund, the Baukunstarchiv NRW (Architecture Archives of North Rhine-Westphalia) and the Museum Folkwang, funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, investigated the contribution of public buildings and churches to the formation of identity in the cities of the Ruhr area and the region as a whole. Anna Kloke received her doctorate from the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Studies at the Bauhaus University Weimar with a thesis on the significance of manifestos in architectural discourse. From 2009 to 2015 she worked as a research assistant and lecturer at Niederrhein University of Applied Sciences. Before completing her Masters in Art and Design at the Universities of Duisburg-Essen and Bochum, she completed a diploma in Interior Design at the University of Applied Sciences Lippe-Höxter. As a member of the Chamber of Architects of North Rhine-Westphalia, Anna Kloke has been working as a freelance planner since 2006.

https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/19590
Copyright © 2024 Anna Kloke

The city of Dortmund is located in the west of Germany. It is part of the Ruhr area, Germany's largest conurbation, which was heavily influenced by the mining and steel industries since the onset of industrialization during the nineteenth century. The industrial plants, their impact on the landscape and the housing estates for the workers have shaped the region – both in terms of appearance and identity [Fig. 1].

Attracted by the prospering industry, many people moved to the Ruhr area. The massive influx had a strong influence on the denominational structure. The regional concentration of Protestants in cities such as Dortmund and Catholics in cities of the former Electorate of Cologne, such as Essen, increasingly broke up. As a further consequence of the economic and social development in the Ruhr area, there was a building boom of churches of both Christian denominations to serve the rapidly growing population, especially from the second half of the 19th century and to a lesser extent after the First World War. The buildings were often made possible by large donations from wealthy companies operating in the Ruhr area. Along with many newly built church-run social institutions, these churches also shaped the appearance of the expanding cities.



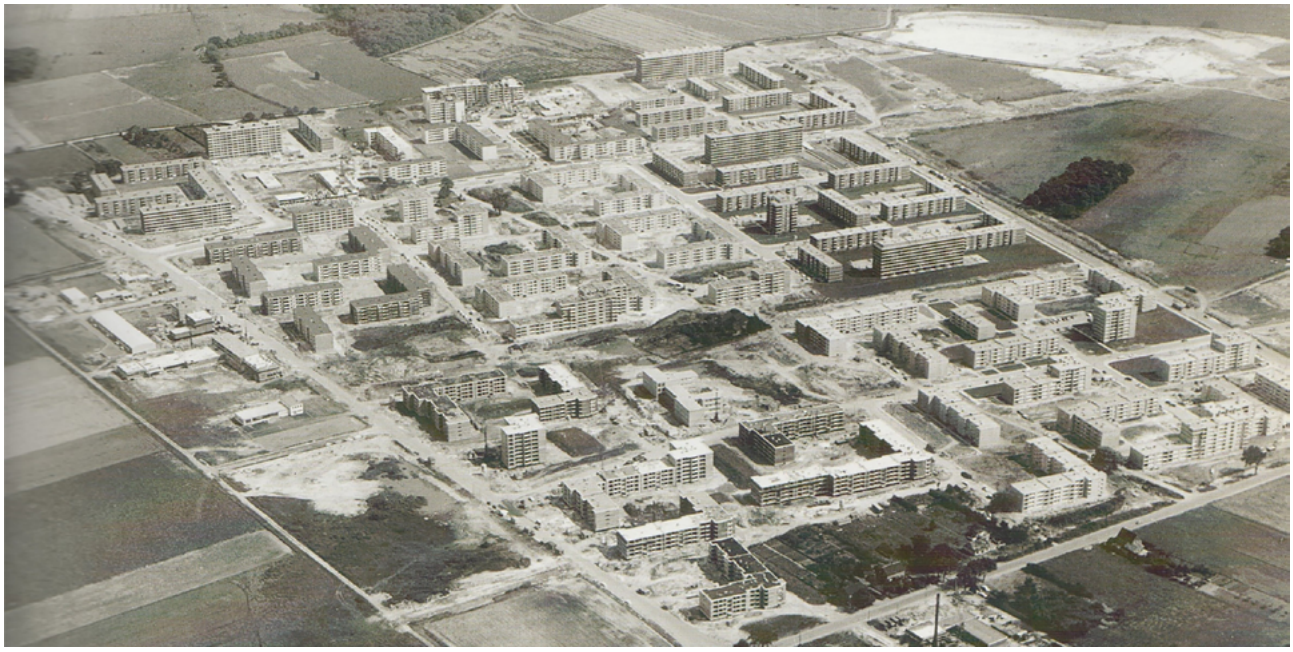

1

After the Second World War the process of confessional mixing continued. There was a resurgence in the building of Christian churches in response to renewed population growth in the Ruhr region.[1] The Bishop of Essen in particular built a large number of so called "Pantoffelkirchen" (slipper churches). Every miner was supposed to have a church in his neighbourhood within walking distance (in slippers).[2] Many of these churches wanted to reflect the renewal

1 However, not only Christian churches were built. Refugees and migrant workers brought other religions with them and built their places of worship.

2 Vera Bücker, *Sakrale Bauten der Industriekultur* (Essen: Regionalverband Ruhr, 2024) https://www.route-industriekultur.ruhr/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2020_TR26_Sakralbauten_RIK.pdf (last accessed December 2024).

Fig. 1
Post Card "Dortmund Scharnhorst", 1942.



movements in the Church, expressed above all in the Second Vatican Council, with the forms and materials of modernity. Today, the Ruhr area has a dense network of these churches, which represent an important (and unfortunately endangered)[3] architectural heritage of the region. This includes the Scharnhorst Ecumenical Centre, not so much for its artistic quality as for its conceptual strength and its power to bear witness to the reform movements in church and society of the 1960s and 1970s.



## A Satellite Town to Combat the Housing Shortage in Dortmund

In 1871, the Scharnhorst colliery was opened to the north-east of the city of Dortmund, in an area that had previously been rural. Over time, various housing estates were built around the colliery. The new "Scharnhorst" district was created, named after the mine. Particularly in the post-war period, the (still) expanding coal and steel industries attracted workers from Germany and abroad to Dortmund. Displaced people also sought accommodation in the city, which was still being rebuilt after the air raids of the war. Between 1965 and 1972, in response to the severe housing shortage in Scharnhorst and the surrounding area, the non-profit housing association *Neue Heimat* built the satellite town Scharnhorst-Ost according to the standards of functional urban development [Fig. 2].[4] With more than 5,000 homes planned for around 20,000 people, Scharnhorst-Ost was one of the largest housing projects in West Germany.

When four young Franciscan friars moved to the site at Easter 1968 to found a

3 Kim de Wildt, "Transformations of 'Sacredness in Stone': Religious Architecture in Urban Space in 21st Century Germany – New Perspectives in the Study of Religious Architecture," *Religions* 10, no. 11 (October 2019): 602, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10110602. See also: "invisibilis – der Kirchenwiederfinder," https://www.moderne-regional.de/listing-category/kirchen/ (last accessed December 2024).

4 *Neue Heimat* (1926-1990) was a non-profit German construction and housing company based in Hamburg and owned by the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB). It was the leading developer of large-scale projects and built several large housing estates in the 1960s and 1970s.

Fig. 2
Satellite town "Scharnhorst-Ost", 1968 (© Archiv Dogewo21)

parish, there were neither social infrastructure nor shops. Although 5000 people already lived in Scharnhorst-Ost, there was not even a post box. Public transport to Dortmund city centre, 10 kilometers away, was inadequate. A supply centre, including the two major churches, was still being planned. The social structure of the new settlement was difficult. Housing benefit recipients lived in 85 per cent of the households and 46 per cent of the first residents were under 15 years old. There were still no spaces for social gatherings. The lack of festivities and events reflected the lack of traditions in a settlement that had been created on a drawing board.

## Pastorate Plans on a Scientific Basis for the Secular City

The Franciscans quickly identified anonymity and isolation as the main problems of the settlement. In 1965, Harvey Cox published his highly regarded work "The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective", in which he described the role of the Church in the secular city as "the diakonos of the city, the servant who bends over backwards to fight for its wholeness and health"[5]. Taking their cue from Harvey Cox, the friars decided that their main task in Scharnhorst-Ost should also be diakonia. So, they moved into the newly built flats themselves, to live next door to the residents and make contact with them, offering social advice and practical help. According to the motto "a church community is not built from the altar"[6], a small community grew without any specific architecture.

The friars reflected on what the structure of the congregation and the ministry to the community in the satellite city should look like in the future. In the course of the increasing scientificisation of the social and the associated socio-political rise of the social sciences in the 1960s and 1970s, including the field of theology, they commissioned the "Wuppertal Institute for Communication Research" (IFK) to carry out a situation analysis.[7] The aim was to create a model for church work in the structural area of metropolitan satellite settlements and to gain starting points for a more systematic and methodically effective pastoral care.[8] The IFK first conducted a survey of the Catholics living there, asking them about their daily life on the estate, their needs and their expectations of the Church as an institution. The results[9] showed that although 75 per cent of respondents

5 Harvey Cox, "The Church as God´s avant-garde," in *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* ed. Harvey Cox (Princeton: University Press, 2013), 148-176: 159.

6 Josef Scharrer, "Die Dienste der Gemeinde," in *Wer mitmacht, erlebt Gemeinde. Modell Dortmund-Scharnhorst. Eine Zwischenbilanz*, ed. Petrus Görges, Reinhard Kellerhoff, Clemens Weber and Werenfried Wessel(Limburg: Lahn-Verlag, 1972), 89-122: 113.

7 See also: Lutz Raphael, "Zwischen Sozialaufklärung und radikalem Ordnungsdenken Die Verwissenschaftlichung des Sozialen im Europa der ideologischen Extreme," in *Europäische Wissenschaftskulturen und politische Ordnungen in der Moderne* (1890-1970), ed. Gangolf Hübinger (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014), 29-50: 48; Benjamin Ziemann, *Katholische Kirche und Sozialwissenschaften 1945-1975* (Göttingen Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011).

8 Josef Scharrer, "Von der Analyse zum Pastoratsplan," in *Wer mitmacht, erlebt Gemeinde. Modell Dortmund-Scharnhorst. Eine Zwischenbilanz*, ed. Petrus Görges, Reinhard Kellerhoff, Clemens Weber and Werenfried Wessel (Limburg: Lahn-Verlag, 1972), 23-39, 23.

9 The following figures from the study are taken from: Scharrer, "Von der Analyse zum Pastoratsplan," 23-39.

had improved their living conditions by moving to Scharnhorst-Ost, only 26 per cent had "normal contacts" in their new environment. 83% rated the leisure value of the neighborhood as low or very low. Scharnhorst-Ost was seen as a purely functional neighborhood. Of those surveyed, 73 per cent expected the church to provide contact visits, pastoral care and support in everyday life, but only 33 per cent wanted to attend worship services. As the survey showed, there was great distrust of the Church as an institution among the residents. Despite this, 50 per cent wanted to be involved in the church community.

Based on the comprehensive study, a pastoral plan was developed with the priority of salvation ministry.[10] The aim was to mobilize people to understand, connect and serve one another. The plan also provided for equal rights for clergy, a high degree of co-determination for the parish council, the formation of working groups that would act as independently as possible, and a comprehensive information and communication policy. A few months later, representatives of the Lutheran Church moved to Scharnhorst. They too wanted to establish a new kind of church community in the satellite town. In 1970, in an article entitled *The church has healing structures. The Scharnhorst Experiment*, they described their church work as democratically organized and consumer-critical help for self-help. Accordingly, they wanted their church to be an open and low-threshold meeting place for the structurally weak neighborhood.[11]

## The Scharnhorst Model: Living Ecumenism as a Joint Effort for the Neighborhood

United by their common ideal of community work and faced with the precarious situation on the ground, the two denominations decided to take joint responsibility for the people in their neighborhood in a living ecumenism.[12] Together they lobbied politically for improvements in infrastructure, provided information about services and developments in the area, offered social services themselves, initiated leisure activities for families and organized neighborhood festivals. In this way, they took on a kind of substitute function for the municipality. Finally, two small pavilions were set up as a kind of interim church.

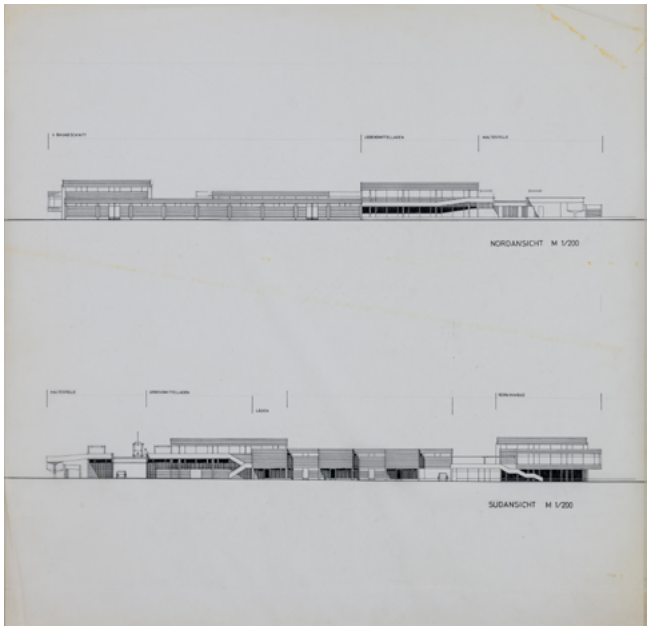
As time went on, not only did the church communities grow, but so did the pressure to build the supply centre, including the churches. In 1967, the city of Dortmund and the *Neue Heimat* housing association organized a competition for the general planning. The local architects Ulrich Gastreich, Mechtild Gastreich-Moritz and Richard Riepe won the competition **[Fig. 3, 4]**. They had already made a name for themselves with a number of Catholic churches and public buildings in the post-war modernist style, and were now awarded the contract for the Scharnhorst Supply Centre. Its construction finally began in 1971.

---

10 Scharrer, "Von der Analyse zum Pastoratsplan," 32 ff.

11 Hans-Albrecht Pflästerer, "Gemeinde hat heilende Strukturen. Das Experiment Neuscharnhorst," *Unsere Kirche. Wochenzeitung der Evangelischen Kirche von Westfalen und der Lippischen Landeskirche*, no. 17 (1971): 6-7.

12 Scharrer, "Die Dienste der Gemeinde," 119.







3 4

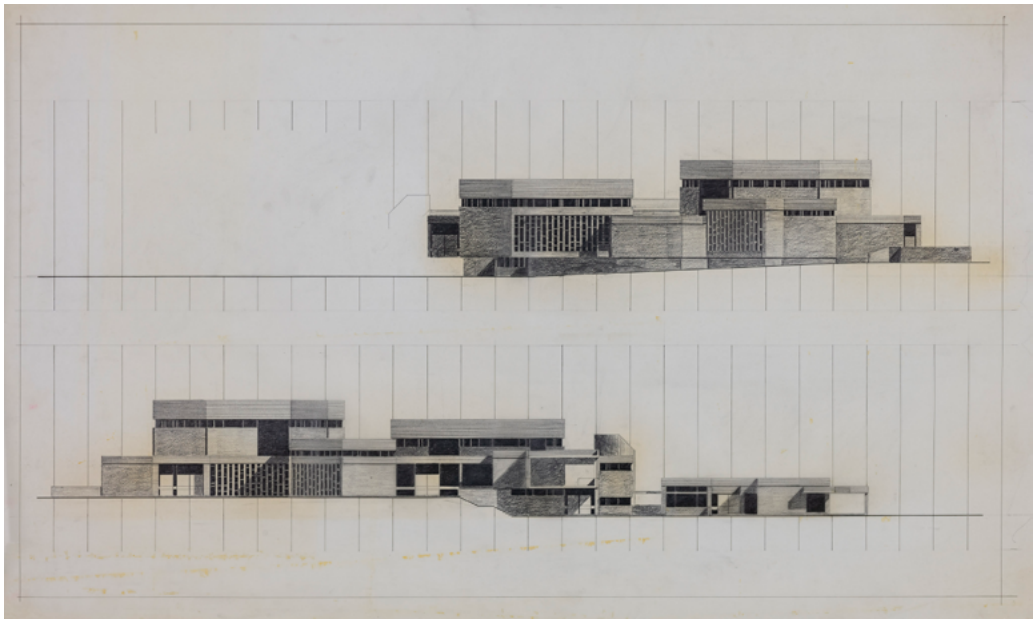
## The Design of the Ecumenical Centre of "Scharnhorst-Ost"

Due to the size and importance of the Scharnhorst-Ost project, the city made special efforts to develop principles for a uniform design of the entire project. For this reason, a design statute was drawn up for Scharnhorst, stipulating that the shopping centre, the bank, the comprehensive school and the churches must form a design unit.[13] This meant that every (new) building had to relate to the neighborhood. The statute only allowed for flat roofs and exterior walls made of scratched plaster or large-format panels of exposed aggregate concrete or artificial stone. In addition, roof cornices, cornice bands, plinths, loggias and balcony parapets had to be made of artificial stone or exposed aggregate concrete. As an expression of modernity or state neutrality, it was decided not to give the church a special position in the cityscape, thus breaking with the traditional European cityscape. Both congregations were to instruct their architects to observe the general design guidelines. They were also contractually obliged not to fence in their properties and to make them accessible to the people of Scharnhorst. With these guidelines, the city preached to the converted, since subordination to the urban planning and design context corresponded to the congregations' idea of becoming one with their surroundings and of not assuming a special role according to the traditional understanding of church and city. They wanted to break up traditional power and leadership structures and work side by side with the newly established urban social institutions in the neighborhood. Both congregations deliberately chose not to follow the traditional canon of church architecture. Wrapped in the camouflage of mass housing construction, their aim was to meet the residents on an equal footing and to reduce the fear of thresholds.

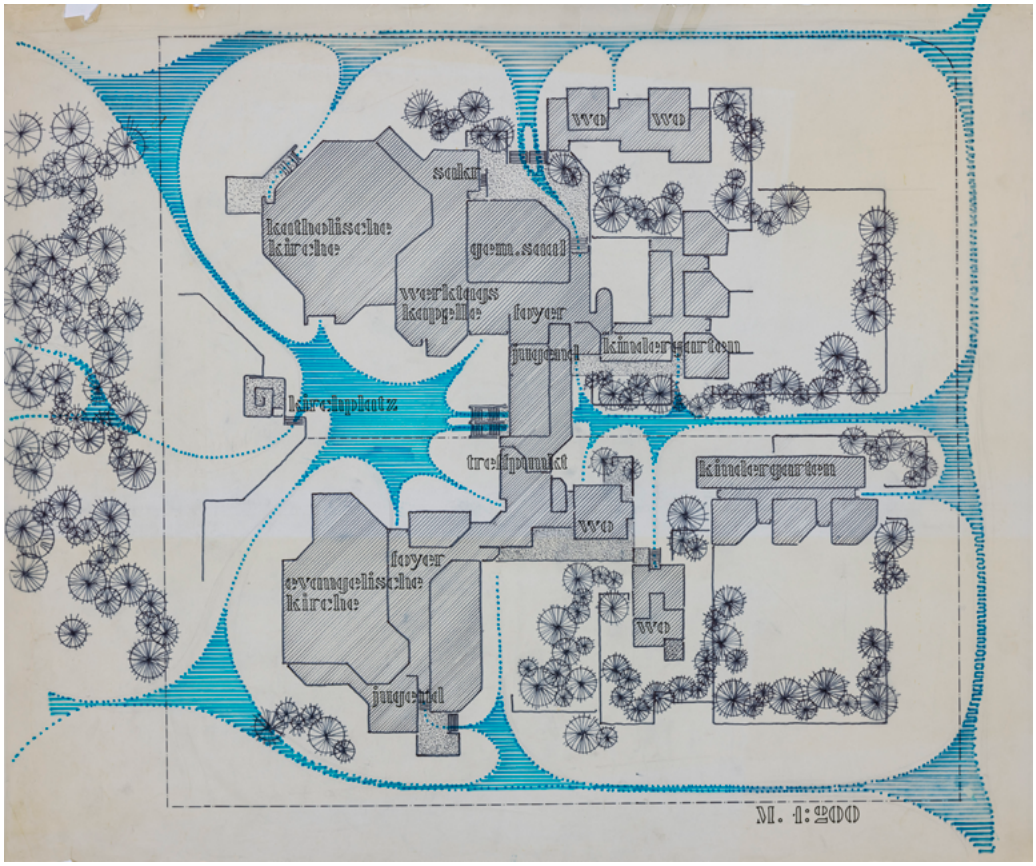
13 Many of the files relating to the competition and the construction of the Scharnhorst housing estate and the Scharnhorst district centre are kept in the Dortmund City Archives. The design statutes can be found here: Stadtarchiv Dortmund, Akte 123/01 Lfd. Nr. 126.

Fig. 3
Ulrich Gastreich, Mechtild Gastreich-Moritz and Richard Riepe, Supply Centre Scharnhorst (Zentrum Dortmund Scharnhorst), undated, North and South elevations (© Baukunstarchiv NRW Dortmund).

Fig. 4
Ulrich Gastreich, Mechtild Gastreich-Moritz and Richard Riepe: Supply Centre Scharnhorst (Zentrum Dortmund Scharnhorst) including the Ecumenical Centre Scharnhorst, undated, plan (© Baukunstarchiv NRW Dortmund).



5




6

The two parishes also decided to commission the local architects Gastreich, Gastreich-Moritz and Riepe, who thus had a wide-ranging opportunity to design Scharnhorst. Buoyed by the ecclesiastical reform of the 1960s and the Second Vatican Council, the congregations worked with the architects to develop open, low-threshold meeting places for the neighborhood. On the basis of their good cooperation for Scharnhorst, they initially planned to share a house, including the worship room.

In the second planning phase, two parishes were designed, structurally linked

Fig. 5
Ulrich Gastreich, Mechtild Gastreich-Moritz and Richard Riepe, Ecumenical Centre, Scharnhorst, undated, elevations (© Baukunstarchiv NRW Dortmund).

Fig. 6
Ulrich Gastreich, Mechtild Gastreich-Moritz and Richard Riepe: Ecumenical Centre Scharnhorst, undated, planimetry (© Baukunstarchiv NRW Dortmund).





by a common meeting place. As can be seen in the design drawing, even the childcare facilities were already separated according to denomination [Fig. 5]. However, the representatives of the diocese and the regional church were unable to agree on even this small common framework. As a result, two completely separate community centres were finally built, which nevertheless form a single design unit. The division into two parts can be seen in a photograph taken at the time of construction [Fig. 7]. To the right of the staircase in the centre of the picture is the Catholic part with a raised sanctuary, the three-storey rectory and the kindergarten building in front of it. To the left of the staircase is the Protestant part with a kindergarten in front.

Using the village square as a model, the architects arranged the individual service areas of the parishes around a central main square and lower side squares [Fig. 8]. In addition to the worship areas, the spatial program includes community halls, youth and elderly centres, social counselling centres, a library, kindergartens, a restaurant, a one-world-shop and a second-hand-shop. This spatial program is reflected in individual, interconnected cubatures, designed as one- to three-storey flat-roofed buildings. By dividing the volumes of the architecture in this way, separate addresses are created for the respective "meeting points". Together with the low building heights, this division also generates a human scale in relation to the surrounding area. The square opens up to the municipal facilities on the west side, such as the citizens' office, the library and the indoor swimming pool. Well integrated into the urban fabric, the square provides a link between the shopping centre and the residential area, which is why it attracts a lot of public traffic.

Residents crossing the church square on their way to the supply center should perceive their neighborhood as a single unit. This impression is also conveyed by a photo from the construction period, which shows the facades of the Ecumenical Centre clad in the simple panel material that was common in the area [Fig. 9]. The windows and doors are also made of the same white plastic material as the surrounding houses. A Parish Centre with (largely) the same façade, the same simple windows and doors as its own block creates a sense of unity, but also breaks with familiar images and helps to create new ones. In this photo, only the sacred space of the Catholic Parish stands out, with a row of small windows and an octagonal structure clad in sheet metal.

Fig. 7
Ecumenical Centre Scharnhorst, undated (© Baukunstarchiv NRW Dortmund).



8

Fig. 8
Satellite image of Scharnhorst-Ost, 2024.
Centre: Ecumenical centre of Scharnhorst around a common forecourt; Catholic parish in the north with an octagonal dome, next to it the detached rectory and the Catholic kindergarten with a (newly covered) blue-grey roof; Protestant parish in the south of the forecourt with a detached Protestant kindergarten. Bilder © 2024 Google, Bilder © 2024 Airbus, GeoBAsis DE/BKG, Maxar Technologies, Kartendaten © 2024 GeoBasis DE/BKG (©2009), https://www.google.com/maps/place/Scharnhorst-Ost,+Dortmund-Scharnhorst/@51.5519799,7.5458388,119mdata=!3m1!1e3!4m6!3m5!1s0x47b911145765a2d7:0xa38c6ac73823eaa2!8m2!3d51.5537616!4d7.5555914!16s%2Fg%2F11b7481gt9?entry=ttu&g_ep=EgoyMDI0MDkyOS4wIKXMDSoASAFQAw%3D%3D
(last access October 2024).

9



10




Fig. 9
Catholic Parish Centre St. Francis with the octogonal dome of the sanctuary, Ecumenical Centre Scharnhorst, undated (© Baukunstarchiv NRW Dortmund).

Fig. 10
Entrance to the Catholic Parish St. Francis and the restaurant "Am Brunnen", 2021 (© Detlef Podehl/ Technical University of Dortmund).



## The Catholic St. Francis Parish

The otherwise ubiquitous demonstration of simplicity and equivalence with the surroundings culminates in the "portal" of the Catholic St. Francis community **[Fig. 10]**. Above the glass door system, framed in white plastic, is a large, much-needed sign indicating the use behind it. The sign defines the two equivalent entrance options: To the left is the parish centre *Katholisches Franziskus Zentrum* with its sacred space. To the right is the restaurant *Am Brunnen*, which also belongs to the church community. In the middle of the sign is a crown, the logo of the local brewery.

This design concept of simplicity and proximity to the people continues inside. As one of the earliest examples of an ecumenical centre in the region, Scharnhorst was deliberately designed as a unit. However, there are two unequal twins, especially inside. The Franciscans wanted their church interior to have a "festive but not pompous or exclusively sacred character"[14]. First one enters a furnished vestibule that doubles as a meeting place **[Fig. 11]**. The doors leading off from this do not distinguish between the entrance to the sacred space and other rooms.[15] The sacred space of the Catholic parish has a polygonal floor plan and is clearly orientated towards the chancel **[Fig. 12, 13]**. The apse of the chancel is marked by an octagonal shape and an octagonal dome. The rough exposed concrete walls are framed by floor-to-ceiling windows at the corners and a

14 Josef Scharrer, "Kommunikation und Gemeinde," in *Wer mitmacht, erlebt Gemeinde. Modell Dortmund-Scharnhorst. Eine Zwischenbilanz*, ed. Petrus Görges, Reinhard Kellerhoff, Clemens Weber and Werenfried Wessel (Limburg: Lahn-Verlag, 1972), 63-88, 87.

15 The ceiling opening in the entrance area seen in the current photos and the stained glass in the doors were only added later and were not originally intended.

Fig. 11
The vestibule of the Catholic Parish St. Francis, 2021 (© Detlef Podehl/ Technical University of Dortmund).



12



13

continuous band of windows, making the ceiling appear to float. The geometric pattern of the exposed concrete beams is striking. Typical of a church built in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the aim was to create flexible and multifunctional spaces. As a result, the worship area has loose seating and can be opened up to the adjoining rooms. The interior, which was originally less ornate, has been partially adapted.

Over time, the original clear-glass windows have been replaced with stained-glass, artistically designed wall sconces have been installed and various devotional objects have been placed. In addition, the original altar table of simple block elements was replaced by an artistically designed wooden table. The intentional leveling of the floor was cancelled out by the subsequent raising of the area immediately around the altar **[Fig. 14]**. This reveals a recurring

Fig. 12, 13
The church room of the Catholic Parish St. Francis, 2021 (© Detlef Podehl/ Technical University of Dortmund).




conflict between the Catholic parishioners and the conceptual profanity of the interior and exterior design. Feelings of lack of legibility, dignity and spirituality led to these "improvements" through architectural semantic cues with the aim of re-sacralisation.[16]

## The Protestant Shalom Parish

As with the Catholic St Francis Parish, a simple glass door system leads into the Protestant Shalom Parish **[Fig. 15]**. Again, there is an anteroom with seating for informal meetings **[Fig. 16]**. One of the similarly designed doors leads into the worship area, which is much less organised and simpler than the Catholic one.

The non-directional, almost unadorned room has no clear basic geometric shape and has no fixed choir **[Fig. 17, 18]**. It also has loose seating and can be divided by folding walls. The altar is a simple wooden table that can be positioned as required. On one of the whitewashed walls hangs a simple wooden cross, left over from the interim church. There are no stained-glass windows. A striking feature are the exposed tubular radiators in front of the floor-to-ceiling windows. The Protestant worship space clearly reflects the demands of the 1969 Protestant Church Building Conference in Darmstadt, such as profanity rather than

16 A deliberate break with the design line right from the start can be found in the Restaurant Am Brunnen. Here, a historic-looking indoor fountain, half-timbering and murals create a cozy atmosphere. Wall paintings with impressions of Assisi are a reference to the patron saint.
Such a tendency towards the re-sacralisation of deliberately simply designed multi-purpose church rooms was identified as early as 1981 by the Institut für Kirchenbau und kirchliche Kunst der Gegenwart (Institute for Church Construction and Church Art of the Present) at the University of Marburg in a study of 17 community centres with multi-purpose rooms over a period of several years. In all of the community centres, attempts were made to "enhance" the rooms through artistic design, the use of valuable materials and the display of devotional objects, or to place them back into a clearer context of use by fixing the altar, pulpit and baptismal font. See: Martin Görbing, Hans Graß and Horst Schwebel, eds., *Planen-Bauen-Nutzen. Erfahrungen mit Gemeindezentren* (Giessen: Wilhelm Schmitz, 1981).

Fig. 14
The church room of the Catholic Parish St. Francis, undated (© Baukunstarchiv NRW).



15



16



17



18

Fig. 15
The Protestant Parish, 2021 (© Detlef Podehl/ Technical University of Dortmund).

Fig. 16
The vestibule of the Protestant Parish, 2021 (© Detlef Podehl/ Technical University of Dortmund).

Fig. 17, 18
The church room of the Protestant Parish, 2021 (© Detlef Podehl/ Technical University of Dortmund).





19 20

sacredness, service rather than representation, worldliness rather than detachment from the world.

In the early years, visitors would ask if it was really a church. Even today, despite many adaptations, especially on the Catholic side, few weddings take place there. In an interview with the author on 24 February 2021 in Dortmund-Scharnhorst, Pastor Reinhard Bürger reported that most couples choose a historic church in the neighbouring district. This shows that the understanding and acceptance of this conscious simplicity is not particularly well developed and needs to be communicated.

## Scharnhorst compared to other Ecumenical centres built in the 1970s

In line with an increased focus on diaconia, many churches in West Germany in the 1970s were designed as low-threshold parish centres.[17] As in Scharnhorst, this was particularly the case in urban expansion areas, where strong population growth created a need for new places of worship. Encouraged by the Second Vatican Council and the Ecumenical movement, some of these new church buildings were built as Ecumenical centres.[18] If we look at examples built in the 1970s in West Germany in the context of urban expansion, such as the *Gemeinsame Kirchenzentrum Meschede*[19], the *Gemeinsame Kirchenzentrum*

Fig. 19
Satellite image "Ökumenisches Gemeindezentrum Scharnhorst", 2024.
Bilder © 2024 Google, Bilder © 2024 Airbus, GeoBAsis DE/BKG, Maxar Technologies, Kartendaten © 2024 GeoBasis DE/BKG (©2009), https://www.google.com/maps/search/Ökumenisches+Gemeindezentrum+Scharnhorst/@51.552028,7.5452078,161m/data=!3m1!1e3?entry=ttu&g_ep=EgoyMDI0MDkyOS4wIKXMDSoASAFQAw%3D%3D (last access December 2024).

Fig. 20
Satellite image „Gemeinsames Kirchenzentrum Meschede", 2024.
Bilder © 2024 GeoBAsis DE/BKG, Maxar Technologies, Kartendaten © 2024 Google, GeoBasis DE/BKG (©2009), https://www.google.com/maps/place/Kath.+KiTa+St.+Franziskus/@51.3626951,8.2916214,88m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m14!1m7!3m6!1s0x47bbe7d8db8b7133:0xd5241289014118b5!2sGemeinsames+Kirchenzentrum+-+Ev.+Kirchengemeinde+Meschede!8m2!3d51.3627589!4d8.2918036!16s%2Fg%2F11btmqm29f!3m5!1s0x47bbe7d8dbb2b03b:0x2ff47a71482c93a3!8m2!3d51.36293!4d8.29208!16s%2Fg%2F11bzymp8kz?entry=ttu&g_ep=EgoyMDI0MDkyOS4wIKXMDSoASAFQAw%3D%3D (last access December 2024).

17 See: Jan Hermelink, "Programm und Praxis kirchlicher Inklusion. Praktisch-theologische Beobachtungen zum Bautyp ‚Gemeindezentrum'," in *Diakonische Kirchen(Um)Nutzung*, ed. Alexander Deeg and Kerstin Menzel (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2023), 95-111.

18 For the history of the development of ecumenical community centres, see also: Albert Gerhards and Stefan Kopp, eds., *Von der Simultankirche zum ökumenischen Kirchenzentrum. Sakralbauten im Spannungsfeld christlicher Konfessionen* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2021). Gerald Hagmann, *Ökumenische Zusammenarbeit unter einem Dach. Eine Studie über evangelisch-katholische Gemeindezentren* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007). Marta Binaghi, *Ökumenische Kirchenzentren: Bild der Einheit oder Spiegel der Trennung?* (Regensburg: Schnell + Steiner, 2015). Stefan Kopp and Joachim Werz, eds., *Gebaute Ökumene. Botschaft und Auftrag für das 21. Jahrhundert?* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2018).

19 The *Gemeinsame Kirchenzentrum Meschede* (trans.: Joint Church Centre) was built between 1975 and 1976. The architects were Norbert Düking and Peter Iseken. It was built in connection with the construction of the *Gartenstadt Nord* housing estate, which was built between 1960s and 1970s. The *Gemeinsame Kirchenzentrum Meschede* was sold to the *Christen Gemeinde Sauerland* in 2023, which has applied for permission to use the building for non-religious purposes for cost reasons.
For the history of the origin and development of the *Gemeinsame Kirchenzentrum Meschede* see also: Stefan Kopp, "Gemeinsam leben – gemeinsam beten – gemeinsam bauen. Ökumenische Kirchenzentren im Erzbistum Paderborn," *Catholica* 74, no. 38 (July 2020): 203-217. Hartmut Geller, "Ökumenische Beziehungen in einer Kleinstadt – Meschede," in *Ökumene und Gemeinde. Untersuchungen zum Alltag in Kirchengemeinden*, ed. Helmut





21 22

*Helfe*[20] in Hagen-Helfe, the *Ökumenische Zentrum Thomaskirche* in Marburg[21] and the *Ökumenische Gemeindezentrum Scharnhorst*, we can find parallels in urban planning and architectural design.

What is most striking is the absence of dominant urban gestures. The function as a church is more likely to be recognised at second glance through applied semantic references. Only the *Gemeinsame Kirchenzentrum Helfe* has a modern interpretation of a church tower, otherwise this clear sign was omitted. All four examples are characterised by a highly structured building volume, the adoption of typical contemporary building forms and materials from secular buildings, and the functional integration into a centre for social service and commerce [Fig. 19, 20, 21, 22]. With the formation of courtyards and squares, the churches create an integration into the urban context and at the same time form a kind of forum for the new settlement.

Inside, including the worship areas, all four examples use loose seating, minimalist furnishings, "unglamorous" materials such as rough concrete or exposed brickwork, and visible load-bearing structures to create a sense of authenticity and truthfullness.

Ecumenism has different architectural expressions in the four examples. From the outside, there is no visible separation between the different denominations in Hagen-Helfe and Meschede, although it is practised inside. In Meschede, there is only one place of worship, but it belongs to the Catholic parish. It is made

Fig. 21
Satellite image "Gemeinsames Kirchenzentrum Helfe", 2022.
Bilder © 2024 Airbus, GeoBAsis DE/BKG, Maxar Technologies, Kartendaten © 2024 GeoBasis- DE/BKG (©2009), https://www.google.com/maps/search/Gemeinsames+Kirchenzentrum+hagen+Helfe/@51.3925862,7.4832563,203m/data=!3m1!1e3?entry=ttu&g_ep=EgoyMDI0MDkyOS4wIKXMDSoASAFQAw%3D%3D (last access December 2024).

Fig. 22
Satellite image "Ökumenisches Zentrum Thomaskirche", Marburg 2024.
Bilder © 2024 Google, Bilder © 2024 AeroWest, GeoBasis-DE/BKG, Maxar Tehcnologies, Kartendaten © 2024 GeoBasis-DE/BKG (©2009), https://www.google.com/maps/place/che+Zentrum+Thomaskirche/@50.792991,8.7860198,99m/data=!3m2!1e3!5s0x47bc89db2e38e333:0xbb63e05f247290cb!4m6!3m5!1s0x47bc89c8d54a44 7d:0x193c256dd7e9533f!8m2!3d50.79307!4d8.78666!16s%2Fg%2F11c488r_2q?entry=ttu&g_ep=EgoyMDI0MTAwMi4xIKXMDSoASAFQAw%3D%3D (last access December 2024).

Geller, Eckart Pankoke and Karl Gabriel (Obladen: Leske und Budrich 2002), 163-218.

20 The *Gemeinsame Kirchenzentrum Hagen-Helfe* (Joint Church Centre) was built between 1975 and 1976 and is still in ecumenical use. The architects were Funke, Manfred Krug and Bernhard van der Minde. It was built in connection with the construction of the *Gartenvorstadt Helfe* housing estate, which began in 1964.
For the history of the origin and development of the *Gemeinsame Kirchenzentrum Helfe* in Hagen-Helfe see also: Kopp, "Gemeinsam leben – gemeinsam beten – gemeinsam bauen"; Hartmut Geller, "Nähe ohne Distanz – Ökumenische Beziehungen im Ökumenischen Kirchenzentrum Hagen-Helfe," in *Ökumene und Gemeinde. Untersuchungen zum Alltag in Kirchengemeinden*, ed. Helmut Geller, Eckart Pankoke and Karl Gabriel (Obladen: Leske und Budrich, 2002), 55-110.

21 The *Ökumenische Zentrum Thomaskirche* (Ecumenic Centre St. Thomas) in Marburg was built between 1972 and 1973 and is still in ecumenical use. The architects were the memebers of the "Theodor London Collective", Dirk Bäumer, Johann Georg (Graf zu) Solms and Karl Hermann Stärk. It was built in connection with the construction of the large housing estate *Wohnstadt Richtsberg*, built between 1963 and 1970.
For the history of the origin and development of the *Ökumenische Zentrum Thomaskirche* in Marburg see also: "Ökumenische Zentrum Thomaskirche," Evangelische Kirchengemeinde am Richtsberg. http://thomaskirche.aion.de (last accessed November 2024); Karin Berkemann, "Marburg-Richtsberg Ökumenisches Zentrum," https://strasse-der-moderne.de/kirchen/marburg-richtsberg-oekumenisches-zentrum/ (last accessed November 2024).

available to the Protestant parish on a permanent basis. The restaurant and the youth rooms belong to the Protestant community. Only the foyer is jointly owned. The *Gemeinsame Kirchenzentrum Meschede* has been a listed building since 2021. Despite the clear separation of ownership, because of the "consistent implementation of ecumenical principles in the building structure and liturgical furnishings, it is the most important testimony to the new construction of Ecumenical centres in Westphalia-Lippe {Note: Region in West Germany} after the Second Vatican Council"[22], according to the responsible monument authority. In Hagen-Helfe, there is also only one building, but it has two independent places of worship with separate sponsorship. As a special feature, there is a common hall, larger than the worship rooms, which serves as a meeting place for the ecumenical community.

The *Ökumenische Zentrum Thomaskirche* in Marburg also has a shared building with two worship spaces. These were originally only intended to be separated by a movable partition. It was only during the construction phase that they were permanently separated by a non-bearing wall. In this case, the duality is also clearly visible from the outside, with two cube-shaped roof structures marking the worship areas of the different denominations. The Ecumenical Centre in Marburg has

> the status of a cultural monument due to its artistic significance, which is committed to classical (post-war) modernism {...}, as well as its role in the history of liturgy and type as an effective stage in the development of ecumenical community centres throughout Germany.[23]

In Scharnhorst, ecumenism is only structurally expressed in the common forecourt and the unifying architectural language. Compared with the architectural examples from Meschede, Hagen-Helfe and Marburg, this is the clearest reflection of the existing separation of denominations.

22 "Gemeinsames Kirchenzentrum Meschede," Untere Denkmalbehörde Stadt Meschede, https://gis.hochsauerlandkreis.de/arcgis1/rest/services/meggi/Meggi_Boden_Baudenkmale/MapServer/0/540/attachments/943 (last accessed November 2024).

23 Ellen Kemp and Annekathrin Sitte-Köster, "Chemnitzer Straße Ökumenisches Zentrum Richtsberg/Thomaskirche," in *Denkmaltopographie Stadt Marburg II*, ed. Landesamt für Denkmalpflege Hessen (Darmstadt: WGB Theiss, 2014), 211-212.






## Conclusion

In view of the prevailing alienation from the Church and the great need for social support, the Scharnhorst Ecumenical Centre was developed as a meeting place and social service centre.

In terms of design, the aim was to counter the prevailing reservations about the church as an institution with a new formal language that makes little distinction between church, retail, administrative, residential, cultural or leisure buildings **[Fig. 23]**. An architecture that has been deliberately designed to be inclusive. This was not a renunciation of self-expression, but the demonstration of a new self-image. As with many other church building projects of the time, the aim was to present modernity and worldliness.

Although some may perceive a lack of spirituality, dignity and clarity, the avoidance of ecclesiastical design and the everyday functionality of the architecture help to ensure that the centre and its services to the neighbourhood are also accepted by a wider society of non-believers and people of other faiths. In addition, the tailored architectural language makes it easy to repurpose areas and rent them out to external parties, such as the local sports club.

In Scharnhorst, the urban integration of the Ecumenical Centre into the supply centre, the creation of a church square as a "forum" for the residents and the routing of the pedestrian path through this square contributed significantly to the integration of the centre into the district. As such, the Ecumenical Centre

Fig. 23
Rectory (middle) and library (right) of the Catholic Parish St. Francis, 2021 (© Detlef Podehl/ Technical University of Dortmund).

has been instrumental in compensating for the lack of social structures in the satellite town and in creating communities.

The example of the Ecumenical Centre in Scharnhorst illustrates the important role that Christian institutions have played in the social and urban development of the city in the past and present, and raises the question of possible successor institutions in view of the announced church closures in the Ruhr area and beyond. With the Ecumenical Centre in Scharnhorst, the church has become a living part of the city within the camouflage of mass housing construction. In its integration into the urban context and its deliberate renunciation of representation and a traditional canon of forms, as a comparison with other ecumenical church centres of the 1970s has shown, it is a built expression and witness to the ecclesiastical and social will for reform of the 1960s and 1970s, and thus part of the architectural and religious heritage of the region and beyond.

Particularly in cases such as Scharnhorst, where the conceptual qualities outweigh any immediately perceived aesthetic or spiritual quality, public communication of the strengths is important both for the protection of this historical heritage of the region, for the preservation of its urban function, and for the preservation of the communities that are based here and have a socially integrative effect on society.[24]



24 The archive material of the *Scharnhorst Ecumenical Community Centre* from the estate of architects Mechthild Gastreich-Moritz and Ulrich Moritz can be found in the *Baukunstarchiv NRW* in Dortmund. The *Ecumenical Community Centre* and its extensive archive material were the subject of the *StadtBautenRuhr* research project (2018-2022) funded by the *Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)*. In addition to the Baukunstarchiv NRW, the *Museum Folkwang* in Essen and the *Technical University of Dortmund* were also involved in the project. The holdings of the *Baukunstarchiv NRW* were used to investigate how specific building projects (such as museums, theatres, libraries, town halls, universities and churches) have contributed to the formation of identity in the Ruhr region. See: "StadtBautenRuhr," Museum Folkwang, https://www.museum-folkwang.de/de/stadt-bauten-ruhr (last accessed November 2024).

## Bibliography


Binaghi, Marta. *Ökumenische Kirchenzentren: Bild der Einheit oder Spiegel der Trennung?.* Regensburg: Schnell + Steiner, 2015.

Bücker, Vera. *Sakrale Bauten der Industriekultur.* Essen: Regionalverband Ruhr, 2024.

Cox, Harvey. "The Church as God´s avant-garde." In *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective,* edited by Harvey Cox, *148-176.* Princeton: University Press, 2013.

de Wildt, Kim "Transformations of 'Sacredness in Stone': Religious Architecture in Urban Space in 21st Century Germany – New Perspectives in the Study of Religious Architecture." *Religions* 10, no. 11 (October 2019): 602.

Geller, Hartmut. "Nähe ohne Distanz - Ökumenische Beziehungen im Ökumenischen Kirchenzentrum Hagen-Helfe." In *Ökumene und Gemeinde. Untersuchungen zum Alltag in Kirchengemeinden*, edited by Helmut Geller, Eckart Pankoke, and Karl Gabriel, 55-110. Obladen: Leske und Budrich, 2002.

Geller, Hartmut. "Ökumenische Beziehungen in einer Kleinstadt – Meschede." In *Ökumene und Gemeinde. Untersuchungen zum Alltag in Kirchengemeinden*, edited by Helmut Geller, Eckart Pankoke and Karl Gabriel, 163-218. Obladen: Leske und Budrich, 2002.

Gerhards, Albert, and Stefan Kopp, eds. *Von der Simultankirche zum ökumenischen Kirchenzentrum. Sakralbauten im Spannungsfeld christlicher Konfessionen.* Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2021.

Görbing, Martin, Hans Graß and Horst Schwebel, eds. *Planen-Bauen-Nutzen. Erfahrungen mit Gemeindezentren*. Giessen: Wilhelm Schmitz, 1981.

Hagmann, Gerald. *Ökumenische Zusammenarbeit unter einem Dach. Eine Studie über evangelisch-katholische Gemeindezentren*. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007.

Hermelink, Jan. "Programm und Praxis kirchlicher Inklusion. Praktisch-theologische Beobachtungen zum Bautyp ‚Gemeindezentrum'." In *Diakonische Kirchen(Um)Nutzung*, edited by Alexander Deeg and Kerstin Menzel, 95-111. Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2023.

Kemp, Ellen and Annekathrin Sitte-Köster. "Chemnitzer Straße Ökumenisches Zentrum Richtsberg/Thomaskirche." In *Denkmaltopographie Stadt Marburg II*, edited by Landesamt für Denkmalpflege Hessen, 211-212. Darmstadt: WGB Theiss, 2014.

Kopp, Stefan and Joachim Werz, eds. *Gebaute Ökumene. Botschaft und Auftrag für das 21. Jahrhundert?*. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2018.

Kopp, Stefan. "Gemeinsam leben – gemeinsam beten – gemeinsam bauen. Ökumenische Kirchenzentren im Erzbistum Paderborn." *Catholica* 74, no. 38 (July 2020): 203-217.

Lutz, Raphael. "Zwischen Sozialaufklärung und radikalem Ordnungsdenken Die Verwissenschaftlichung des Sozialen im Europa der ideologischen Extreme." In *Europäische Wissenschaftskulturen und politische Ordnungen in der Moderne (1890-1970)*, edited by Gangolf Hübinger, 29-50. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014.

Pflästerer, Hans-Albrecht. "Gemeinde hat heilende Strukturen. Das Experiment Neuscharnhorst." *Unsere Kirche. Wochenzeitung der Evangelischen Kirche von Westfalen und der Lippischen Landeskirche*, no. 17 (1971): 6-7.

Scharrer, Josef. "Von der Analyse zum Pastoratsplan." In *Wer mitmacht, erlebt Gemeinde. Modell Dortmund-Scharnhorst. Eine Zwischenbilanz,* edited by Petrus Görges, Reinhard Kellerhoff, Clemens Weber and Werenfried Wessel, 23-29. Limburg: Lahn-Verlag, 1972.

Scharrer, Josef. "Kommunikation und Gemeinde." In *Wer mitmacht, erlebt Gemeinde. Modell Dortmund-Scharnhorst. Eine Zwischenbilanz,* edited by Petrus Görges, Reinhard Kellerhoff, Clemens Weber and Werenfried Wessel, 63-68. Limburg: Lahn-Verlag, 1972.

Scharrer, Josef. "Die Dienste der Gemeinde." In *Wer mitmacht, erlebt Gemeinde. Modell Dortmund-Scharnhorst. Eine Zwischenbilanz*, edited by Petrus Görges, Reinhard Kellerhoff, Clemens Weber and Werenfried Wessel, 89-122. Limburg: Lahn-Verlag, 1972.

Ziemann, Benjamin. *Katholische Kirche und Sozialwissenschaften 1945-1975.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011.

Özlem Balcı Öztürk, Oya Şenyurt

# Brutalist Practice in 1960's Berlin Churches: Experimental Interior Spaces

ARTICLE

*Post-War Berlin Architecture, Brutalism, Reyner Banham, Church Architecture, Raw Concrete*

**/Abstract**

**Numerous buildings, especially religious buildings, were destroyed and damaged in Europe during the Second World War. The city of Berlin is among those that suffered losses.**

**Repairing the damage to churches that have a place in the collective memory and designing new churches played a crucial role in helping people hold on to life again. In the 1960s, new church construction in West Berlin experienced its pick. In this period, which Goldhagen describes as an interregnum between an expiring Modernism and dawning Postmodernism, experimental designs emerged under the influence of Brutalism. This study focuses on brutalist churches built in Berlin in the 1960s: Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, Maria Regina Martyrum Memorial Church, and Paul Gerhardt Church. Defining a point of identity for the city, these churches not only represent a point of social unification for the community but also aim to strengthen the faith. It is possible to capture the same spiritual effect in the blue light leaking from the concrete modules in Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, the light shining through the concrete beams in Maria Regina Martyrum Memorial Church, and the colors reflected from the stained glass in Paul Gerhardt Church. The role of religious buildings in the post-war Berlin brutalist practice, design parameters in the context of Reyner Banham's principles, and the spiritual effect of light were discussed through literature, periodicals, and visuals obtained through on-site documentation.**

**/Author**

**Özlem Balcı Öztürk**
**Kocaeli University, Faculty of Architecture and Design,**
**Department of Architecture, Kocaeli, Turkey**
**ORCID 0000-0002-7489-0216**

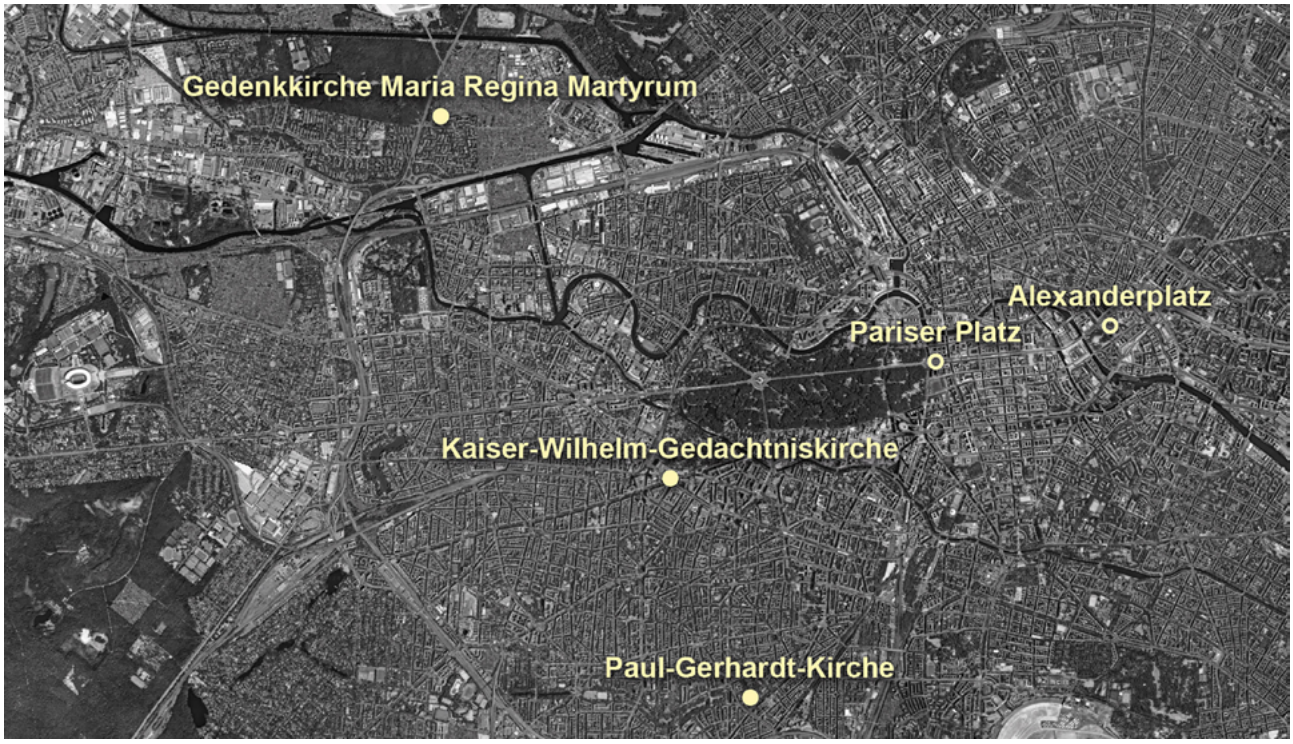
**Oya Şenyurt**
**Kocaeli University, Faculty of Architecture and Design**
**Department of Architecture, Kocaeli, Turkey**
**ORCID 0000-0002-4837-3960**

Özlem Balcı Öztürk is an academician of architecture at Kocaeli University. She received an M.Sc. degree in historical architecture from the Istanbul Technical University. She is presently working on her Ph.D. dissertation focusing on New Brutalism. Her last publication is *Modern Istanbul Map*, 2024.

Oya Şenyurt, is an academician of architecture at Kocaeli University. She received her master's degree in 2002 and her doctorate in 2006 with the theses she completed at Yıldız Technical University, Department of Architectural History and Theory. She received the title of "Professor" in 2017. Her last book is *Osmanlı Mimarisine Dair Kısa Okumalar*, 2023.



https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/20038
Copyright © 2024 Özlem Balci Öztürk, Oya Şenyurt




1

## Introduction:
## 1960s Berlin Churches in the Synthesis of Architecture-Concrete- Faith

Numerous buildings were destroyed and damaged in Europe during the Second World War. Church buildings had an essential place in collective memory. The importance attributed to churches by the communities increased with the destruction after the war. People sought peace in religious buildings, which the times did not offer. The post-war period was a time of reflection, self-examination, and a new orientation in the Christian churches.[1] Berlin was one of the cities that suffered much destruction, and many places of worship were damaged. After the war, reconstruction began rapidly, and massive housing projects in the Late Modernist style were built along the city's periphery in record time. As a result of the war, religious buildings became the most prominent social meeting points where people reestablished themselves, so notable brutalist-style churches were also built in residential areas. These churches provided a representation – with their sculptural, raw concrete forms – to compensate for the surrounding architectural monotony.[2] The study focuses on the brutalist churches built in West Berlin in the 1960s in the synthesis of architecture-concrete-faith. The study includes a comprehensive architectural analysis of three churches of the period that have a prominent role in the urban memory: Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, Maria Regina Martyrum Memorial Church, and Paul Gerhardt Church, based on Reyner Banham's brutalist principles [Fig. 1].

1 Patrick Voigt and Nikolaus Bernau, *Beton und Glaube-Kirchen der Nachkriegsmoderne in Berlin* (Berlin: Archipendiumedition, 2004), 5.

2 Felix Torkar, *Brutalist Berlin Map* (London: Blue Crow Media, 2021).

Fig. 1
Location of the brutalist churches in Berlin described in the essay (Map data ©2024 Google edited by the authors).

The redevelopment also included reconstructing and expanding West Berlin's Catholic and Protestant worship infrastructure. In this context, the initial reconstruction efforts focused on the historical city centers and central churches, which had sustained heavy damage. According to Pehnt, in Germany, between 1960 and 1970, the expectation of architecture was formulated to reflect the demands of society at large, promoting processes but also heeding form.[3] This approach, which prioritized the wishes of the public and social welfare, also influenced the design processes of religious buildings. For instance, in the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church project, the preservation of the remains of the old church was brought to the agenda with the demands of the public. Also, Paul Gerhardt Church had a design approach that preserves and incorporates the remains of old churches damaged in the war into new buildings. Maria Regina Martyrum Memorial Church is a newly constructed religious building that serves as a memorial church. The case studies in this context also address two approaches to the new post-war church-building practice. The study examines Berlin's post-war religious architectural practice and how brutalist principles were applied in churches. The significance of religious buildings in the post-war Berlin brutalist practice, image conception in the context of Banham's principles, brutalist design parameters reflected in the interior space, and the spiritual effect of the use of light were discussed through the relevant literature, periodicals, visuals, and impressions obtained through on-site documentation.

In post-war Germany, the main questions were how to organize the reconstruction and which forms were appropriate.[4] The church building typologies used since late antiquity, particularly basilicas or gallery churches, were no longer used after the war. The inherent social hierarchization of the congregation did not fit in with a democratizing society at the time.[5] This situation brought about a search for total space and a central plan approach in religious building typology.

The most significant innovation in the design of religious buildings from the mid-1950s is that they began to express themselves in ever stronger forms. These forms enabled the creation of a memorable image in the urban memory, one of the principles of Brutalism. The search for an appropriate form and material for the church, which is changing in its social and spatial dimension, is shaped by the use of concrete as a new building material and represents the transformation of society towards a new, more democratic order. The forms, which emerged freely from the possibilities offered by reinforced concrete and thus increased the design canon to an unprecedented diversity, are interpreted as 'contemporary' in their expression, that is, as pointing to the future. Therefore, they reflect the transformation of churches in both directions: the change in

3 Wolfgang Pehnt, *German Architecture: 1960-1970* (New York & Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 42.

4 Anette S. Busse, *Im Spannungsfeld Brutalistischer Strömungen und Liturgischer Bewegung. Bauten der Nachkriegsmoderne von Klaus Franz* (Karlsruhe: KIT Scientific Publishing, 2020), 311.

5 Voigt and Bernau, *"Beton und Glaube"*, 5.

liturgy in relation to the community and new church spaces and structures.[6] Other principles of Brutalism, such as clear exhibition of the structure, valuation of the material as found, and the emphasis on "honesty," reflected the atmosphere of the period. The purity of form, material, and structure strengthened the spiritual aura of the churches.

Jürgen Joedicke wrote in his article *Church building in our time* dated 1958 that more Protestant and Catholic churches were built in Germany in the first years after the war than in the centuries since the Reformation.[7] West Germany's most remarkable new churches were modern. The modernist designs of the Catholic and Protestant churches of this period refer to the Middle Ages, the neo-medieval of the Second Reich, the *pluralizing Modernism* of the twentieth century, and the destruction caused by the Second World War.[8]

Architectural historians describe a few decades in architectural culture following the Second World War as an *interregnum* between an expiring Modernism and a dawning Postmodernism, during which Modernism continued to produce its revisions.[9] These revisionist discourses, defined by Goldhagen as *pluralizing Modernism*, indicate the multiple nature of Modernism.[10] Reyner Banham, the theorist of Brutalism, one of the revisions of Modernism, put forward the basic principles that distinguish the concept of Brutalism from other contemporary architectural approaches in his academic studies:[11]

1. Memorability as an Image
2. Clear exhibition of Structure
3. Valuation of Materials *as found*.

The first principle is to create a memorable impression. Banham defines the concept of image in its simplest sense as visually valuable. Image essentially requires that the building be an immediately comprehensible visual entity, and that the form grasped by the eye be confirmed by the experience of using the building.[12] According to the principle of a clear display of the structure, all the constructive elements that complete the building should be used without hiding or covering. The last principle concerns the presentation of materials as they come from the source or the use of raw-looking variations of all selected materials. From a material point of view, the word *brut* means that concrete should not be hidden, wood should not be sanded, plaster should not be smoothed, paint

---

6 Busse, *Im Spannungsfeld Brutalistischer*, 312-313.

7 Jürgen Joedicke, "Kirchenbau in unserer Zeit: der Standpunkt des Arkitekten," *Bauen und Wohnen,* no. 12 (1958): 354.

8 Kathleen James-Chakraborty, *Modernism as Memory: Building Identity in the Federal Republic of Germany*, (Minneapolis &London: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.), 40.

9 Sarah Williams Goldhagen, and Rejean Legault, "Critical Themes of Postwar Modernism," in *Anxious Modernisms: Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture,* eds. Sarah Williams Goldhagen & Rejean Legault (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000).

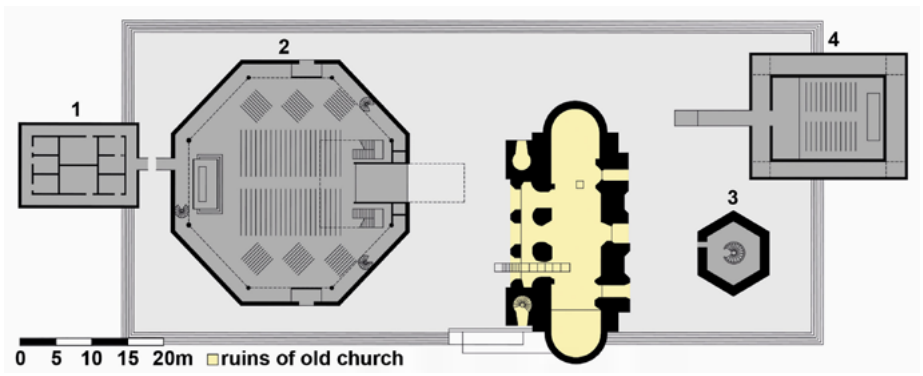
10 Sarah Williams Goldhagen, "Coda: Reconceptualizing The Modern," in *Anxious Modernisms: Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture,* eds. Sarah Williams Goldhagen, and Rejean Legault (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000).

11 Reyner Banham, "The New Brutalism," *Architectural Review*, December (1955): 354-361; Reyner Banham, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic* (London: Architectural Press, 1966).

12 Banham, "The New Brutalism", 354-361.




2




3

should not be applied directly to walls, and the rough surface of brick should be protected.[13]

## Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church

The Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, completed in 1961, represents the urban center of West Berlin and serves as a symbolic figure for the city.[14] The complex, designed by Egon Eiermann, comprises four new buildings surrounding the ruins of the central tower of the old church, which was damaged during World War II **[Fig. 2]**. A stepped plateau is laid around the tower, where the octagonal church, the hexagonal bell tower, the rectangular parish building, known as the foyer, and the equally rectangular chapel are located **[Fig. 3]**.[15]

The old church, designed by Franz Schwecht, was constructed between 1891 and 1892. Following the destruction of the church by an air strike in 1943, dis-

Fig. 2
Kaiser Wilhelm Church Complex (authors archive, 2022).

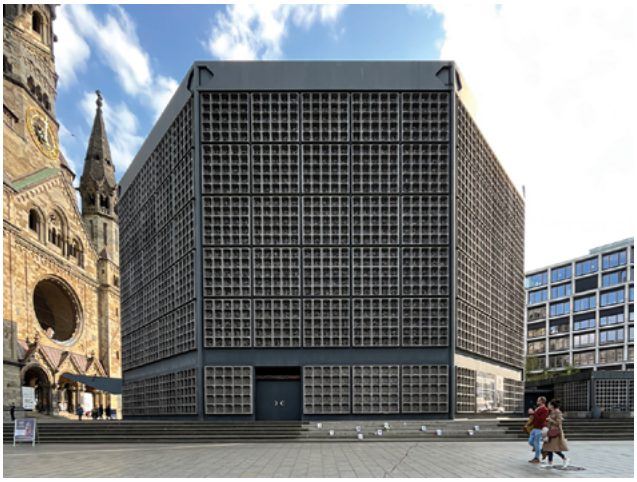
Fig. 3
Plan of Kaiser Wilhelm Church; (1) foyer, (2) church, (3) bell tower, (4) chapel (visualized and scaled by authors based on Beton und Glaube-Kirchen der Nachkriegsmoderne in Berlin. Berlin: Archipendiumedition, 2004.

13 Chis van Uffelen, *Massive, Expressive, Sculptural*: *Brutalism Now and Then* (Braun Publishing, 2018).

14 Laurids Ortner, "Grossstädtisch werden: Projekte und Bauten in der Stadt von Haus Rucker & Co.," *Bauen+Wohnen*, no. 3 (1987): 28.

15 Voigt, and Bernau, *Beton und Glaube*, 56.





4 5

cussions about its future commenced in the post-war period. The demolishing wastes were removed in 1954-1955, but the West Tower was left in a state of disrepair.[16] An invited competition for the new design was organized in 1956 with the participation of nine architects experienced in church buildings. In 1957, Eiermann's project, which entailed the demolition of the West Tower ruins, was selected for construction.[17] However, the idea of demolishing the West Tower, which has become a part of the urban memory, has provoked reactions from Berliners.[18] These reactions show the extent to which the residents embrace the church and prove the image value it carries. In response to mounting pressure from the public and the press, the board of trustees of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church Foundation initiated a process to include the old tower in the proposed development. Consequently, Eiermann developed a conservationist methodology for the design, preserving the existing part and integrating it into the new church. When the construction was completed in 1961, it was a political monument to the West's presence and faith's existence in the divided city.[19] Following the inauguration of the church, Eiermann's reluctant attitude changed completely. While the first design could have been built anywhere in the world, the revised version, integrated into the old church, was unique and specific to its location.[20] The new tower rising next to the ruined church does not exceed the old one in size and does not throw it out of focus.

The Kaiser Wilhelm Church provides Banham's principle of *memorability as an image* in an abstract sense, recalling both the chaos and destruction of war and the value of peace. It is an iconic city symbol with its innovative design,

16 Cornelius Holtorf, *Destruction and Reconstruction of Cultural Heritage as Future-Making. In The Future of the Bamiyan Buddha Statues: Heritage Reconstruction in Theory and Practice*, ed. Masanori Nagaoka, 161. Unesco Publishing, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-51316-0 (last accessed December 2024).

17 Gerhard Kabierske, "Der Architekt Egon Eiermann und die Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtnis-Kirche," *KWG Magazin,* (October 2021): 7

18 "Vom Wiederaufbau der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtnis-Kirche in Berlin," *Bauen + Wohnen*, no. 12 (1958): 10.

19 Kabierske, "Der Architekt Egon Eiermann", 9-11.

20 Rüdiger Zill, "'A true witness of transience': Berlin's Kaiser- Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche and the symbolic use of architectural fragments in modernity," *European Review of History: Revue europeenne d'histoire,* Vol. 18, no. 5-6 (2011): 820-821, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2011.618332 (last accessed December 2024).

Fig. 4
Kaiser Wilhelm Church, towers of the old and new church (authors archive, 2022).

Fig. 5
Kaiser Wilhelm Church, facade (authors archive, 2022).





6 7

prominent position, and, especially, its two towers (a unique combination of old and new) **[Fig. 4]**. The church's image was also frequently used on postcards, one of the standard mass media of the period. This combination of the new and old represents a nostalgia, perhaps an aesthetic of ruin, perhaps a resurrection from the wreckage of the old.[21]

Following Banham's principle of *the clear exhibition of structure*, the two main elements of the building's construction, the steel structural profiles, and the prefabricated concrete modules are displayed **[Fig. 5]**. Kaiser Wilhelm Church consists of particularly filigree prefabricated concrete elements.[22] The gaps of the concrete modules that form the texture are filled with colored stained glass in some places and with raw concrete in others. Detail of the facade superposed the grid of the gaps between the prefab elements with a concrete grid between the glass slabs **[Fig. 6, 7]**.[23] This detail creates different light and shadow effects on the facade at different times of the day.

The principle *of the valuation of materials* is exemplified in this church through the ingenious and distinctive combination of concrete and glass. The concrete utilized for the facades and interiors is of a raw, unprocessed quality. The church's altar is adorned with stained glass concrete modules, creating an unusual atmosphere. The stained glass slabs, the work of the French artist Gabriel Loire, form translucent walls **[Fig. 8]**. The blue light that permeates the octagonal church through its walls produces a spiritual effect. The gallery floor with the organ is located above the entrance door and in direct opposition to the altar. Eiermann initially explored the concept of colored light through the grid texture, which he applied as a master in Kaiser Wilhelm, in the St. Matthew Church in Pforzheim, constructed between 1951 and 1953. St. Matthew Church also exhibits a brutalist approach, yet the structural system's use of raw concrete rather than steel differentiates the two cases.

21 Stanislaus von-Moos, "Gedächtniskirche' *à la carte*. Notes on the Political Fortunes of a Pile of Stones," *RA. Revista de Arquitectura*, no. 25 (2023): 10-33, https://doi.org/10.15581/014.25.10-33.

22 Helmut Weber, "Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche Berlin – Qualitä̈t und Geschichte einer Instandsetzung," *Bautechnik*, 84 (2006): 268-271, https://doi.org/10.1002/bate.200710024.

23 Sabine von Fischer, "Risse, Spalten, Fugen: Spielraum im architektonischen Detail," *Bauen + Wohnen*, no. 93 (2006): 52.

Fig. 6
Kaiser Wilhelm Church, side entrance of the church (authors archive, 2022).

Fig. 7
Kaiser Wilhelm Church prefabricated concrete module detail (authors archive, 2022).



Fig. 8
Altar of Kaiser Wilhelm Church
(authors archive, 2022).

**Maria Regina Martyrum Memorial Church**

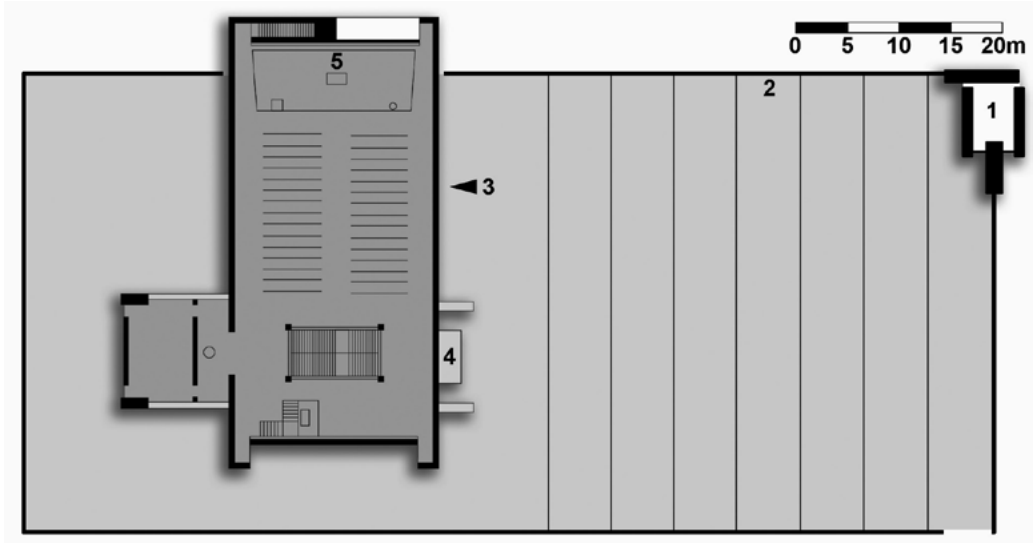
Designed by architects Hans Schädel and Friedrich Ebert, the church was under construction between 1960 and 1963. The construction techniques in the building of Maria Regina Martyrum Church in Charlottenburg reflected the prevailing state of the technological advancement of the period. The complex comprises two churches, one on the ground floor and the other on the upper floor, a ceremonial hall, a parish hall, a presbytery, a playground, a kindergarten, and a tower [Fig. 9].[24] The church was dedicated to martyrs for religious freedom and conscience in the National Socialist era. In light of the aforementioned historical context, the architects of the Church of Maria Regina Martyrum oriented the building in a manner that would face Plötzensee, a former execution site during the National Socialist era. The sizeable ceremonial courtyard, accessed via Heckerdamm Street, refers to the concentration camps, and the bell tower at the end of the courtyard represents a watchtower. The ceremonial courtyard provides a venue for events with 10,000 attendees. A cubic sculptural form characterizes the bell tower [Fig. 10].[25] In describing this memorial church, the architect Schädel said, *like an Easter promise in the face of Plötzensee*. This metaphor is manifested within the interior of the church. The rising sun's light should shine into the church through the ribbon windows at the side of the altarpiece, *like an Easter promise* – an assurance of life – *in the face of Plötzensee* – the place of painful death.

24 H. A., "Aus Berliner Tagebuchnotizen," *Berner Schulblatt – L'Ecole Bernoise*, no. 98, H:32/33 (1965): 568.

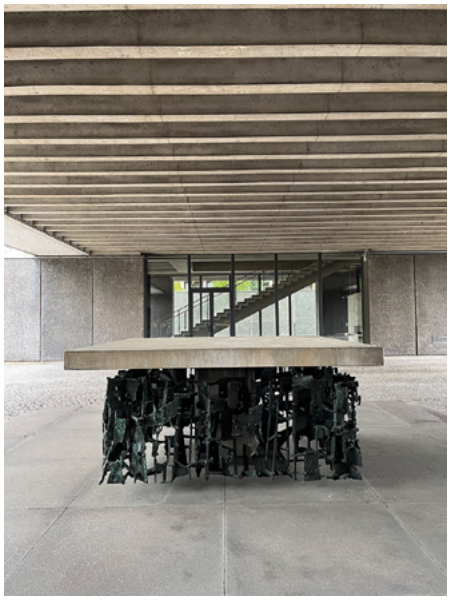
25 Voigt and Bernau, *Beton und Glaube,* 69.



9




10



11



12

Fig. 9
Maria Regina Martyrum Church (authors archive, 2022).

Fig. 10
Plan of Maria Regina Martyrum Church: (1) bell tower, (2) Stations of the Cross by Otto Herbert Hajek, (3) open-air altar, (4) Apocalyptic Woman by Fritz Koenig, (5) altar painting by Georg Meistermann (visualized and scaled by authors based on Beton und Glaube-Kirchen der Nachkriegsmoderne in Berlin. Berlin: Archipendiumedition, 2004).

Fig. 11
Maria Regina Martyrum Church, open-air altar (authors archive, 2022).

Fig. 12
Maria Regina Martyrum Church staircase (authors archive, 2022).

The church serves as the community center of a suburban parish in addition to religious function and has a significant place in the collective urban memory.[26] Furthermore, the building's iconic architectural character also offers a sense of Reyner Banham's *memorability as an image*. From the vantage point of Heckerdamm Street, one can first discern the bell tower included in the courtyard wall. The concrete tower represents a symbolic figure for the environment of the church.

The second principle of Banham, *the clear exhibition of structure*, is evident in both the exterior and interior analyses of the building. The primary mass above the load-bearing walls exhibits a cantilever suspended in the air. The structure of load-bearing walls is visible. The raw concrete beams underneath the massive mass are exposed, defining a semi-open space inside the open-air altar in the courtyard **[Fig. 11]**. A single-spine raw concrete staircase leads from the ground floor to the first-floor church **[Fig. 12]**. The upper church's interior functions as a building exhibition because the structure and materials can be observed in their most honest form. The horizontal raw concrete beams that form the ceiling structure are displayed.



13

Concrete, natural stone, and wooden materials fulfill the principle of *the valuation of materials as found* in this church. Natural materials were used on the facades; the massive mass was covered with white marble pebble slabs. All materials in the church's interior were selected based on their inherent qualities and used in their unprocessed state. The exposed walls were decorated with alternating patterns designed with wooden concrete forms. The ceiling structure comprises unprocessed wood panelings between the beams. The seating units were also made of raw wood. The church organ, another element made of wood, is on a raw concrete console opposite the altar. Furthermore, the route to the gallery floor comprises raw concrete elements derived from the wall.

The church represents a distinctive instance of the convergence of architectural and artistic elements within a religious edifice, exhibiting a degree of innovation ahead of its period. It is home to several notable works of art, including pieces by Fritz König, Otto Herberts Hajek, and a monumental altar painting by Georg Meistermann.[27] One of the most significant characteristics that make the church unique is the abstract painting on the altar wall. The entire wall behind the altar is painted with areas of color that are partly calm and then again shimmering, falling, and rising forms. It is an entirely abstract painting; only a

26 Pehnt, *German Architecture: 1960-1970,* 34.

27 Sabine Klopfleish, *Path of Remembrance. Memorial Area Charlottenburg-Nord* (Wirtschaftsförderung. Berlin:Pinguin Druck, 2021).

Fig. 13
Altar of Maria Regina Martyrum Church (authors archive, 2022).

tiny lamb with a crown and seven eyes is recognizable **[Fig. 13]**.[28] The perfect combination of light and art emphasizes the altar of the church. The vertical lighting positioned behind the panel serves to accentuate the spiritual effect. In front of the long wall of the courtyard facing the tower are large cast-iron statues designed by Otto Herbert Hajek. The sculptures, assembled in seven groups of varying dimensions, depict the *Station of the Cross* **[Fig. 14]**. Except for the initial figure, situated at a distance from the remaining figures, each group is characterized by a cross figure. Additionally, the figure of Christ is discernible within this composition. The entrance to the church is symbolized by the golden portal sculpture by Fritz Koenig, *the Apocalyptic Woman*, shining in the sunlight **[Fig. 15]**.





14 15

## Paul Gerhardt Church

The architects of Paul Gerhardt Church, constructed in 1958-1964, were Hermann Fehling and Daniel Gogel.[29] Its location is between St. Norbert's Church and the Baroque Schöneberg village church (Dorfkirche Schöneberg).[30] The St. Norbert's Church (1960-1962) was also a design of the Fehling and Gogel's partnership during the same period. A brutalist approach characterized the architectural style of both churches, and similar sculptural raw concrete bell towers influenced the Schöneberg silhouette **[Fig. 16, 17]**. Paul Gerhardt Church features an integrated design with a historic church structure located in the project area before and was damaged during the war. This approach was widespread in Berlin in the post-war period and indicated that respect for the old was a primary consideration in the design process of new religious buildings.

28 A., "Aus Berliner Tagebuchnotizen", 568.

29 The Fehling and Gogel partnership is known for its prominent brutalist works in 1960s Berlin architecture. The most important of these are the Paul Gerhardt Church (1958-1964), the St. Norbert Church (1960-1962), and the Institute for Hygiene and Microbiology (1966-74). These works are characterized by their use of exposed concrete, emphasizing the material aesthetics and their contradictory forms.

30 Voigt and Bernau, *Beton und Glaube,* 75.

Fig. 14
Maria Regina Martyrum Church, stations of the Cross by Otto Herbert Hajek (authors archive, 2022).

Fig. 15
Maria Regina Martyrum Church apocalyptic Woman by Fritz Koenig (authors archive, 2022).





16 17

The design of the new church's facade was oriented to the existing one **[Fig. 18]**. Designed between 1907 and 1910 by architect Ricard Schultze, the old church was one of the few pure Art Nouveau churches in Berlin. The longitudinal axis of the church was characterized by a closure at both ends, analogous to an abscissa. The main entrance hall, accessed from the street side, was semicircular. The abscissa opposite the entrance hall constituted the altar area.[31] The building had a capacity of 1200 people and a floor area of approximately 53 by 28 meters.[32] The reconstruction of this building, which was damaged during World War II, was the subject of a project together with the construction of a new, modern church. The surviving part of the old church (part of the abscissa) was designed as a separate chapel connected to the chapel of the new church **[Fig. 19]**.

The constructivist subconscious that characterized the architectural atmosphere of the 1960s was tempered in Fehling and Gogel's early work by a system of lateral thinking. They had a modest design approach that respected the characteristics of the everyday life culture.[33] Design approaches that integrate with, rather than compete with, historical buildings exemplify this.

The unique roof design characterized the Paul Gerhardt Church. A dynamic, secret total space is created under the roof, which, in places, descends from the ceiling to the floor in the form of triangles. Its original form and cubic bell tower make it a landmark for the city and reflect Banham's principle of *memorability as an image*. Gunnar Klack described the roof form of the Paul Gerhardt Church as a *tent-roof* and compared it to the roof of Frank Lloyd Wright's *Unitarian Meeting*

31 Otto Sarrazin, and Friedrich Schultze,"Paul-Gerhardt-Kirche in Schöneberg bei Berlin," *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung*, no. 1-2 (1911): 3.

32 Ernst Spindler and Brino Möhring, "Bilderstrecke," *Berliner Architekturwelt*, no. 10, Januar (1911): 400, zlb.de (last accessed November 2024). The authors measured using the plan and linear scale in the link.

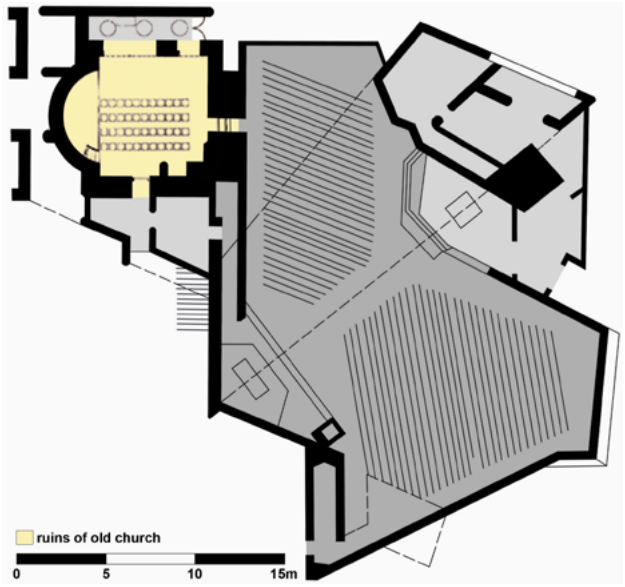
33 Ernst Hubeli, "Fehling und Gogel: signifikante Raumkonstruktionen = Constructions spatiales significatives = Significant spatial constructions," *Baunen + Wohnen*, no. 75 (1988): 24.

Fig. 16
Bell tower of Paul Gerhart Church (authors archive, 2022).

Fig. 17
Bell tower of St. Norbert (authors archive, 2022).



18




19

*House*, an example of a church in organic architecture.[34]

Banham's principle of *the clear exhibition of structure* can be defined by the room and the exposed concrete load-bearing walls that give the church its basic form. The roof is supported by load-bearing curtain walls visible inside and outside. The openings of the reinforced concrete shell form the facades with a combination of steel structure and glass. The wooden door on the entrance facade is also integrated into this structure. The part of the interior where the organ is located is covered with a wooden sunshade on the facade.

Fehling and Gogel use the essential elements of architecture: light, wall, ceiling, staircase, and structure. Each element is recognizable and irregular, but they are in harmonious balance as a whole. Walls and stairs define the movement of spaces, as do ceilings, which are always easily visible through skylights. In their abstract floor plan analysis, Fehling and Gogel rely on precise formal forms rather than instinctive orientation, and an invisible geometry dominates the design.[35] Similarly, the interior of the Paul Gerhardt Church has an open layout of freely formed triangles.[36] The church's architects stated that they started the design from the floor plan and then worked on the space. The form of the building emerged at this stage; the facades did not yet exist after the completion of the structural part. The architects designed the facade in the final stage and worked on sketches.[37] On the northeastern facade, a large window opens onto the cemetery, symbolizing the eternal communion of saints.[38]

Despite their spatial complexity and superimposed construction systems, there is no detail in the buildings that does not conform to the properties of

34 Gunnar Klack, *Gebaute Landschaften: Fehling + Gogel und die organische Architektur: Landschaft und Bewegung als Natur-Narrative* (Biefield: Transcript, 2015), 350.

35 Hubeli, "Fehling und Gogel", 26.

36 Voigt and Bernau, *Beton und Glaube,* 75.

37 Hermann Fehling and Daniel Gogel, "Werkverzeichnis: vollständiges Werkverzeichnis 1947-1988," *Baunen + Wohnen*, no. 75 (1988): 61.

38 Voigt and Bernau, *Beton und Glaube,* 75.

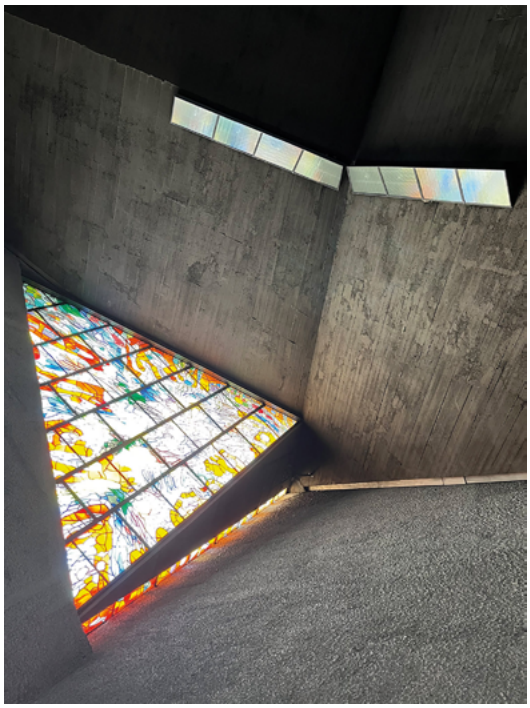
Fig. 18
Paul Gerhart Church (authors archive, 2022).

Fig: 19
Plan of Paul Gerhart Church (visualized and scaled by authors based on Beton und Glaube-Kirchen der Nachkriegsmoderne in Berlin. Berlin: Archipendiumedition, 2004).

the materials. In line with Banham's principle of the *valuation of materials as found*, even surprising uses of materials are never artificial; ordinary construction materials, such as rough concrete plaster, take on a different expression.[39] The roof's soffit is raw concrete, with fine wood mold workmanship applied vertically. There are two different applications on the interior surfaces: a balanced combination of raw concrete material on the ceiling with traces of wood mold and rough concrete plaster on the wall surfaces **[Fig. 20]**. In addition, the church seating and the organ are made of wood. The gallery with the organ is located on the upper floor at the entrance of the church. The gallery's wooden coverings harmonize with the organ **[Fig. 21]**.

Light is the most crucial parameter for the spiritual atmosphere in the interior.

39 Hubeli, "Fehling und Gogel", 27.



20



21



22

Fig. 20
Paul Gerhart Church, stained glass detail (authors archive, 2022).

Fig. 21
Paul Gerhart Church, organ gallery (authors archive, 2022).

Fig. 22
Altar of Paul Gerhart Church (authors archive, 2022).

There are skylights between the roof and the walls. The light is most emphasized by the stained-glass window just behind the altar. The colored lights filtering through the stained glass at different angles at various times of the day provide a focus for the altar. Three steps from the ground elevate the altar [Fig. 22].

## Conclusion

After World War II, cities began a process of rapid reconstruction, and in Berlin, too, many new residential buildings were constructed. In these residential districts, considerable attention was paid to the reconstruction of religious buildings as an architectural, social, and cultural center for the community, and substantial budgets were allocated. The *brutalist* practice came to the fore in church architecture, which allowed post-war hopes to flourish again and strengthened the sense of unity and solidarity. With its principle of memorability as an image, Brutalism was an ideal model for church designs that needed distinctive forms among the massive housing projects built after the war. In addition, concrete as a new building material came to the fore as a symbol of democratic transformation with the possibilities it offered to the desire for new forms. The use of raw materials and the exhibition of the structure provided a unity between the search for "honesty" of this period and the ethics of Brutalism.

The reconstruction process was twofold in Berlin: the reuse of war-damaged churches and the construction of new churches. Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, and Paul Gerhart Church are examples of newly designed churches integrated with war-damaged churches. Marina Regina Martyum Church is a new design as a memorial church. The architectural design of all three churches fulfills the brutalist principles defined by Reyner Banham. Kaiser Wilhelm Church is characterized by the unique detailing of its facades, which are made of prefabricated concrete modules. This detail, which arises from integrating concrete material and stained-glass art, adds spirituality to the interior space under the influence of blue with the hit of light. Maria Regina Martyrum Church is a work ahead of its time, integrating the dialogue of art and architecture not only in the altarpiece but also in the entire church. The interior of the altar wall is depicted with a painting. This depiction defines a *unique sanctuary* with a controlled intake of light and the display of structural elements as exhibition objects. Paul Gerhart Church is an urban landmark with its sculptural bell tower and tent-roof. Colorful stained-glass patterns reflected by light on the angled raw concrete walls of the altar create a spiritual atmosphere. As is seen, the altar space in all three churches has acquired a spiritual quality with unique characteristics under the influence of color and light. The churches are still in use and excellent condition today. Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, located in the center of Berlin and its symbolic value, continues to be a tourist attraction and hosts events. Maria Regina Martyrum Church is both a parish church and a memorial church, while Paul Gerhart Church continues to serve mainly the local community of Schöneberg. Despite the destruction and suffering of the war, these churches emphasized hope with their expressionist forms, created a calm effect in the

interior using raw materials and provided a spiritual atmosphere with the effect of light and colors.

In contrast to other post-war architectural styles, Brutalism has not disappeared but has evolved and carried its impacts into the 21st century. In contemporary architecture, it continues to be a source of inspiration beyond the principles of Reyner Banham and the architectural patterns of the 1950s-1960s. With current technology and architectural perceptions, new variations of Brutalism can be observed in contemporary architecture and even in churches, albeit in small numbers. Jesus Christus-Der Gute Hirte Church (2000, Frankfurt), St. Canisius Church (2002, Berlin), and Maria-Magdalena Church (2004, Freiburg) are examples of contemporary church architecture in Germany that still display traces of brutal aesthetics.

## Bibliography


A., "Aus Berliner Tagebuchnotizen," Berner Schulblatt – L'Ecole Bernoise, no. 98, H:32/33 (1965): 567-569.

Banham, Reyner. *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic.*London: Architectural Press, 1966.

Banham, Reyner. "The New Brutalism," *Architectural Review*, (December 1955): 355-361.

Busse, Anette S. *Im Spannungsfeld Brutalistischer Strömungen und Liturgischer Bewegung. Bauten der Nachkriegsmoderne von Klaus Franz.* Karlsruhe: KIT Scientific Publishing, 2020.

Fehling, Hermann, and Daniel Gogel. "Werkverzeichnis: vollständiges Werkverzeichnis, 1947-1988." *Baunen + Wohnen*, no. 75 (1988): 58-70.

Holtorf, Cornelius. "Destruction and Reconstruction of Cultural Heritage as Future-Making." In *The Future of the Bamiyan Buddha Statues: Heritage Reconstruction in Theory and Practice,* edited by Masanori Nagaoka, 157-172. Unesco Publishing, 2020.

Hubeli, Ernst. "Fehling und Gogel: signifikante Raumkonstruktionen = Constructions spatiales significatives = Significant spatial constructions." *Baunen + Wohnen*, no. 75 (1988): 24-29.

James-Chakraborty, Kathleen. *Modernism as Memory: Building Identity in the Federal Republic of Germany*. Minneapolis &London: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

Joedicke, Jürgen. "Kirchenbau in unserer Zeit: der Standpunkt des Arkitekten." *Bauen und Wohnen*, no. 12 (1958): 354-358.

Kabierske, Gerhard. "Der Architekt Egon Eiermann und die Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtnis-Kirche." *KWG Magazin* (Oktober (2021): 6-11.

Klack, Gunnar. *Gebaute Landschaften: Fehling + Gogel und die organische Architektur: Landschaft und Bewegung als Natur-Narrative*. Biefield: Transcript, 2015.

Klopfleish, Sabine. *Path of Remembrance. Memorial Area Charlottenburg-Nord. Bezirksamt Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf von Berlin*. Wirtschaftsförderung. Berlin: Pinguin Druck, 2021.

Ortner, Laurids. "Grossstädtisch werden: Projekte und Bauten in der Stadt von Haus Rucker & Co. Werk." *Bauen+Wohnen*, no. 3 (1987): 24-35.

Pehnt, Wolfgang. *German Architecture: 1960-1970.* New York & Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1970.

Sarrazin, Otto, and Friedrich Schultze. "Paul-Gerhardt-Kirche in Schöneberg bei Berlin," *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung*, no. 1-2 (1911): 3-5.

Spindler, Ernst, and Bruno Möhring, eds. "Bilderstrecke". *Berliner Architekturwelt*, no. 10, (1911): 397-400.

Torkar, Felix. *Brutalist Berlin Map*. London: Blue Crow Media, 2021.

Van Uffelen, Chris. *Massive, Expressive, Sculptural: Brutalism Now and Then.* Braun Publishing, 2018.

Voigt, Patrick, and Nikolaus Bernau. *Beton und Glaube-Kirchen der Nachkriegsmoderne in Berlin.* Berlin: Archipendiumedition, 2004.

"Vom Wiederaufbau der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtnis-Kirche in Berlin," *Bauen + Wohnen*, no. 12 (1958): 10.

von Fischer, Sabine. "Risse, Spalten, Fugen: Spielraum im architektonischen Detail." *Bauen + Wohnen*, no. 93 (2006): 44-53.

von Moos, Stanislaus. "Gedächtniskirche' à la carte. Notes on the Political Fortunes of a Pile of Stones." *RA. Revista de Arquitectura*, no. 25 (2023): 10-33.

Weber, Helmut. "Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche Berlin – Qualität und Geschichte einer Instandsetzung." *Bautechnik*, no. 84 (2006): 268-271.

Williams Goldhagen, Sarah. "Coda: Reconceptualizing the Modern." In *Anxious Modernisms: Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture*, Sarah Williams Goldhagen, and Rejean Legault, eds. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000.

Williams Goldhagen, Sarah, and Rejean Legault. "Critical Themes of Postwar Modernism." In *Anxious Modernisms: Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture*, edited by Sarah Williams Goldhagen, and Rejean Legault. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000.

Zill, Rüdiger. "'A true witness of transience': Berlin's Kaiser- Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche and the symbolic use of architectural fragments in modernity," *European Review of History: Revue europeenne d'histoire 18*, no. 5-6 (2011): 811-827.

**Alba Arboix-Alió, Josep Maria Pons-Poblet**

# Parish Churches and Public Space in Barcelona: A Catalan Experience During the 1950s and 1960s

ARTICLE

*Parish Church, Public Space, Barcelona, Modrego, Sant Sebastià.*

**/Abstract**

**This study examines the relationship between Catholic parish churches and urban development in Barcelona, Spain, focusing specifically on the 1950s and 1960s. During this period, a notable increase in church construction was observed, correlating with the city's demographic growth and immigration, as well as the need to reconstruct a devastated Diocese due to the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) aftermath.**

**The significant role of Archbishop Gregorio Modrego Casaus in this post-war reconstruction is emphasized. Under his leadership, many new parishes were established, and numerous damaged or destroyed temples were rebuilt. His strategic approach to restructuring the territory and the urban landscape of Barcelona during his tenure is highlighted.**

**The methodology of this study involves a comprehensive inventory of the 132 Parish churches of Barcelona, detailed architectural analysis, on-site visits, and the creation of graphical plans that depict the churches' relationship with their urban surroundings. The analysis spans from the oldest churches to the most recent additions, initially offering a chronological perspective, then focusing on the 37 built during the 1950s and 1960s, and finally presenting a paradigmatic case study: Sant Sebastià del Verdum (MBM architects). This temple perfectly embodies the era's changes, initiated by the Modern Movement and accelerated by the Second Vatican Council.**

**Overall, this research seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the connection between Catholic parish churches and urban development in Barcelona, particularly during a period of significant post-war growth.**

**/Author**

**Alba Arboix-Alió**
**Universitat de Barcelona, Department of Visual Arts and Design**
**alba.arboix@ub.edu**
**ORCID: 0000-0003-0430-1751**
**Scopus Author ID: 57203987238**
**Researcher ID: N-6564-2016**

**Josep Maria Pons-Poblet**
**Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Department of Strength of Materials and Structures in Engineering**
**josep.maria.pons@upc.edu**
**ORCID: 0000-0003-1876-0772**
**Scopus Author ID: 57190245436**

Alba Arboix-Alió Lecturer Professor Serra Húnter at the Department of Visual Arts and Design of the University of Barcelona (UB) teaching "Ephemeral Installations and Exhibitions" and "Urban Environments". Previously, she also taught at the Technical School of Architecture of Barcelona (UPC) at the University of Girona (UdG), at the Open University of Catalonia (UOC) and at the International University Center of Barcelona (UNIBA). She holds a Ph.D. from the UPC with the thesis "Church and City: The Role of Parish Churches in the Construction of Barcelona" (2016). She is the author of the book "Barcelona: Churches and the Construction of the City" published by the Barcelona City Council (2018). Since 2019, she has been the coordinator of the Conference on Teaching Innovation in Architecture (JIDA). Her main research interests include sacred architecture, the city of Barcelona, public space, urban design, and the adaptive reuse of buildings and the vacant spaces surrounding them.

Josep Maria Pons-Poblet Industrial Engineer from the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya. PhD in Engineer with the Thesis *From Gaudí to Miralles: one hundred years of metallic structure in Barcelona* (2014). Associate Professor in the Department of Strength of Materials and Structures in Engineering, at the Barcelona School of Industrial Engineering (ETSEIB) of the Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC) where he mainly teaches Theory of Structures and Mechanics of Continuous Media. He has previously taught at the Polytechnic School of the University of Girona (UdG), as well as at the Technical School of Industrial Engineering (EUETIB) of the UPC.

https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/18495
Copyright © 2024 Alba Arboix-Alió, Josep Maria Pons-Poblet

## Introduction

Churches, deeply ingrained in the architectural landscape and the collective consciousness of Western societies – particularly those with a traditional Catholic background[1] – play a significant role in the daily life and cityscape of many countries that share this cultural heritage.[2] Even to those who may not frequent churches these religious structures hold a crucial position in shaping the visual identity of numerous cities, including Barcelona in Catalonia, Spain.[3] However, little is known about the role and contribution of its churches in the formation, development, and organization of its diverse neighbourhoods, both at the architectural and urban levels. It is, our understanding of the connection between churches and the urban environment remains limited.

## State of the Art

Previous studies have explored Catholic architecture in Spain from different perspectives. For instance, Juan José Arrizabalaga[4] examined 16 cases in the Basque Country, focusing on the spatial relationship between churches and their surrounding sacred precincts. Ricardo Gómez-Val[5] conducted a restoration-oriented analysis of 56 parish churches constructed during the latter half of the 20th century in Barcelona, emphasizing liturgical and ecclesiastical aspects. Esteban Fernández-Cobián[6] investigated the architecture of religious architecture in Spain during the mid-20th century, while E. Delgado[7] explored sacred architecture in the country from 1936 to 1975. Paloma Gil[8] highlighted the concept of the church as a temple in 20th-century architecture, and Magda Mària i

1 Jonathan F. Schulz, Duman Bahrami-Rad, Jonathan P. Beauchamp and Jospeh Henrich, "The Church, intensive kinship, and global psychological variation," *Science 366*, no. 10 (2019): eaau5141, https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aau5141 (last access November 2024); Matt Murdoch and Jim Davies, "Spiritual and Affective Responses to a Physical Church and Corresponding Virtual Model", *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking 20*, no. 11 (2017): 702-708, https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2017.0249 (last access November 2024); Erik W. Carter, "Addressing Accessibility Within the Church: Perspectives of People with Disabilities," *Journal of Religion and Health*, no. 62 (2022): 2474-2495, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-022-01508-6 (last access November 2024).

2 Kathryn P. Derose, "Linking churches and parks to promote physical activity among Latinos: Rationale and design of the Parishes & Parks cluster randomized trial", *Contemporary Clinical Trials 123*, (December 2022): 106954, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cct.2022.106954 (last access November 2024); Meghan Baruth, "Perceived environmental church support and physical activity among Black church members", *Health Education & Behavior 40*, no. 6 (2013): 712-720, https://doi.org/10.1177/1090198113477110 (last access November 2024); Robyn Plunkett and Peter Chen, "Supporting Healthy Dementia Culture: An Exploratory Study of the Church," *Journal of Religion and Health* 55 (2016): 1917-1928, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-015-0165-8 (last access November 2024); Rexford Owusu, George Kankan, and Daniel Opoku, "Predictors of church participation in Effutu municipality, Ghana: A marketing perspective", *European Journal of Business & Management Research 5*, no. 2 (2020), https://doi.org/10.24018/ejbmr.2020.5.2.257 (last access November 2024).

3 Alba Arboix-Alió, "Church and City. The Role of Parish Temples in the Construction of Barcelona, (PhD Diss., UPCCommons, 2016) https://www.tdx.cat/handle/10803/387815 (last access November 2024).

4 Juan José Arrizabalaga, "The Churches with Wooden Galleries in Euskal-Herria. The Labortano Type and Its Sacred Precincts" (PhD Diss., Architectural Department, UPV, 2012).

5 Ricardo Gómez-Val, "The Construction of Parish Churches in Barcelona between 1952 and 2000." (PhD Diss., Department of Architectural Constructions, UPC, 2012).

6 Esteban Fernández-Cobián, "The Sacred Space in Contemporary Spanish Architecture" (Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Architectural Constructions, UDC, 2000).

7 Eduardo Delgado, "Spanish Sacred Architecture, 1939-1975: From the Postwar to the Post-Council" (PhD Diss., Department of Architectural Composition, UPM, 1999).

8 Paloma Gil, *El Templo del Siglo XX* (Barcelona: Ediciones del Serbal, 1999). Fig. X

Serrano[9] took an interdisciplinary approach, examining churches between 1545 and 1621 from architectural, historical, and liturgical perspectives.

While there is substantial information available on parish churches from an architectural standpoint, no previous study has comprehensively assessed the significance of Catholic parish churches in Barcelona's public spaces on a broader scale. Furthermore, their relationship with the city's public spaces and urban development remains largely unexplored. If we add this to a period of extensive construction in the ecclesiastical field, namely the 1950s and 1960s of the 20th century, we find ourselves within a very well-defined and unexplored framework. Because several studies showed this relationship to have been clear enough up to the 17th century[10]. However, we can see here how, in the case of the Catalan capital, the temples continued to articulate the city over the following centuries, allowing for a better understanding of post-war period and even allowing for a better understanding of today's Barcelona.

## Theoretical Framework

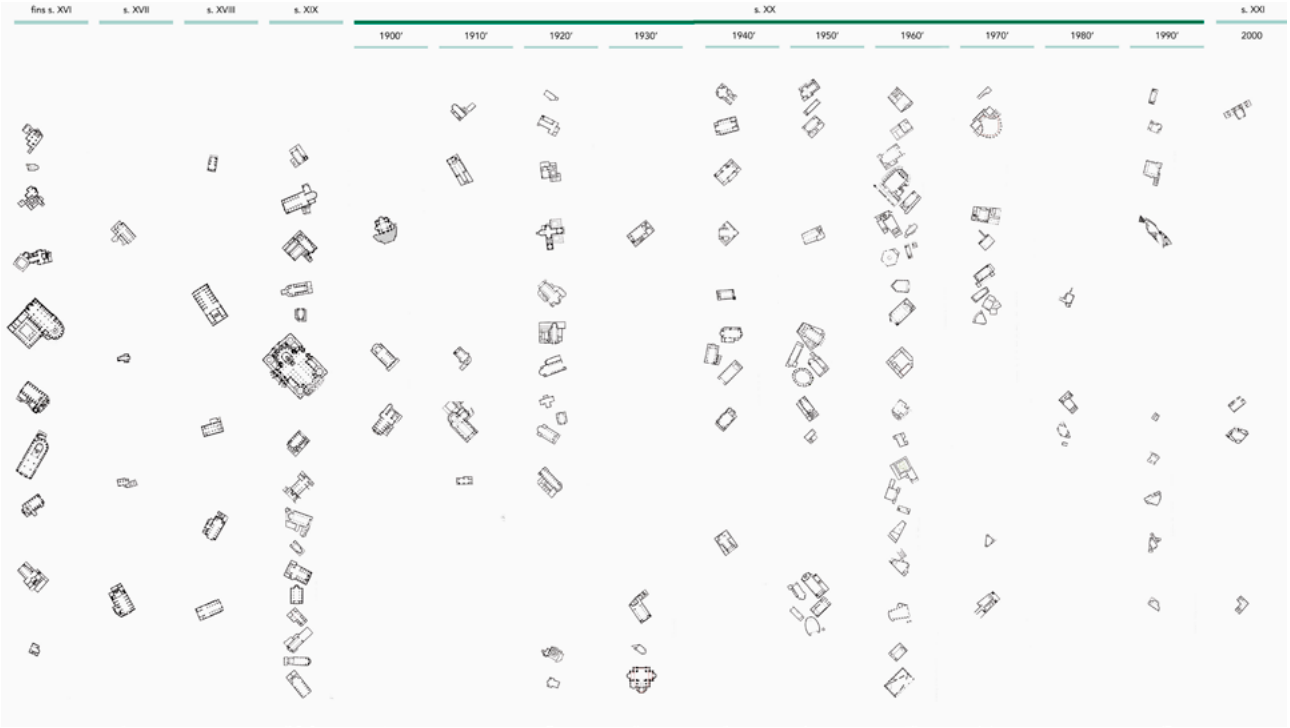
The study focuses on Catholic parish churches, comprising a diverse range of forms and styles. Perhaps no other architectural type exhibits such significant variation, as these buildings were constructed during distinct periods with varying liturgical practices. Broadly speaking, we can distinguish between pre-conciliar churches and post-conciliar churches. The former, often of basilica style, tend to adopt more elongated and linear layouts, while the latter, following the guidelines set by the Second Vatican Council (1965), promote expansive and radial forms that foster a more democratic interior space, with the parish priest facing the congregation (as opposed to having his back turned to them), encouraging interaction among attendees.[11]

While we possess substantial knowledge regarding the architectural, liturgical, and ecclesial aspects of specific churches in Barcelona (such as *La Sagrada Família* or *Santa Maria del Mar*), as well as churches representing historical styles like Romanesque or Gothic, our understanding of the role played by parish churches as a collective group of architectural objects remains unstudied. Furthermore, even the most iconic churches have not been thoroughly studied from an urban perspective. Therefore, this framework illustrates the relevance of incorporating an urban approach, which allows us to establish connections

9 Magda Mària, "Religion, Society and Architecture: Parish Churches in Catalonia (1545-1621)" (PhD Diss., Department of Architectural Composition, UPC, 1994).

10 Magda Mària and Alba Arboix-Alió, "Liturgia y espacio urbano en Barcelona." *Actas III Congreso Internacional de Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporánea*, no. 3, (2013): 132-141, https://ruc.udc.es/dspace/handle/2183/23042; Renee L. Ripley and Bharat Bhushan, "Bioarchitecture: Bioinspired art and architecture-A perspective," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society a Mathematical, Physical, and Engineering Sciences*, no. 374 (2016), https://doi.org/10.1098/rsta.2016.0192 (last access November 2024); Rudolf Cesaretti "Population-Area Relationship for Medieval European Cities," *PLOS ONE*, no. 11 (2016): e0162678, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0162678 (last access November 2024).

11 Alba Arboix-Alió, "Relevance of Catholic Parish Churches in Public Space in Barcelona: Historical Analysis and Future Perspectives," *Buildings 13*, no. 6 (2023): 1370, https://doi.org/10.3390/buildings13061370 (last access November 2024).




1

between the past, present, and future, with a particular focus on the 1950s and 1960s. In this short period of time there had been built the 30% of current Catholic parish churches (without counting restorations and refurbishments because if we were to include them, this percentage would climb much higher).

In Figure 1 is displayed a temporal classification of the 132 existing Catholic parish churches within the municipal boundaries of Barcelona **[Fig. 1]**. Arranged to the same scale and orientation, they are ordered in columns from left to right. The first four columns show centuries, and the subsequent columns show decades.

While classifications that do not go beyond offering a territorial or chronological cataloguing of the elements in their collection are sometimes criticized, they are also necessary. This is especially true when they serve to present objective data that, although they may seem obvious, could be overlooked. The chronological table presented on this occasion organizes, from left to right and top to bottom, the 132 parish churches currently in the city of Barcelona. In this manner, the spatial axis is fixed, and only the temporal dimension is considered. It is worth noting that the moment of construction is when its spatial structure is determined. Therefore, restorations or expansions that do not substantially modify its formal essence, or rehabilitations that fix specific defects caused by various aggressions over time, are not considered. On the other hand, if a church has had to be completely rebuilt because the preceding one was totally damaged, the date of this last construction is taken, without forgetting that the location as a 'sacred point' or 'genius loci' will have many more years of antiquity.

The first column groups churches from different centuries that are prior to 1600. Except for the temple of the *Mare de Déu del Coll* and that of *Sant Martí de Provençals*, the others correspond to constructions in the city centre. They correspond to the current city centre since the third example, *Sant Pau del Camp*,

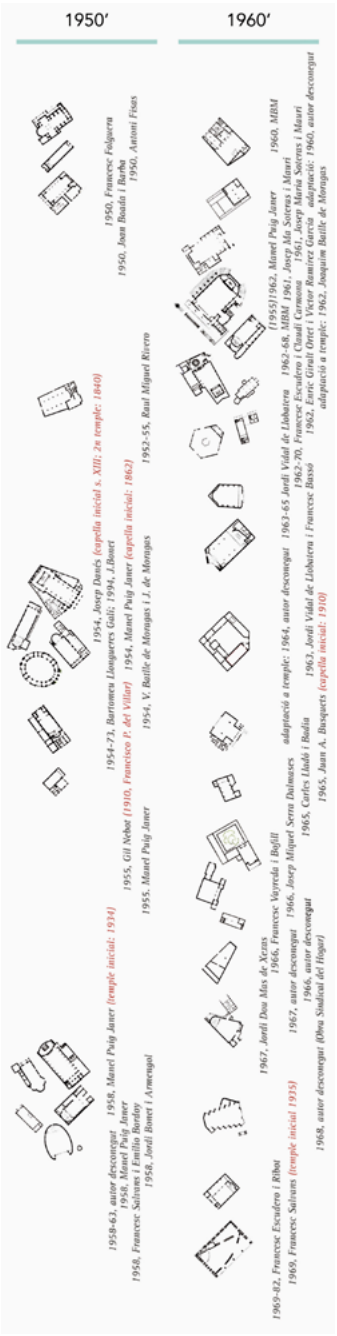
Fig. 1
Temporal position of the 132 existing parish churches within the municipal boundaries of Barcelona. Arranged to scale and with the same orientation and sorted by columns from left to right, the first four of which show centuries and the subsequent ones, decades (Graphic by the authors).

was located on the outskirts when it was built and was only surrounded by fields and unbuildable land. The next three columns gather parish churches built during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, noting a significant increase in construction in the latter. Subsequent columns correspond to periods of ten years.

This is where the first 'ecclesiastical boom' occurs in the 1920s, graphically confirming the profound and comprehensive void that existed during the years of the last Civil War (1936-39) and confirming the impressive number of sacred constructions built during the 1950s and 1960s. It is during this last decade that Barcelona grows at a rate of more than two churches per year, and the seventies begin with about thirty new parish centres. This article will focus on examining in more detail this particular time frame.

While this data may seem obvious because it is directly proportional to the physical and demographic growth of the city coinciding with key moments of immigration, it is necessary to mention the situation of the last 20 years. During the 1990s and the first years of the new millennium, Barcelona has still contributed to ecclesiastical construction with thirteen new parish churches. At a time when the city's uncontrolled growth has already slowed down and the trend has supposedly shifted towards secularism, new parish churches such as Sant *Salvador d'Horta*, *Sant Josep Obrer*, *Sant Esteve*, *Patriarca Abraham*, Sant Marc, *Santa Bernardeta*, *Sant Narcís*, *Sant Mateu*, *Santa Maria Magdalena*, *Sant Cristòfol*, *Sant Bartomeu*, *Sant Francesc de Pàola*, and *Sant Domènec Guzmán* have been built, some of which are monumental and all fully compliant with post-conciliar regulations.

In any case, the main objective of this research article will be to analyse in more detail and from an urban perspective the 15 churches built in the 1950s and the 22 built in the 1960s **[Fig. 2]**. This will allow us to better understand these tumultuous post-war years, which, in the Catalan case, were of special intensity due to being clear losers of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). If we broaden our view to Europe, we find ourselves in a similar situation. After a devastating World War II, most cities of Western Catholic tradition focused all efforts on the reconstruction of their damaged churches. Therefore, at this time, the relations established between ecclesiastical hierarchies, politicians, scholars of religious and social sciences, architects, and artists led to the construction of thousands of new churches throughout Europe in a short time, even before the post-conciliar revolution.[12] In the Catalan case, although relatively unknown, it will undoubtedly be so.




1

Fig. 2
Zoom of the temporal position of the 37 parish churches built during the 50' and 60' in Barcelona. Arranged to the same scale and orientation, the annotations in red alert that a previous version of that temple has already existed and the annotations in black inform the year of construction and the architect (Graphic by the authors).

## Materials and Methods

To answer our objective, it will be necessary to gather comprehensive information on the intricate connections between Catholic parish churches, public spaces, and the urban growth and expansion of Barcelona in Catalonia, Spain.

12 Sven Sterken and Evan Weyns, eds.. *Territories of Faith. Religion, Urban Planning and Demographic Change in Post-War Europe* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022).

First, by having a general framework of its entirety, that is, considering the 132 parish churches built in the more than 2000 years of history of the city. And then, focusing more knowingly on the 37 built between the 1950s and 1960s of the 20th century. To accomplish this, we will also provide the case study of the *Sant Sebastià del Verdum*. This church showcases the successful solution of a post-conciliar church designed by the prestigious architects of MBM, which is a reference for the modern movement at the European level.

Our study builds upon previous preliminary research conducted by A. A-A for their doctoral thesis, which examined in detail all Catholic parish churches constructed within Barcelona's municipal boundaries (132).[13] The data presented in this study aims to establish a plausible connection between churches and the city, spanning from the earliest foundational temples to churches integrated into the more recent block neighbourhoods.

Methodologically, we conducted an exhaustive inventory of the 132 existing parishes within the city's municipal limits. Additionally, we meticulously analysed architectural elements, plans, and urban contexts of each church by utilizing both on-site visits (including hand-drawn sketches and current photographs) and extensive research in various archives of Barcelona. This collection of scientific and unpublished research forms the core corpus of our study. The consulted archives and catalogues include the Diocesan Archive of the Archdiocese of Barcelona, Barcelona Municipal Archives, Historical Archive of Barcelona, Archive of the Provincial Council of Barcelona, Historical Archive of the Association of Architects of Catalonia, Photo Archive of Barcelona, Archive of the Excursionist Centre of Catalonia, Archive of the Gaudi Chair, Archive of the Cartographic Institute of Catalonia, Archive of the National Art Museum of Catalonia, Archive of the Museum History of Barcelona, several parish archives, and JM Gavín's inventory of Churches.

Precise drawings of the 132 Catholic parish churches were created using AutoCAD and Photoshop software, based on the hand-written notes and sketches from on-site visits, as well as plans obtained from different sources such as archives and catalogues. These drawings adhere to the graphic style of Camillo Sitte and Nolli.[14] The current plans are self-generated. Using the AutoCAD program, the different sections of the cartographic records from the City Council (https://w20.bcn.cat/cartobcn/) were downloaded and meticulously assembled. Relevant layers were selected, line thickness and colours were adjusted, patterns were added, and churches and their surrounding urban spaces were depicted. For the Nolli's style, Photoshop was employed to superimpose the churches and urban plans.[15]

Furthermore, we analysed the historical evolution of these 132 parish churches

13 Arboix-Alió, "Church and City. The Role of Parish Temples in the Construction of Barcelona".

14 Camillo Sitte, *Construcción de Ciudades Según Principios Artísticos* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1980); Giovanni Battista Nolli, *Nuova pianta di Roma data in luce da l'anno 1748* (Napoli: Edizioni Intra Moenia, 2016).

15 Alba Arboix-Alió, "Data set of catholic parish churches of Barcelona. Relevance of their architectural characterization as singular buildings," *Data in Brief 51* (2023): 109630, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dib.2023.109630 (last access November 2024).; Alba Arboix-Alió, "Data collection of Catholic parish churches of Barcelona," *Mendeley Data*, 22 August 2023, https://doi.org/10.17632/2jvhcg972t.2 (last access November 2024).

in Barcelona. It is worth noting that the location and positioning of buildings play a crucial role in a city's urban growth. While we observe modern or contemporary structures today, many of them are second, third, or even fourth iterations of churches built on the same site, with the original structures dating back centuries. Factors such as forced expropriations by the ecclesiastical government and wars have led to the rebuilding of these sacred spaces. However, for the purpose of our analysis, we adopt a present-day perspective in understanding the city's history, drawing inspiration from Italo Calvino's approach.[16] When gathering data to create our illustrations, we consider the year of the current building while acknowledging the year of the first structure on the site. Thus, our methodological approach combines both deductive and inductive reasoning, ensuring its applicability extends beyond the city of Barcelona itself.

As a result, we have developed an urban layout encompassing the parish churches in Barcelona, wherein the sacred interiors are integrated with the surrounding public spaces, visually representing the relationship between the churches and the urban environment. Combining both macro and micro perspectives, our study aims to offer a rich and layered understanding of the role and evolution of Catholic parish churches in Barcelona's urban and social fabric, particularly during the transformative decades of the 1950s and 1960s. The 37 parish churches built in this period have been designed in the style of Nolli's plan. Additionally, we have also meticulously depicted these urban enclaves following the style of Camillo Sitte [Fig. 3, 4, 5].

## Results: Churches and City

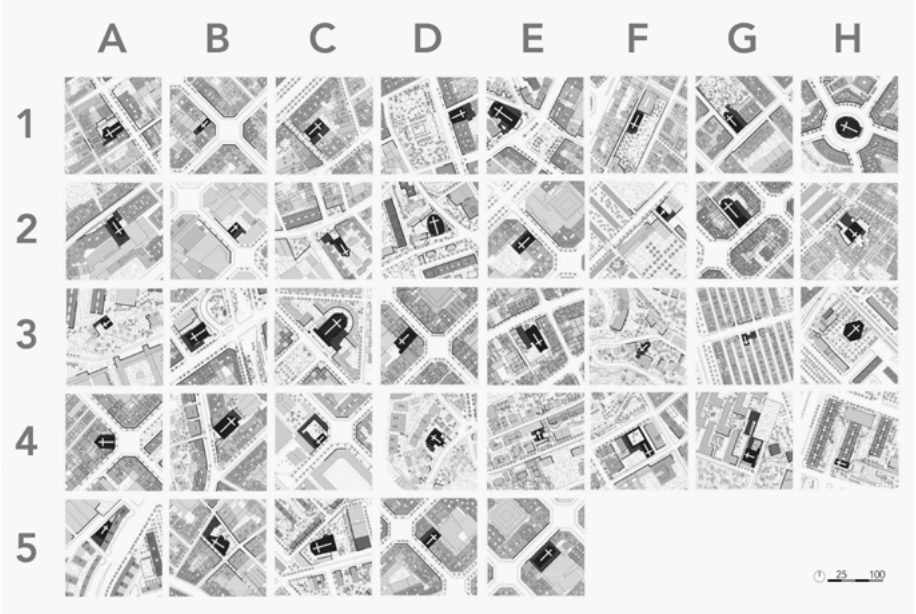
The research findings, presented through maps and drawings, are structured to comprehensively understand the diverse urban relationships that exist between the churches and the city, spanning from the oldest to the most recent churches.

### *First the Church is built and then the Neighbourhood appears*

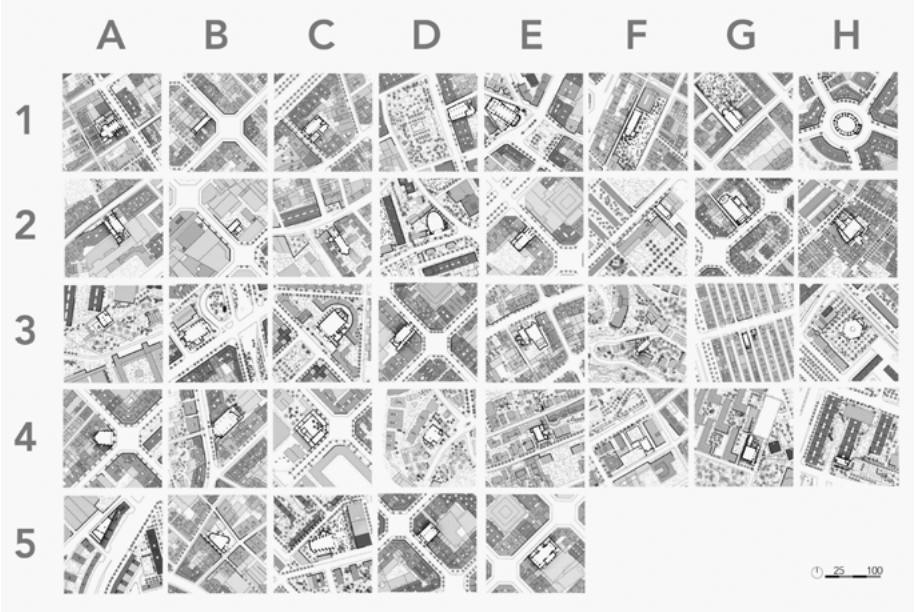
During the Medieval period, ecclesiastical buildings played a foundational role in the formation and growth of Barcelona. Examining a mid-19th century city map showcasing the current parish churches provides a clear understanding of their importance in the contemporary urban landscape. Analyzing the churches' locations in relation to the roads leading out of the medieval city reveals their influence in giving rise to new urban settlements, thus initiating Barcelona's urban expansion [Fig. 6].

These population centres, closer to Roman Barcelona, were already established by the 12th century. However, from the 13th century onward, agricultural centres surrounding slightly more distant churches began to strengthen and grow, such as *Sant Vicenç de Sarrià*, *Sant Joan d'Horta*, *Santa Maria de Sants*,

16 Italo Calvino, *Las ciudades invisibles* (Madrid: Ediciones Siruela, 1998).




3




4

| | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Sant Miquel dels Sants<br>C. Escorial 163 | Sant Tomàs d'Aquino<br>C. Roger de Flor 245 | Santa Dorotea<br>C. Santa Dorotea 5 | Sant Joan Maria Vianney<br>C. Melcior Palau 56 | Sants Gervasi i Protasi<br>Pl. Bonanova 12 | Sant Josep de Calassanç<br>C. Joan de Peguera 20 | Sant Ildefons<br>C. Madrazo 92 | Sant Gregori Taumaturg<br>Pl. St. Gregori Taumaturg 9 |
| 2 | Santa Agnès<br>C. Sant Elies 23 | Sant Pancraç<br>C. Badajoz 130 | Sant Medir<br>C. Constitució 17 | Sant Ot<br>Pg. Manuel Girona 25 | Sant Oleguer Bisbe<br>C. Nàpols 133 | Sant Pere Ermengol<br>C. Lluís Borrassà 20 | Esperit Sant<br>C. Trav. Gràcia 401 | Sant Sebastià<br>C. Viladrosa 96 |
| 3 | Sant Rafael<br>Pl. Can Ensenya s/n | Santa Tecla<br>Av. Madrid 107 | Sant Pius X<br>C. Pardo 5 | Sant Llorenç<br>C. Entença 109 | Crist Redemptor<br>Av. Mare de Déu de Montserrat 34 | Sant Joan de la Creu<br>Av. Vallvidrera 75 | Santa Maria de Cervelló<br>C. Almirall Cervera 8 | Sant Pauli de Nola<br>C. Alfons el Magnànim 125 |
| 4 | Corpus Christi<br>C. Bailèn 175 | Santa Cecília<br>Pg. Sant Gervasi 66 | Sant Fèlix<br>C. Sardenya 29 | Sant Jordi<br>Viaducte de Vallcarca 7 | Sant Cebrià<br>C. Arenys 65 | Verge de la Pau<br>Pl. Ferran Casablancas 4 | Sant Jeroni<br>Pl. Mossèn Ferran Palau 3 | Verge de Natzaret<br>C. Juan de Mena 29 |
| 5 | Santíssim Sagrament<br>C. Santander 18 | Santa Joaquima de Vedruna<br>C. Francolí s/n | Sant Ambròs<br>C. Concili de Trento 297 | Preciosíssima Sang de Nostre Senyor Jesucrist<br>C. Viladomat 76 | Mare de Déu de la Medalla Miraculosa<br>C. Consell de Cent 10 | | | |

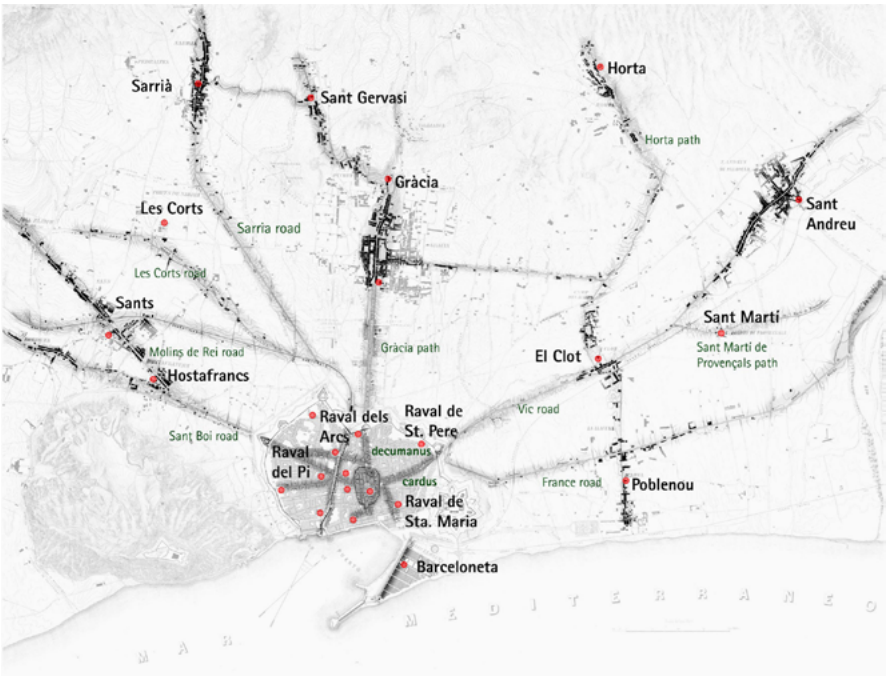
5

Fig. 3
Urban implementation of the parish churches built in the 1950s and 1960s of the 20th century in Barcelona, with the same scale and orientation. Drawn following the style of Camillo Sitte (Graphic by the authors).

Fig. 4
Urban implementation of the parish churches built in the 1950s and 1960s of the 20th century in Barcelona, with the same scale and orientation. Drawn following the style of Giambatista Nolli (Graphic by the authors).

Fig. 5
Name and address of the parish churches that appear in the Figures 4 and 5 (Graphic by the author).

*Sant Andreu del Palomar*, *Sant Martí de Provençals*, or *Sants Gervasi i Protasi*, popularly known as *La Bonanova*. The dedication of these churches later served as the namesake for the respective neighborhoods that developed around them.




Over the centuries, new settlements continued to consolidate, often with a church as their central feature. Examples from the same map include *Verge de Gràcia i Sant Josep*, also known as *Els Josepets de Gràcia*, *Santa Maria de Gràcia*, *Santa Maria del Remei* in *Les Corts*, *Sant Àngel Custodi* in *Hostafrancs*, *Santa Maria del Taulat* in *Poblenou*, and *Sant Martí del Clot* in the ward of the same name. These examples highlight the linear and direct cause-effect relationship between foundational churches and the urban expansion.[17]

The relationship between neighbourhoods and churches can be more intricate than the straightforward case of foundational churches, it is, the cases when first the church is built and then the neighbourhood appears around it. After the notable urban and demographic boom in Barcelona during the mid-20th century, primarily due to immigration waves in the 1920s, 1940s/50s, and 1950s/60s, the city witnessed significant changes in its growth patterns. The traditional medieval growth model became obsolete, giving way to the regular layout of the Eixample district, the emergence of neighbourhoods around factories or commercial axes, and the creation of industrial estates.[18]

Up until the 18th century, much of the history of Western architecture could be identified and summarized through the Christian temple. Indeed, up to the Baroque period, churches have been one of the paradigmatic architectural types where structural, constructive, and compositional progress of each era is concentrated.[19] In addition to their symbolic, utopian, and transcendental nature, attributes such as monumentality, allegory, and referentiality are added to the sacred building. This results in a society that is predominantly believing to invest all available resources into its construction.

But during the 18th and 19th centuries, in Catalonia, a process of secularization began, which continued into the 20th and 21st centuries, creating a predominantly secular dominant thought. Nevertheless, despite it is claimed that

6

Fig. 6
Plan of the existing churches in Barcelona in 1855, which are now the main churches in the neighborhoods they connect. Graphic by the author on base "Plan of Barcelona and its surroundings in 1855" (source: Arturo Soria y Puig, Cerdà. Las Cinco Bases de la Teoría General de la Urbanización. Milan: Electa, 1996).

17 Arboix-Alió, "Church and City. The Role of Parish Temples in the Construction of Barcelona".

18 Manuel Solà-Morales, *Deu lliçons sobre Barcelona: Ten Lessons on Barcelona* (Barcelona: COAC, 2008).

19 Kenneth Frampton, *Historia crítica de la arquitectura moderna* (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 2007).

Barcelona is one of the most secular cities in Europe according to the Secularist Spanish civil association "Europa Laica", at the same time it is found that the relationship between the church and the city remains highly intense. This is because, no matter how much society and the democratic state have secularized, parish churches continue to be closely linked to popular culture. They continue to exist, shaping and uniting the city of Barcelona to the point of still forming a recognizable entity between the church and the city.[20]

This is particularly evident when studying those cases where it is not the church that establishes the urban core, nor the already settled population that demands the erection of the parish church. Rather, it occurs on those occasions where the religious building and the urban fabric are planned together on paper and are simultaneously constructed in the city. It is in these comprehensively planned neighbourhoods that the church is discovered to be one of the




7

key pieces for articulating and symbolizing the whole ensemble. In Barcelona, various developments of this type can be located, which can be grouped into three distinguishable strategic lines, the third of them occurred during the 1950s and 60s.

*Church and Neighbourhood built at one same Time*

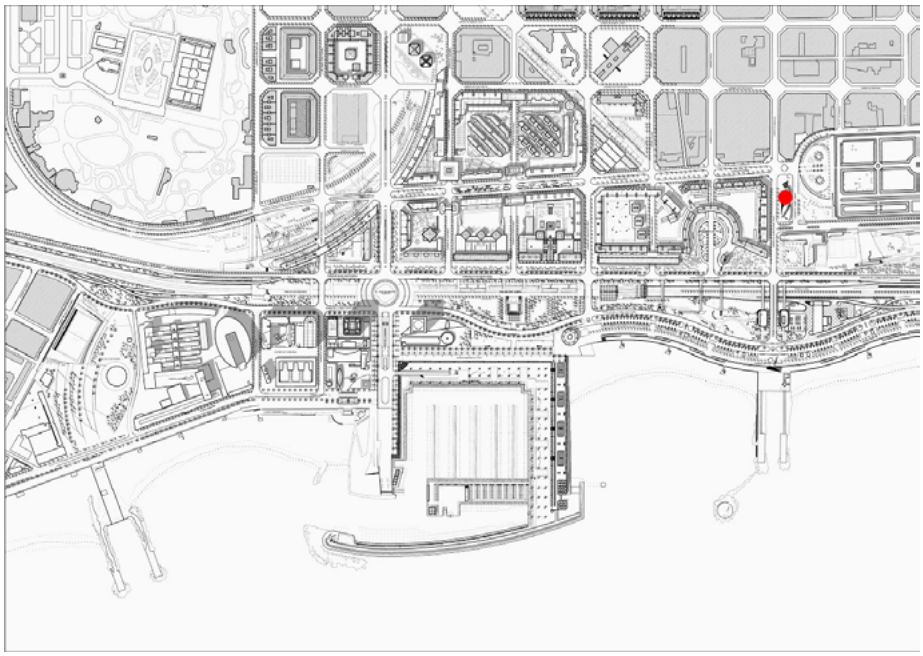
Church and city go hand in hand, initially, when contemplating the first territorial expansions near the older fabrics of foundational Barcelona. The neighbourhood of Barceloneta with its parish church of *Sant Miquel del Port* is the best and the first example. Its construction, in 1753, carried out by the engineer Juan Martín Cermeño, corresponds to a project of military conception and neoclassical regularity, and represents the first public housing complex conceived from the parcel module. The proposal consists of a stretch of equal, parallel

Fig. 7
Location of the parish church of Sant Miquel del Port on a manuscript map by Antonio López Sopeña, 1801. Graphic by the author on base "Digital Collection of the General Archive of Simancas" (Ref: sig MPD, 29, 057).

20 Arboix-Alió, "Church and City. The Role of Parish Temples in the Construction of Barcelona".

streets, running southeast, intersected by others at right angles. The blocks of houses obtained in this layout, elongated and of shallow depth, are arranged in the same orientation, except for those that turn 90º to form the two unique squares of the neighbourhood **[Fig. 7]**. One of them, the smaller, more directional and delimited one, is the atrium of the parish church of *Sant Miquel del Port*; the other, of greater surface area, more isotropic and dispersed, shapes the current market square.

Planning on paper and the construction of the church alongside a fragment of the city also proceed in parallel because of special occasions. Certain social and large-scale celebrations drive the urbanization of entire sectors of the city, with the sacred building serving as a distinguishing element. A relatively recent example is the event of the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. In celebration of the sporting event, the Vila Olímpica neighbourhood was built, and the *Patriarch Abraham* temple was erected as a symbolic monument. The design of the sports city complex and its subsequent transformation into a residential neighbourhood was carried out by the same team of MBM Architects (Josep Mª Martorell, Oriol Bohigas, and David Mackay), together with Albert Puigdomènech, and incorporating projects from architects and urban planners who had won FAD awards **[Fig. 8]**. The church, now the parish of the neighbourhood, was born as a place of worship with the intention of being an ecumenical centre for interfaith dialogue among the various Christian denominations participating in the Olympic Games. It is the work of Josep Benedito and Agustí Mateos, who designed a standalone building, more like a sculptural monument, perhaps more significant for what it represents as an urban landmark than for the architectural quality of the whole. Its shape is that of a large fish, recalling the maritime history of the area and alluding to the early Christian symbol representing Jesus, a symbol shared among various Christian users of the centre. The church is in



8

Fig. 8
Location of the Parish Church of the Patriarca Abraham on the planning map of the Vila Olímpica of Barcelona in 1992. Graphic by the author on base "Tempus Fugit Visual Projects through Architects for Architecture" (source: https://arqxarq.es/el-exito-de-la-vila-olimpica/, last access October 2024).

the elliptically shaped body, leaving the tail for the parish facilities, which are currently largely empty as they were sized for a time of much attendance and have not yet been adapted to accommodate new uses. The main entrance is through a large staircase and an atrium, leading to the entrance gate, under the choir of the church. The floor plan is symmetrical along a northeast-southwest axis but is liturgically poorly oriented. Being a standalone building, without changing its shape, the sanctuary could have been projected to the east, towards the rising sun, as Christian liturgy dictates. There is a second, ground-level entrance on the higher part of the street responsible for overcoming, with its natural slope, the unevenness of the plot. The temple is situated at the end of Avinguda d'Icària, on a boundary plot between Vila Olímpica and Poblenou, which due to its shape and dimensions, allows for the autonomous placement of the ecclesiastical piece. Finally, the parish church is planned on paper and built in the city in parallel with the construction of the urban fabric when, due to a housing shortage, new neighbourhoods of apartment blocks must be rapidly created in areas farthest from the historic and geographic centre of the city.

All three strategies, despite responding to very different moments and causes, correspond to the type of urban growth known in Spain as *polígons* (which can be translated literally as polygons or as 'block development'). In this type of neighbourhoods there is always unity and parallelism in the entire process of project planning, execution, and ultimately, material definition. From the Urbanism Laboratory of Barcelona, efforts are made to pedagogically explain this phenomenon. In fact, not just to elucidate urban fabrics formed as blocks, but also all the various forms of city growth. The research group from the School of Architecture in Barcelona, led by Manuel de Solà-Morales until his death in 2012, discovered a third parameter to the classic tandem of 'morphology-typology' that is very useful for studying the city: that of 'structure.' Any type of urban growth can now be explained with the triad: urbanization, parcelling, and construction. That is, the relationship between the infrastructure for distributing services, the morphology of land occupation, and the typology of building construction.[21] These three parameters, added to the factor of time, create all the existing urban forms in the current, heterogeneous cities.

Following this discourse, block developments or polygons constitute a form of urban growth that arises from confronting all three parameters – plotting, urbanization, and construction – at the same time and with the presence of a single agent. It is an operation, responding to a very specific need and where, usually, available economic resources are scarce. In general, this type of growth leads to homogeneous, geometric urbanizations that appear suddenly in delimited areas and with the ad infinitum repetition of residential blocks. Upon taking a closer look, however, focusing on parish churches, it is discovered that in most cases, the church building is one of the key pieces that articulates the predominantly residential ensemble. It is the piece that is associated with the appearance of open space – often defining what represents the only square in

21 Manuel de Solà-Morales, *Las formas de crecimiento urbano* (Barcelona: Edicions UPC, 1997).



9




10

Fig. 9
Location of the Parish Church of Sant Francesc Xavier on the map of the neighbourhood then known as Ramon Albó. Graphic by the author on base "Web Memory of the Neighbourhoods, Graphic History of the Neighbourhoods of the Horta-Guinardó District" (source https://memoriadelsbarris.blogspot.com/2011/11/historia-del-barri-de-can-peguera.html, last access October 2024).

Fig. 10
Location of Pius X on the urbanization plan of Can Ros, the initial name of the Congrés neighbourhood. Graphic by the author on base: Les Vivendes del Congrés Eucarístic de Barcelona. 1952-1962. Barcelona: Ediciones UPC, 2011, 40.



the settlement; it is the landmark placed at the point of greatest visibility; it is the building that tends to be set back from the established alignment; and it is the element that forms the unique urban enclave of the whole due to the symbolic and structural role of the church building itself.

In the growth of the city of Barcelona, three periods are identified where, in response to housing demand to accommodate demographic growth, the construction of *polígons*, is resorted to.[22]

In an initial phase, during the second decade of the previous century, groups of 'Affordable Houses' emerged. Following laws specifically enacted for the purpose, low-density clusters featuring single-family homes were built. A prime example is the affordable houses of Can Peguera in the district of Horta, with the Parish Church of *Sant Francès Xavier* serving as a focal point. Another is the neighbourhood of Fargues in Guinardó, with the Church of *Sant Antoni de Padua*. These residential clusters feature very simple urban forms and highly austere architectural types, designed to provide decent housing to meet the minimal needs of their inhabitants **[Fig. 9]**.

In a second phase, spanning from the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939 to the year 1955, despite a slowdown in the construction sector due to a lack of building materials, more complex urban forms with a greater variety of housing types were realized. Within a new legal and institutional framework, the housing cluster of the Congrés neighbourhood stands out, with the Parish Church of *Sant Pius X* playing a central role. This is a development of greater dimensions compared to those of the previous period, introducing isolated blocks and opting for a diversity of architectural types. Public services and facilities assume more importance, affecting the overall design of the cluster **[Fig. 10]**. The church, designed by Josep Mª Soteras i Mauri, although not constructed

Fig. 11
Location of Sant Jeroni on the urbanization Montbau. Graphic by the authors on base image made available through courtesy of Arxiu Municipal de la Ciutat de Barcelona).

22 Aixalà Ferrer, *Els polígons de Barcelona* (Barcelona: Edicions UPC, 1996).

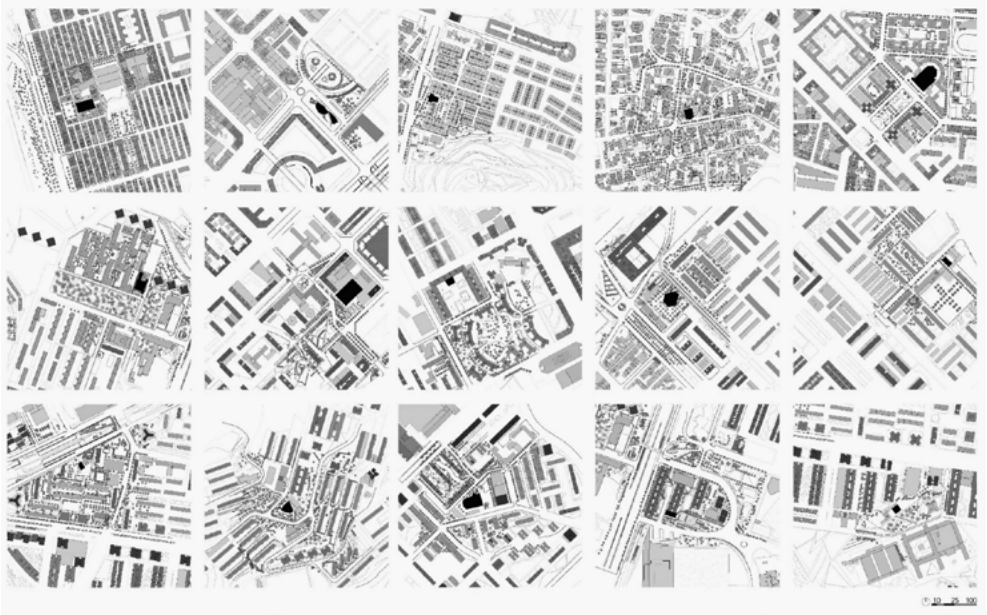


Fig. 12
Urban layout of the churches that articulate polygons in the city of Barcelona. Except from de first four, the other 11 examples are built during the 1950s and the 1960s. From left to right and from top to bottom using the following nomenclature: Church name, neighbourhood name (if different from the church name). Year of neighbourhood construction, year of church construction (if different from the year of neighbourhood construction). In addition, there are sometimes different churches because in many cases, when the neighbourhood is built, liturgical celebrations are held in a provisional church that is nothing more than a warehouse; years later, the definitive church is built, and in some cases, after some time, a second church is built that replaces the previous one. Sant Miquel del Port, La Barceloneta, 1753. Sant Antoni de Pàdua, La Font d'en Fargues, 1925. Sant Francesc Xavier, Can Peguera or Ramón Albó, 1929. Sant Pius X, El Congrés, 1953; 1961. Sant Cristòfor, La Marina de Port or La Seat, 1956; 1966; 2000. Sant Lluís Gonçaga, Sant Martí de Provençals, 1956; 1969. Sant Jeroni, Montbau, 1957; 1966. Sant Paulí de Nola, Besós Maresme or Sud-oest Besós, 1960; 1962. Sant Bernat de Claravall, Ciutat Meridiana, 1964; 1973. Sant Ambrós, La Verneda i la Pau or La Pau, 1966; 1968. Sant Ambrós, also in the district of La Verneda i la Pau or La Pau, 1966; 1968. Verge de Natzaret, La Vall d'Hebron, 1966. Sant Rafael, La Guineueta, 1970; 1960 and finally, the ecumenical center for the Olympic Games which, once the Games were over, became the parish of the Patriarca Abraham neighborhood, La Vila Olímpica, 1992. Graphic by the authors.

until a few years later, is a focal element from the inception of the project. St. Pius X presides over the large square of the cluster and, with its tall reinforced concrete bell tower, serves as a landmark for the entire neighbourhood.

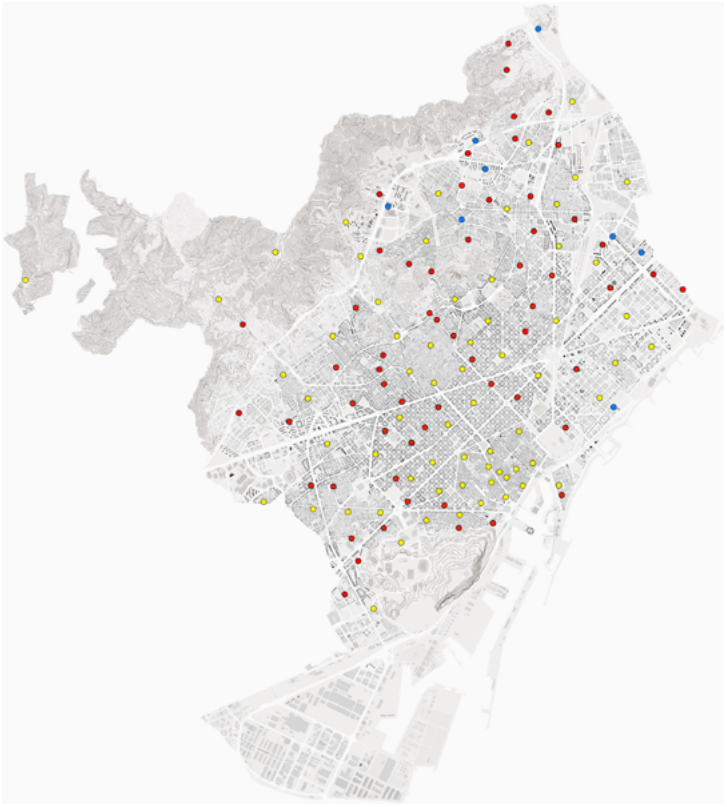
A third phase occurs in the decade from 1955 to 1965, marked by a significant increase in the promotion of public housing, facilitated by a series of enabling laws. Is in this period when most polygons have been built. A paradigmatic example is the Montbau development with the Parish Church of *Sant Jeroni* [Fig. 11]. Above all classifications, if we examine all the cases of block neighbourhoods built in the city of Barcelona, we find that the majority (11 out of 15) were constructed during our study period, between the 1950s and 1960s. Of the 37 parish churches built during this period, 11, or 30%, are churches within these block developments [Fig. 12].

*Archbishop Gregorio Modrego Casaus*

The presence of Catholic parish churches scattered throughout the layout of Barcelona in a homogeneous and regular manner facilitates their interpretation from a collective and series perspective. Indeed, when the churches are highlighted on a contemporary map of the city, the equidistant nature of their positioning becomes evident. Distributed throughout every district as distinctive buildings, they generally stand as recognizable urban landmarks. This distribution enables an analysis of the entire city as a whole revealing a comprehensive urban strategy [Fig. 13]. Thus, regardless of whether the sacred building predates, postdates, or exists concurrently with the population centre that surrounds it, this mapping aids in understanding the relationship between the parish churches and the city, as well as the historical relationship between ecclesiastical bodies and municipal and state powers. And normally, the name of a Bishop stands out. Cardinals Josef Frings in Cologne, Manuel Gonçalves Cerejeira in Lisbon, Giacomo Lercaro in Bologna or Jozef-Ernest Van Roey in Mechelen. Discussing this matter in Barcelona leads to mentioning a significant

figure who led the diocese of Barcelona for nearly twenty-five years: Archbishop Gregorio Modrego Casaus (Aragón 1890 – Barcelona, 1972).[23]

Gregorio Modrego was born in Aragón, educated in Rome, and adopted by Barcelona. He arrived in the Catalan city after the Spanish Civil War to succeed the previous bishop, Manuel Irurita Almandoz, who was notably close to National Catholicism and opposed to the Republic or any liberal or progressive currents. Modrego did not intend to lead with a spirit of renewal. In fact, the motto engraved on his shield is 'unity'. Modrego sought unity within the clergy, the country, the people, and, above all, he proclaimed unity as paramount. Despite this, the populace placed puzzling expectations on him, especially considering the city had supposedly ended the tenure of the previous bishop. Nevertheless, both the pontificate of Gregorio Modrego Casaus and his personal legacy are remembered in the history of the Barcelona diocese for their prolific activity.



13

The archbishop ordained 657 priests, organized multiple congresses – the most notable being the XXXV International Eucharistic Congress of Barcelona in 1952 – and promoted the construction of housing in the Congrés district. Although some say the pinnacle of his pontificate was the aforementioned congress or that his greatest gift to the Catalan capital was the construction of an entire neighborhood, from an urban planning perspective, he is credited with another significant accomplishment: the complete reconstruction of the city's religious heritage. Indeed, Gregorio Modrego must be recognized for the monumental task of restructuring and reorganizing the Barcelona diocese during the early postwar period in Spain, a time when he established a total of 118 new parishes. Of these, 63 are within the municipal boundaries of the city of Barcelona, and 59 of which have survived to the present day.[24]

The Aragonese native arrived during a tumultuous period, and without prejudice or excuses, managed to coordinate the teams needed to rebuild the demolished or partially destroyed temples and to establish new parishes wherever necessary. The severe damages caused during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), combined with the rapid growth of the city due to a massive influx of immigrants, made the need for churches a palpable reality, and undoubtedly, his

23 Francesc Muñoz Alarcón, *Gregorio Modrego Casaus: obispo del XXXV Congreso Eucarístico Internacional de Barcelona: documentos y notas históricas* (Barcelona: Claret, 2002).

24 Alba Arboix-Alió, "Reconstructing the Dioceses of Barcelona. Parish Reform and Church Building under Monsignor Modrego Casaus from 1943 to 1967," in *Territories of Faith. Religion, Urban Planning and Demographic Change in Post-War Europe*, ed. Sven Sterken and Evan Weyns, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022).

Fig. 13
Urban layout of current Catholic Parish churches. In red, the ones erected under Modrego's mandate. In yellow the previous ones and in blue the post ones. Graphic by the authors.

response was unyielding.

Among the damages to the sacred architecture of the Barcelona diocese, 160 temples were burned or looted, 74 were partially mutilated, and 35 were completely destroyed. Within the municipal boundaries of the city of Barcelona, virtually all parish churches were desecrated and damaged, with 12 of them being utterly destroyed: *Santa Maria de Sants*, *Sant Josep i Santa Mònica*, *Sants Gervasi i Protasi*, *Sant Francesc de Paula* – which was eventually torn down during the expansion works of the Palau de la Música Catalana, ceding its name to a newly built church in the Poblenou district –, *Santa Maria de Jesús de Gràcia*, *Sant Cugat del Rec* – now vanished –, *Santa Anna* – the modern church adjacent to the ancient 12th-century temple which was preserved –, *Santa Maria del Taulat*, *Mare de Déu de Port*, *Sant Antoni de Pàdua*, Sant Francesc d'Assís, and *Mare de Déu de la Medalla Miraculosa*.[25]

During the period from 1943, the year of the bishop's arrival in the diocese, to 1967, the year he departed, Gregorio Modrego Casaus inaugurated a total of 154 buildings, distributed as follows: 93 newly constructed temples (35 in places where existing temples had been completely destroyed and 58 in areas that previously had no church), 43 reconstructed temples, and 18 further restored.

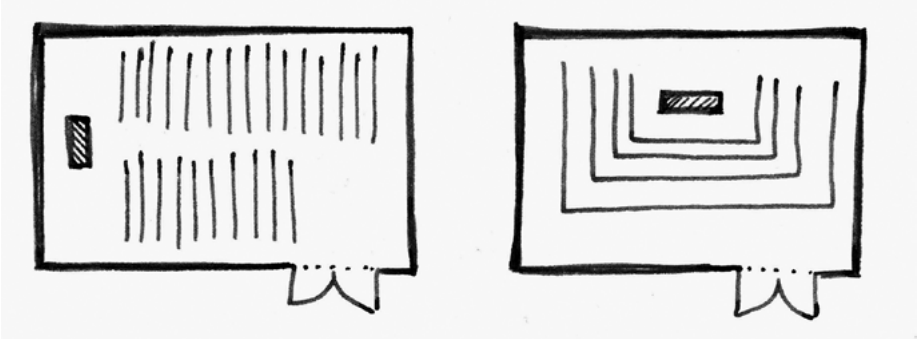
It's important to distinguish between the canonical erection of a parish – a juridical act through which a new parochial demarcation is created – from the act of placing and blessing the foundation stone and the construction and dedication of the temple. Ideally, one would follow the other naturally and fluidly, but often periods of years or even decades pass between the different phases. In this regard, Modrego consecrates parishes that had been established in previous pontificates, especially during Irurita's. Likewise, churches established by Modrego are not constructed until subsequent pontificates. Yet, in this case, the initial decision is what's most important, not necessarily how or when the ecclesiastical building is completed. The merit of the Aragonese's pontificate lies in the strategy of reorganizing the territory and the initial decision to elevate a temple.

Thus, within the municipal limits of the city of Barcelona alone, during the years Gregorio Modrego Casaus heads the diocese, 62 new parishes are canonically erected. This not only represents a significant restructuring of the diocese but also a substantial contribution to the city's urban form. In 1945, thirty-six new parishes are established; between 1955 and 1959, six; in 1961, nine; and between 1962 and 1967, eleven more. In subsequent pontificates from 1968 to the present day, eight more are added. Nevertheless, some of the erected parishes are never built, and some are later annulled. *Sant Isidre* is never built; *Sant Tarcisi* only functions while the priest is alive; *Sant Bernat Calbó* is later removed and merged with *Santa Maria del Taulat*; *Sant Ignasi de Loiola* is initially erected as a parochial holding, which is why the number of parishes established in 1945 sometimes fluctuates between 35 and 36; and *Santa Maria de Cervelló* ceases

25 Josep M. Martì Bonet, *El martiri dels temples a la Diòcesi de Barcelona (1936-1939)* (Barcelona: Editorial Museu Diocesà, 2008).

to be parochial during the course of the investigation and merges with the parochial demarcation of *Sant Miquel del Port*.[26]

As observed in the three periods outlined in the previous figure, indicating the parishes existing before Gregorio Modrego Casaus's arrival to the diocese of Barcelona (65, in yellow), those erected during his 24-year pontificate (59, in red), and those appearing afterward (8, in blue), the bishop acts with a meticulously studied strategy. In any case, the churches built during Modrego's mandate represent almost 50% of all existing parochial churches. And, focusing on those constructed in the 50s and 60s, it's 73% (27 out of 37).



Furthermore, out of the 37 churches built in the 50s and 60s of the 20th century, 8 already follow non-directional architectural provisions, thus anticipating the directives that the Second Vatican Council would dictate. Specifically, there are 4 radial-shape and 4 expansive. One of the latter is *Sant Sebastià del Verdum*, a paradigmatic case we have taken as a case study because it represented a great oportunity to build modern arquitecture. MBM (Martorell Bohigas Mackay architects) know how to take advantage of this, both when designing the actual and definitive church, as well as when they design the initial temple that operates for a few years on a provisional basis.

### *Case Study Church: Sant Sebastià del Verdum*

#### *Sant Sebastià, final Church*

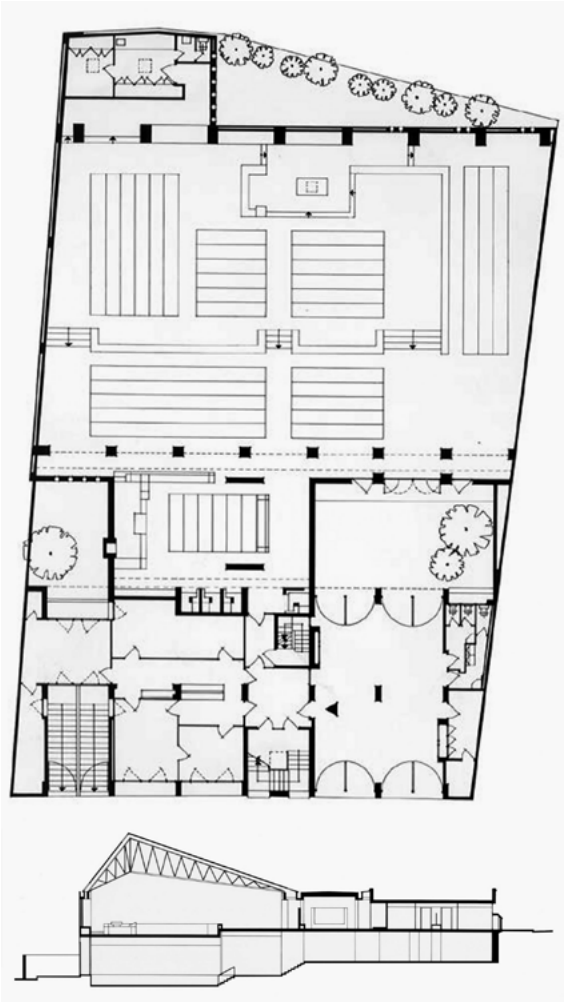
The parish church of Sant Sebastià, in the neighbourhood of Verdum, in the Nou Barris district of Barcelona, is very appropriate to study the paradigm shift that the Second Vatican Council entails for the essence of architectural space. When the council is approved, this church is still in the drafting stage. Retaining the main ideas, which are strongly akin to the liturgical reform in the sense of a modern, restrained temple, the architects adapted it completely and, wherever possible, they abode by the Council texts' chapters which referred to church building. Leaving the container intact, they rotated 90º the position of the altar and they moved it from one end to the centre of the nave [35]. With this simple gesture the space's hierarchy became completely changed, the benches could be arranged in a U-shape surrounding the altar and it resulted in a general sense of the space that was more flat and democratic, instead of the earlier distribu-

Fig. 14
Croquis of the spatial organization of the church before and after the Second Vatican Council. Graphic by the authors.

26 *Gregorio Modrego Casaus. Labor pastoral de un gran pontificado* (S.A.D.A.G., 1962).

tion which was longer and directional [Fig. 14].

This decision led to the alteration of the nave's floor level, building it with steps in the shape of an amphitheatre. The altar is located at the lowest, more central place, dignified by a podium elevating it, and causes all glances to converge towards the priest's position. Josep Mª Martorell, Oriol Bohigas and David Mackay, founders of the renowned MBM study, are the authors of this Barcelonan church that is a benchmark at an international level [Fig. 15].



15

The Sant Sebastià temple is ground-breaking and modern, but also simple and austere. The entire complex is built honestly, without cladding, exposed brick walls, steel rafters, concrete main beams, Catalan vaults and solid woodwork, combining tradition with innovation seamlessly. From its interior a very remarkable transversality of space can be felt, since the temple's volume is read as a single rectangular space covered with a spatial structure made of metal mesh which, along with covering large spans, bestows a very effectist aspect on the higher level of the church. Sant Sebastià is built inside a street block in carrer Viladrosa. Its location makes it inconspicuous, a position emphasised by a not too explicit use of religious imagery. Because this temple makes a point of forgoing the near entirety of traditional religious imagery in pursuit of a bare, austere space, which makes protagonists out of the gathered community, completing the sacred interior. Only a small wrought metal cross above the entry fence, painted in garnet like the whole fence, timidly indicates the use given to its interior. The access is through a yard built with reinforced concrete, brick and steel gateways; the very same materials used in the construction of the temple.

*Sant Sebastià, a bit of History*

The history of this parish is closely linked to the Verdum neighborhood, today a densely populated territory in the geometric centre of the Nou Barris district within the municipal boundaries of Barcelona, but until the beginning of the last century, an entirely uninhabited space formed only by forests and vineyards. It is from 1917 that, due to the waves of immigration that the city suffers, the vineyard barracks begin to be inhabited and many others are built, leading, in the framework of the International Exhibition of Barcelona of 1929, to the first spontaneous population of this area [Fig. 16].

The celebration of the International Eucharistic Congress in 1952 represents a turning point for the incipient neighbourhood. The main event takes place in Pius XII square, at the end of Diagonal avenue, which at this moment is occupied by barracks residents. To clear the location where the closure of the massive event

Fig. 15 Floor and section of the parish church of Sant Sebastià. Drawings courtesy of MBM architects.





16 17

is planned, the then civil governor of Barcelona, Felipe Acedo Colunga, orders the construction of residential blocks between the neighborhoods of La Prosperitat and Les Roquetes, next to the vineyard barracks. The thousand projected dwellings occupy the perimeter delimited by Viladrosa, Joaquim Valls, Seixanta Metres (now via Favència) and de la Fuente de Cañellas (currently, Almansa) streets. These constructions, known as 'Governor's Homes', are promised as temporary, without providing them with running water – the houses have cisterns on the roof and there are public laundries on the street – or the minimum sanitary parts. They are fragile constructions and of the most extreme precariousness in the materials used and the chosen construction systems. However, and as suspected, they end up standing almost fifty years, offering a sad image of permanent provisionality and vertical slum.[27]

The housing project funded by the government contemplated three phases to accommodate both the relocated shack dwellers and the large number of immigrants who were continuously arriving in the city. In the end, they only took charge of the first – which the locals mockingly called "paper houses" – ceding the rest of the lands to the 'Sindical Home Work' (OSH) to complete the most western plots on both sides of Via Favència. Thus, the Verdum neighborhood was finally born **[Fig. 17]**.

Simultaneously and on a private initiative, the Congrés neighborhood was built on some land in Sant Andreu. To understand the different context in this case, the architects of the plan had the wisdom and skill to design a hierarchical urban space rooted in the existing traces of the territory, fostering from the project the complicity between uses and buildings. The central axis, Felip II Street, is attached to one of the directives of the Cerdà plan and continues it up to Virrei Amat Square. It is over this square that a large plaza presided over by the parish church of Sant Pius X, which articulates the whole set, is projected. Unfortunately, none of this happens in the Verdum neighborhood. On the con-

27 Joan Cuadrench, *Sant Sebastià de Verdum. Mig segle d'una parròquia de barri. 1958-2008* (Barcelona: Ed. Tecfa Group, 2008).

Fig. 16
Aerial photo of the Verdum neighborhood in 1960. Graphic by the authors on base "ICC, Foto-plànols de ciutats catalanes (1945-1966)".

Fig. 17
Verdum neighbourhood recently inaugurated (source: Nou Barris Archive).

trary, it is a relatively small polygon with a very high density where a single model of residential block with a ground floor and three stories is repeated, with 12 homes of between 20 and 50m$^2$ per landing, with a single access and corridor. In fact, everything seems left to the criteria of arbitrariness, as neither the block is well oriented, nor does the empty space created function as a square, nor does the perimeter building solidify the corners closing the set. With the completion of the plan by the OSH, the situation does not improve, but rather the conflicting disposition of the houses becomes even more evident.[28]



18

*Sant Sebastià, the provisional Church*

The construction of this modern church with an industrial appearance has a clear precedent that serves as a trial: the provisional church that the same Bohigas and Martorell – then very young and newly graduated – designed in 1958 for the first neighbours of the neighbourhood. This, located west of the group at the intersection between the current Favència route and Artesania Street, is completed in 1959 and is one of the first public and social constructions in the area. However, the parish as a spiritual entity had already begun to function a year earlier in an old bar and dance hall, with many of the Sunday masses and the most crowded ones being celebrated in the middle of the street. Indeed, the religious acts of the Verdum neighbourhood, as happens in other cases where the parish is founded before the temple, begin to be carried out in the open air, without any building, occupying the free spaces adjacent to the median walls. These, as an austere but efficient background decoration, serve as a plane on which to support the altar table and collect the space by delimiting its visuals in the direction of the gaze of the attendees, neighbours of the neighbourhood who bring their own chairs from home to sit. This emergency and provisional situation recalls the true meaning of the word *ecclesia*, which comes from Greek and etymologically means assembly, referring to the action of the meeting and not to the building itself, thus prioritizing use and function over the protective building [Fig. 18].

As has been seen on other occasions, and this case is no exception, the parishes of peripheral and more marginal neighborhoods play a role that goes far beyond providing spiritual service to the community. The churches of the new cores created with a conflicting social mix and a total lack of resources, must articulate neighborhoods born suddenly and somewhat forcibly, both urbanistically and socially. Thus, Sant Sebastià becomes the civic center where, in addition to the church piece, there is also a nursery, a recreational center for children

Fig. 18
Images from different celebrations in the street when the church has not built yet (Courtesy of Parish Church Archive).

28 Historic Archive of Verdum: http://arxiuhistoric.blogspot.com/2013/09/historia-del-barri-de-verdum.html (last access November 2024).



19



20

and young people, an adult education center, a medical dispensary, a neighborhood cinema, and a football field.

In addition, the provisional church of Sant Sebastià represents the ecclesial construction that summarizes the situation of the changes that are taking place in different fields during these years. On the one hand, there is the constant echo of the precariousness and the social urgency of the neighbors who live in these neighborhoods. On the other hand, a series of liturgical changes are taking place, dictated from the Vatican, which change the physiognomy of the temples and the way they are used. Finally, these are years of affirmation of a new modern architecture in Catalonia which, once the initial isolation suffered in the country during the first years of the post-war period is overcome, begins to be recognized and emerge with its own brand. Therefore, it is precisely at the moment when favorable social, religious, and architectural concerns come together when the provisional church of Sant Sebastià can be built in the Verdum neighborhood, simultaneously responding to all of them.

The final project of the provisional church – which has two previous proposals – is composed of two rectangular bodies, the largest of which houses the temple itself and the other the sacristy and the parish offices. Both bodies are joined by a glass passage closed by lattice works of precast concrete pieces. The nave of the temple is rectangular, light, clear, and is built with prefabricated

Fig. 19
Floor plan of provisional church (drawings courtesy of MBM architects).

Fig. 20
Provisional church of Sant Sebastià del Verdum. Català-Roca.

materials. The parish dependencies, in contrast, are materialized in a smaller but solid and heavy volume, with plastered brick walls painted with lime. A large four-armed concrete cross presides over the access and finishes composing and symbolizing the provisional parish complex [Fig. 19].

The entire complex is modulated on an isotropic grid of 1,5x1,5 m, and the church nave is constructed with prefabricated materials in the swift period of three months. Its structure is made of wood, the gabled roof is made of fibre cement, and the walls, assembled dry, are made of lightweight prefabricated panels with wood chips and cement. As for the floors, they are made of mechanical brick and the ceiling is made of wooden slats. The presbytery is materialized by the presence of a wooden platform raised on the floor of the nave, a curved brick wall as an altarpiece, and a visible concrete altar. The baptismal font and the large four-armed cross that signifies the ensemble are made of the same heavy stone material. The lightness of the temple barracks contrasts with the volume of the parish dependencies and the characteristic cult elements of the church, among which the concrete cross stands out for its plastic force and sculptural verticality. This, free-standing, becomes the symbol that still endures in the memory of the neighborhood today [Fig. 20].

*Sant Sebastià, an examplary Case Study*

The provisional church of Sant Sebastià and, in the same vein albeit with an increase in complexity, the definitive one, are two true lessons in functionality, economy, austerity, and modernity, also exemplifying, when looked at together, the paradigm shift that the new liturgy means for the ecclesial type. In reality, Oriol Bohigas and Josep Martorell on the first occasion, and the complete triad Martorell-Bohigas-Mackay on the second, propose two very dignified minimum constructions as they understand that all sacred buildings should be. For these architects, and paraphrasing words that Oriol Bohigas says on the third day of the Conversations on religious architecture in 1963, a temple is, above all, a good work of architecture in any sense; a building that values the tectonic, constructive, economic, programmatic, and temporal laws of the discipline, optimizes them all through the craft, and sublimates them through poetry. Therefore, what is needed is for a good architect well rooted in his time to build a temple, because the problems of ecclesiastical architecture – continuing with Bohigas' idea – are exactly the same as those of any other architectural work, and it is not worth making so many differences.[29]

Sant Sebastià, similarly to those churches which arose around the 60s of the last century in the city's more outlying neighbourhoods, had the chance to meet the stipulations of the time. On one side, the prerequisite of building temples at a minimum cost and in the shortest possible time, and one the other, conforming to the model of a neutral, raw, noble and sincere architecture the Council called for [38]. Therefore, it's due to the need to make worship places available urgently

29 Barcelona (Catalunya). Patronato Municipal de la Vivienda, *Conversaciones de arquitectura religiosa: Barcelona del 8 al 11 de octubre 1963* (Barcelona: Patronato Municipal de la Vivienda, 1965).



and that the post-Concilium aesthetic styles were not that far removed from the Modern Movement's, that a generation of young architects were able to transpose avantgarde rationalist architecture into sacred buildings [Fig. 21].

Fig. 21
Final church of Sant Sebastià del Verdum. Català-Roca.

## Discussion, Limitations and future Lines

This research underscores the profound impact of Catholic parish churches on the public realms around religious edifices and Barcelona's urban growth. Such impact can be seen in both ancient churches and newer structures, particularly in neighborhoods established in the 1920s and even more prominently in the 1950s and 1960s.

It's crucial to emphasize that our examination centered solely on Catholic parishes within Barcelona's city limits, omitting religious structures from other faiths. The study encompassed all 132 Catholic parishes, irrespective of their architectural style, as depicted in the initial image. This thorough consideration reinforces the evaluation of the 37 parishes erected in the 1950s and 1960s, aiding in fulfilling the research's goals.

There's a discernible link between foundational churches and urban territories. In such churches, the building often becomes the bedrock of urban communities, a trend dominant in Roman and Medieval urban centers. Consequently, our findings highlight that in Barcelona's foundational instances, the church was the precursor, with urban development flourishing around it. The connection between neighborhoods and churches, however, might be multifaceted. We discovered that churches were instrumental in strengthening new neighborhoods born from migration and population surges. This insight offers a renewed view of Barcelona's urban past, an area extensively explored in Urban Studies by distinguished scholars like Manuel de Solà-Morales and Joan Busquets [39, 40].[30] The objective is to introduce a novel urban research approach that enriches urban historical explorations, as illustrated in works such as 'The Forms of Urban Growth' and 'Ten Lessons on Barcelona'.

It shold be pointed out that churches aren't merely central during the inception of cities. They also mirror the technological and cultural strides across timeframes, acting as indicators of urban metamorphosis. Before the integrative vision proposed by Ildefons Cerdà, churches were pivotal in shaping Barcelona's core, its nascent towns, and adjacent suburbs. This trend persists in towns later incorporated into Barcelona.

To our understanding, our research is the inaugural effort highlighting the church's central role in molding neighborhoods in Barcelona across the 1920s to the 1970s. This establishes an evident link between all parish churches and Barcelona's urban evolution, covering churches from ancient to modern times.

Barcelona is distinguished by its prominent parishes in a city with a rich tapestry of Catholic edifices, some currently under restoration, perpetuating a medieval legacy. This characteristic differentiates Barcelona from other urban centers where a nearing completion Catholic structure, like the famed Sagrada Familia by Antoni Gaudí, might be the prime cultural attraction.

---

30 Sergi Lois, "Una església d'urgència. La construcció del passat imperfecte de la perifèria de Barcelona," (Master thesis, Universitat Ramon Llull – Barcelona, 2014); Joan Busquets i Grau, *Barcelona: La Construcció Urbanística d'una Capital Compacta* (Barcelona: LUB-UPC, 2018); Joan Busquets i Grau, Dingliang Yang and Michael Keller. *Urban Grids: Handbook for Regular City Design* (Novato: ORO Editions, 2019).

Our research also elucidates that during his extensive service as bishop and later archbishop of Barcelona, Gregorio Modrego Casaus initiated a major diocesan transformation. A glance at today's city map reveals the parishes form a remarkably consistent pastoral network – a legacy largely credited to Modrego, especially considering the limited new church constructions post his 1967 retirement. It appears he established a robust system aiding both the Church and state in their ideological endeavors.

The momentum to transform was expedited post the Spanish Civil War, spurring many emerging architects to reimagine church designs. This shift wasn't just a response to the global architectural inclination towards minimalism; it primarily symbolizes the Spanish Church's evolution. Primarily, the Second Vatican Council's resolutions, championing human rights and freedoms, challenged Spain's religious and political foundations. Additionally, backed by the grassroots clergy, lay Catholic groups began mirroring the role of trade unions, thus challenging the Church's upper echelons.

Significantly, churches like Sant Sebastià del Verdum were pivotal in this paradigm shift, offering a haven for these progressive movements. With mounting Vatican pressures and as the older, conservative church leaders passed away, societal consciousness began its upward trajectory.

One interesting future perspective is to replicate this study in other cities (within Catalonia, such as Girona, Tarragona, or Lleida or even abroad). However, it is important to note that although this is a possibility, there has not been a conclusive investigation on this topic to date. Thus, it represents a potential area for future research in parallel and comparative lines. The methodology employed in this study to analyze Catholic parish churches could also be applied to evaluate other unique buildings, irrespective of their religious or secular nature, and their relationships with the surrounding urban spaces.

Another interesting future perspective is to broader the study including churches from other religions built in Barcelona. Although other religion had no impact in ancient times, it is true that has gained a lot of importance in the last decades. Including them could proportionate a new layer of information to the understanding of the current city.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the study has not employed space syntax analysis either other approches such as theological, sociological or anthropological. While the primary focus of our research was a basic urban and architectural perspective, the inclusion of complementary analysis could offer valuable insights for future research, complementing the present findings.

## Conclusions

To conclude, this study highlights the significant relationship between Catholic parish churches and the expansion of Barcelona focusing on the 1950s and 1960s. Key findings include:

1. Churches, including those beyond the medieval period, have served as the starting point for the development of newly created neighborhoods in Barcelona and play a crucial role in explaining the city's growth.
2. The rapid construction of Catholic parish churches in the 1950s and 1960s highlights the dynamic expansion of the city during that period.
3. A significant percentage of Catholic parish churches built during this time were located in block neighborhoods (polygons), which corresponds with the urban development trends of that era.
4. The leadership of Gregorio Modrego Casaus had a lasting impact on the diocesan transformation of Barcelona, resulting in a robust pastoral network of churches that still exists today.
5. The architectural shift in church design during this period, including the move towards non-directional architectural provisions, reflects the influence of the Second Vatican Council and changing societal consciousness.
6. *Sant Sebastià del Verdum* represents a prime example to transpose avantgarde rationalist architecture into sacred buildings as well as to explain the evolution of society's mindset and the architectural developments in the sacred typology promoted by the Second Vatican Council.
7. The methodology employed can serve as a valuable tool for studying the connections between churches, public spaces, and urban development in other cities with a Catholic tradition and scattered temples.
8. Future research possibilities include replicating the study in other cities, including churches from other religions in Barcelona, and employing additional analytical approaches such as space syntax analysis and theological, sociological, or anthropological perspectives.

In conclusion, we can confirm that during the mid-20th century, a significant period of change and development occurred due to the interaction between churches and urban growth of the city. The impacts of these changes were observed across various sectors, reflecting broader social, economic, and political transformations characteristic of this era. The detailed analysis provided in this article though the relationship between the Catholic parish churches and the public space that surrounds them together with the urban growth of the city sheds light on the complexities and nuances of this transformative period, offering new insights and perspectives that contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the mid-20th century's legacy and its lasting effects on contemporary city.

## Annex

Name of Churches Built between 1950 and 1969 in Barcelona

1. Sant Miquel dels Sants
2. Sant Tomàs d'Aquino
3. Santa Dorotea
4. Sant Joan M. Vianney
5. Sants Gervasi i Protasi
6. Sant Josep de Calassanç
7. Sant Ildefons
8. Sant Gregori Taumaturg
9. Santa Agnès
10. Sant Pancraç
11. Sant Medir
12. Sant Ot
13. Sant Oleguer, bisbe
14. Sant Pere Ermengol
15. Esperit Sant
16. Sant Sebastià
17. Sant Rafael
18. Santa Tecla
19. Sant Pius X
20. Sant Llorenç
21. Crist Redemptor
22. Sant Joan de la Creu
23. Santa Maria de Cervelló*
24. Sant Paulí de Nola
25. Corpus Christi
26. Santa Cecília
27. Sant Fèlix
28. Sant Jordi
29. Sant Cebrià
30. Verge de la Pau
31. Sant Jeroni
32. Verge de Natzaret
33. Santíssim Sagrament
34. Santa Joaquima de Vedruna
35. Sant Ambrós
36. Preciosíssima Sang de Nostre Senyor Jesucrist
37. Sant Lluís Gonçaga

*This church was deconsecrated during the course of the study, but we maintain it in the collection due to its interest from an urban point of view.

## Bibliography


Arboix-Alió, Alba. "Church and City. The Role of Parish Temples in the Construction of Barcelona." Phd Diss., UPCCommons, 2016.

Arboix-Alió, Alba. "Reconstructing the Dioceses of Barcelona. Parish Reform and Church Building under Monsignor Modrego Casaus from 1943 to 1967." In *Territories of Faith. Religion, Urban Planning and Demographic Change in Post-War Europe*, edited by Sven Sterken, and Evan Weyns. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022.

Arboix-Alió, Alba. "Data set of catholic parish churches of Barcelona. Relevance of their architectural characterization as singular buildings," *Data in Brief 51* (2023): 109630 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dib.2023.109630.

Arboix-Alió, Alba. "Data collection of Catholic parish churches of Barcelona," *Mendeley Data*, August 22, 2023.

Arboix-Alió, Alba. "Relevance of Catholic Parish Churches in Public Space in Barcelona: Historical Analysis and Future Perspectives," *Buildings 13*, no. 6 (2023): 1370.

Arrizabalaga, Juan José. "The Churches with Wooden Galleries in Euskal-Herria. The Labortano Type and Its Sacred Precincts." PhD. Diss., Architectural Department, UPV, 2012.

Baruth, Meghan. "Perceived environmental church support and physical activity among Black church members". *Health Education & Behavior 40*, no. 6 (2013): 712-720.

Busquets i Grau, Joan. *Barcelona: La Construcció Urbanística d'una Capital Compacta*. Barcelona: LUB-UPC, 2018.

Busquets i Grau, Joan, Dingliang Yang, and Michael Keller. *Urban Grids: Handbook for Regular City Design*. Novato: ORO Editions, 2019.

Calvino, Italo. *Las ciudades invisibles*. Madrid: Ediciones Siruela, 1998.

Carter, Erik W. "Addressing Accessibility Within the Church: Perspectives of People with Disabilities." *Journal of Religion and Health*, no. 62 (2022): 2474-2495.

Cesaretti, Rudolf, "Population-Area Relationship for Medieval European Cities," *PLOS ONE*, no. *11* (2016), e0162678.

Barcelona (Catalunya). Patronato Municipal de la Vivienda. *Conversaciones de arquitectura religiosa: Barcelona del 8 al 11 de octubre 1963*. Barcelona: Patronato Municipal de la Vivienda, 1965.

Cuadrench, Joan. *Sant Sebastià de Verdum. Mig segle d'una parròquia de barri. 1958-2008.* Barcelona: Ed. Tecfa Group, 2008.

de Solà-Morales, Manuel. *Las formas de crecimiento urbano*. Barcelona: Edicions UPC, 1997.

Delgado, Eduardo. "Spanish Sacred Architecture, 1939-1975: From the Postwar to the Post-Council." (PhD Diss., Department of Architectural Composition, UPM, 1999).

Derose, Kathryn P. "Linking churches and parks to promote physical activity among Latinos: Rationale and design of the Parishes & Parks cluster randomized trial". *Contemporary Clinical Trials 123*, (December 2022): 106954.

Fernández-Cobián, Esteban. "The Sacred Space in Contemporary Spanish Architecture." (PhD Diss., Department of Architectural Constructions, UDC, 2000).

Ferrer, Aixalà. *Els polígons de Barcelona*. Barcelona: Edicions UPC, 1996.

Frampton, Kenneth. *Historia crítica de la arquitectura moderna*. Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 2007.

Gil, Paloma. *El Templo del Siglo XX*. Barcelona: Ediciones del Serbal, 1999.

Gómez-Val, Ricardo. "The Construction of Parish Churches in Barcelona between 1952 and 2000." (PhD Diss., Department of Architectural Constructions, UPC, 2012).

Gregorio Modrego Casaus. *Labor pastoral de un gran pontificado*. S.A.D.A.G., 1962.

Lois, Sergi. "Una església d'urgència. La construcció del passat imperfecte de la perifèria de Barcelona," Master Thesis, Universitat Ramon Llull – Barcelona, 2014.

Mària, Magda. "Religion, Society and Architecture: Parish Churches in Catalonia (1545-1621)." (PhD Diss., Department of Architectural Composition, UPC, 1994).

Mària, Magda, and Alba Arboix-Alió. *"Liturgia y espacio urbano en Barcelona". Actas III Congreso Internacional de Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporánea*, no. 3 (2013): 132-141.

Martì Bonet, Josep M. *El martiri dels temples a la Diòcesi de Barcelona (1936-1939)*. Barcelona: Editorial Museu Diocesà, 2008.

Muñoz Alarcón Francesc. *Gregorio Modrego Casaus: obispo del XXXV Congreso Eucarístico Internacional de Barcelona: documentos y notas históricas*. Barcelona: Claret, 2002.

Murdoch, Matt, and Jim Davies. "Spiritual and Affective Responses to a Physical Church and Corresponding Virtual Model". *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking 20*, no. 11 (2017): 702-708.

Nolli, Giovanni Battista. *Nuova pianta di Roma data in luce da l'anno 1748*. Napoli: Edizioni Intra Moenia, 2016.

Owusu, Rexford Owusu, George Kankan, and Daniel Opoku. "Predictors of church participation in Effutu municipality, Ghana: A marketing perspective," *European Journal of Business & Management Research 5*, no. 2 (2020).

Plunkett, Robyn, and Peter Chen. "Supporting Healthy Dementia Culture: An Exploratory Study of the Church," *Journal of Religion and Health 55* (2016): 1917-1928.

Ripley, Renee L., and Bharat Bhushan. "Bioarchitecture: Bioinspired art and architecture-A perspective," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society a Mathematical, Physical, and Engineering Sciences*, no. 374 (2016).

Rodríguez Pedret, *Carmen. Les Vivendes del Congrés Eucarístic de Barcelona. 1952-1962*. Barcelona: Ediciones UPC, 2011.

Schulz, Jonathan F., Duman Bahrami-Rad, Jonathan P. Beauchamp, and Jospeh Henrich. "The Church, intensive kinship, and global psychological variation." *Science 366*, no. 10 (2019): eaau5141.

Sitte, Camillo. *Construcción de Ciudades Según Principios Artísticos*. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1980.

Solà-Morales, Manuel. *Deu lliçons sobre Barcelona: Ten Lessons on Barcelona*. Barcelona: COAC, 2008.

Soria y Puig, Arturo. *Cerdà. Las Cinco Bases de la Teoría General de la Urbanización*. Milan: Electa, 1996.

Sterken, Sven, and Evan Weyns, eds. *Territories of Faith. Religion, Urban Planning and Demographic Change in Post-War Europe*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022.

**João Luís Marques**

# Fernando Távora: Churches and Modernity in Portugal

INVITED

*Távora, Churches, Convent, Modern, Catholic.*

**/Abstract**

**Fernando Távora (1925-2005), a renowned architect from Oporto, left a profound legacy, which includes religious projects that played a significant role in shaping the human and architectural profile of a master whose centenary of birth was recently celebrated by the HPA magazine. A devout Catholic since his early age, as documented in the recently published records of his youth diaries, Távora would find in Catholic religious commissions an initial and privileged space to investigate and explore modernity in a broad sense. *Modern Churches at school, Modern Convent in the city, One lecture, Design exercises and real commissions, Working with the community* is our proposal to highlight his contribution for modern religious architecture discussion. Throughout the 1950's and 60's Fernando Távora, as teaching assistant and later professor at Porto School of Fine Arts (ESBAP, Escola Superior de Belas Artes do Porto/Oporto), he proposed to his students design projects of religious nature that, in parallel, he was developing in his atelier. Távora was a member of the Movement for the Renewal of Religious Art (MRAR, Movimento de Renovação da Arte Religiosa) with continued participation since the 1950s. Having strong cultural and social concerns, he actively participated in both the continued renovation of the School and the responsibilities he assumed in the diocese of Oporto. We find him associated with social promotion work in the second half of the 1960s in Oporto's Diocese, a commitment that he would continue through civic and political roles assumed after the 25th of April revolution, namely in the Local Ambulatory Support Service (SAAL, 1974-1975) operations.**

**/Author**

**João Luís Marques**
**FAUP – Faculty of Architecture at the University of Porto**
**jlmarques@arq.up.pt**

João Luís Marques, graduated from FAUP – Faculty of Architecture at the University of Porto (2006), earned a PhD in Architecture from the same institution in 2017 with the thesis *"The Church in the City: Service and Hospitality, Portuguese Architecture 1950-1975,"* funded by FCT.
Erasmus student at the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia, he completed an internship in Barcelona with Carlos Ferrater. He began his professional career in Porto, collaborating with Camilo Cortesão, Serôdio Furtado, and Correia Ragazzi, alongside pursuing independent architectural practice, which he continues today.
Since 2013, he has been a researcher at the Center for Studies in Architecture and Urbanism CEAU and has been collaborating with the Center for Religious History Studies CEHR at the Portuguese Catholic University since 2015. His research focuses on the History of Architecture and Portuguese Architecture, through which he has organized events, exhibitions, and editorial projects, many extending beyond academic circles.
He is a member of international platforms like OARC (Observatory of Contemporary Religious Architecture) and ICOMOS, as well as the ATRIO group – Liturgy, Art, and Architecture.
Since 2018, he has been an Invited Assistant Professor at FAUP, teaching courses such as Portuguese Architectural History and, currently, the History of the City of Porto and Ancient and Medieval History.

https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/20956
Copyright © 2024 João Luís Marques

## Modern Churches at School

The pedagogical activity of Fernando Távora started in the beginning of the 1950s, upon invitation by Carlos Ramos (1897-1969), who then became the director of ESBAP. After completing his studies in 1950, Fernando Távora began his teaching career alongside Carlos Ramos, as his assistant in Architectural Composition (4th year) from 1951 to 1957.

Master Carlos Ramos was a unique figure and led the restructuring of ESBAP, along the 1950's and 1960's, "gathering for the Mother-House many of the dividends from the personal (or group) strengths of those involved in the multiple activities, which he himself often shared." Indeed, throughout his tenure as head of the school, he transformed the

> (...) concept of School/Workshop: he went beyond the vision of the bourgeois patronage super-studio and embraced the idea of a School-oriented-towards-community-service, the true Workshop-School for the 'non-geniuses,' the anti-'style school,' capable of training professional citizens well-equipped to face the challenges of a very poor country like ours, grappling with an exhausting war and an uncertain political succession process in the making.[1]

In 1952, Fernando Távora wrote in the magazine *Panorama* that Oporto had favorable signs and conditions suggesting "the possibility of a modern Architecture." This was not only supported by the School responsible for training future professionals, but also the understanding of public and private entities whose cooperation materialized in various ways, whether through "an urbanistic solution that allows or imposes a satisfactory architectural solution" or "the need for a construction of public interest that the Municipality does not hesitate to carry out in accordance with the life of the City, without prejudices of any kind."

> Contemporary architecture is all what is created in our time; modern architecture is all that, being contemporary, is created in accordance with our time. (...) Those who attempt to define modern architecture as something expressed by a form, a technical process, or a program are mistaken. Such a definition makes no sense. Humans are different in space and time, under different physical conditions. Modern architecture is not a style, but the result of an attitude.[2]

At the end of the 1952-1953 academic year, Távora participated in two initiatives at ESBAP that would shape the school's renewal and its engagement with religious commissions: the hosting of the *Exhibition of Contemporary Religious Architecture* and the pioneering academic exercise for the fourth year of the Special Architecture Course, which involved converting a warehouse into a chapel in the fishing village of Afurada (Gaia). This exercise would later lead to a real commission building site (1954-1955) **[Fig. 1, 2, 3]**.

---

1 Octávio Lixa Filgueiras, "A escola do Porto 1940/69," in *Carlos Ramos, exposição retrospectiva da sua obra* (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1986), n.p. (translation by the author).

2 Fernando Távora, "O Porto e a Arquitectura moderna," *Panorama – revista portuguesa de arte e turismo*, no. 4, II série (1952): n.p. (translation by the author).

In turn, the traveling exhibition, organized by an informal group of Catholic artists and students, was first presented in the Church of St. Nicholas (Lisbon)[3] before moving to ESBAP – a hub for the training of modern architects, painters, and sculptors.

> This exhibition does not merely present works. It goes further: it criticizes. (...) Not with the pretension of solving the problem of religious architecture in our time, but of framing it, taking clear awareness of its elements and of the urgency with which it arises among us. And this is done through structured observation and analysis of living tradition – so often evoked, yet neither followed nor respected.[4]

These words, taken from the exhibition catalog and published in the ESBAP bulletin, clearly reflect the interest generated by the exhibition. The critique inherent to the exhibition was embraced within the school, which fostered it in defense of the autonomy of education. Obviously, the school was by no means detached from the debate on religious architecture.

The proposals for the new chapel to serve the fishing community was naturally aligned with the values of purity, truth, poverty, and peace advocated by the young organizers of the *Exhibition of Contemporary Religious Architecture*. The academic exercise became a laboratory for exploring these values. Modernity lays more in this exploration than in the design of forms, which were often constrained. Reflecting on architectural works in Portugal up to the mid-20th century reveals the radical nature of the challenge posed to the students.

In Oporto, a local group of the *MRAR* emerged, associated with ESBAP. It was lead by Luiz Cunha, and involved figures such as Fernando Távora, Álvaro Siza, Carlos Alberto Carvalho Dias, Maria Luísa Marinho Leite, and José Grade, among others. Távora participated in several meetings and even hosted some in his office.

Parallel to the students' work, Fernando Távora developed the remodeling project for the *Instituto Nun'Álvares* (Santo Tirso, 1952) – a Jesuit boarding school housed in a former thermal hotel north of Oporto. The project included various facilities, such as a new library and the adaptation of a rectangular room into a chapel. The proposed solution stood out for its simplicity and axial organization: at the far end, a marble altar was complemented by a large wooden cross with a gilded baldachin suspended from the ceiling and lighting [Fig. 4].

This appears to have been the first religious commission Távora undertook as an independent professional. A decade later he would return to design an extension that included a classroom pavilion and a new chapel (Santo Tirso, 1963-1965), with the congregation organized around the altar, fully embracing the spirit of Vatican II.

---

3 See João Alves da Cunha and João Luís Marques, "Catholic parishes in Lisbon master plano of 1959. The legacy of the SNIP and the MRAR," in *Territories of faith. Religion, Urban planning and demographic change in post-war architecture*, ed. Sven Sterken and Eva Weyns (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022), 191-220.

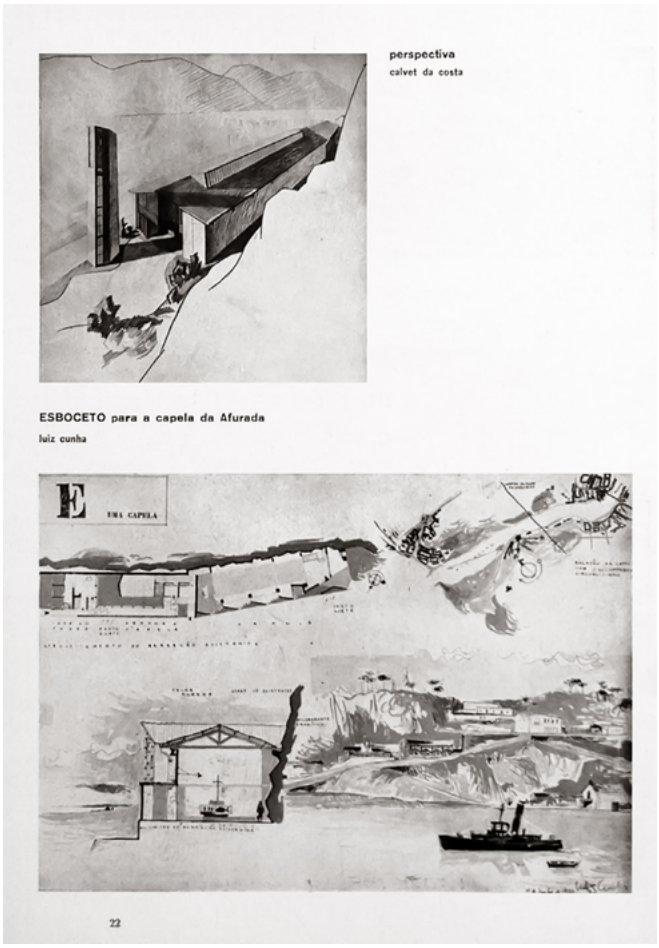
4 "Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporânea," *Arte Portuguesa. Boletim da Escola Superior de Belas Artes do Porto*, no. 2-3 [1951-1952 and 1952-1953] (1954): 11 (translation by the author).




1




2




3

Fig. 1
Cover of *Oporto Fine Arts School Bulletin*, no. 2-3 (1951-1952, 1952-1953).

Fig. 2
Exhibition of Contemporary Religious Architecture (source: *Oporto Fine Arts School Bulletin*, no. 2-3, 1951-1952, 1952-1953): 11.

Fig. 3
Chapel for the fishing village of Afurada (source: *Oporto Fine Arts School Bulletin*, no. 2-3, 1951-1952, 1952-1953): 22.

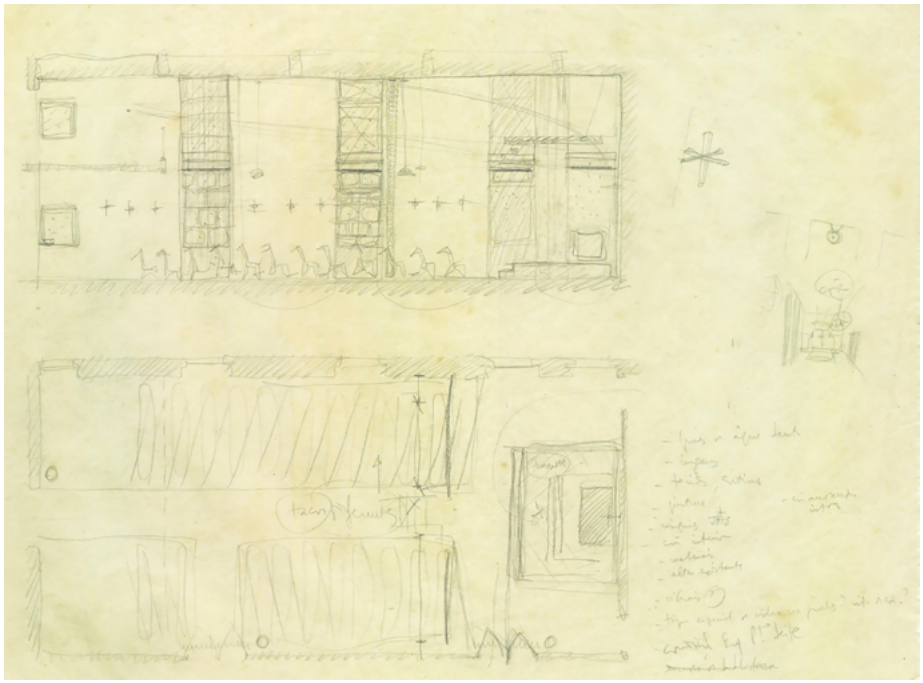


Fig. 4
Fernando Távora, Nun' Alvares Institute Renewal, Chapel Sketch, [1952]
(Fundação Marques da Silva, Fernando Távora Archive, FIMS/FT/0019-pd0055).

**Modern Convent in the City**

> As the city destroyed it, it was just right that the city rebuilds it. Hence, perhaps, the reason or historical justification for the fair and large alms that Oporto gave to the Order of St. Dominic in the form of this piece of uncultivated land that we are seeing and trampling on at this very moment.[5]

This was said at the blessing ceremony of the first stone of the Dominican convent, in 1951, by Luís de Pina, who had been the mayor of Oporto (1945-1949), the period in which steps were taken to the transfer of the land aside of Avenida Marechal Gomes da Costa. Such negotiations started in 1948, the very year in which Fernando Távora had joined the city council services.

This area, five kilometers west from the city center, met special conditions for urbanization, as identified by the team that studied the urbanization of the city in the 1940s and 1950s **[Fig. 5]**. In the particular case of Avenida Marechal Gomes da Costa, several possibilities for implementing religious equipment would be considered in the following years.

In 1947, a study plan for a new residencial neighborhood of the state 'Economic Houses Program' to be built to the east of that avenue, next to Quinta de Serralves, suggested an isolated church, bordering the garden square in the center of the neighborhood, Largo D. João III. Ten years later, in the 1957-1958 academic year, Fernando Távora would challenge his students, proposing "a chapel" for the same square.

At the same time, in 1947, an Urbanization Plan for the west side of the avenue was being developed in the Oporto's General Urbanization Plan Office. For

5 Luís de Pina, "O Porto e S. Domingos (22nd March.1952)," *Cristo Rei, Boletim Religioso da Igreja de Cristo-Rei Dominicanos*, ano I, no. 1 (1952): 1 (translation by the author).

this area, the plan considered single-family detached townhouses, providing for the construction of a set of schools, with a 'special building' (not identified in the study) topping the neighborhood's interior street axes, in accordance with the current urban trend of the time. The residential neighborhood project would have a small center for local commerce, close to a recreation and sports area, with a square crossed by the connection between Marechal Gomes da Costa and Boavista avenues. This square would be made up, on all its sides, of blocks with commerce, and would not be dominated by any singular urban equipment.

In 1948, in the review of this urbanization project, instead of a parish church, the Dominican convent appeared next to a local shopping center, as documented in the transfer plan of approximately 7500 m2 of municipal land – a block limited by streets in its entire perimeter. Although this drawing of December 1948 just presents the plot for construction, in April the "new study of the commercial and civic center" already included a 'church and ecclesiastical residence' for that same lot, a solution very close to the one Fernando Távora would sign in 1949 [Fig. 6].

This plan reduced the number of buildings foreseen in the initial studies. While in the mid-1940s six blocks were foreseen, limiting the center crossed longitudinally by the street, and in 1948 the center was the result of a combination of blocks and townhouses including the church, the final version by Fernando Távora, of 1949, proposes only two blocks, facing each other, intended to accommodate commerce, offices and housing.

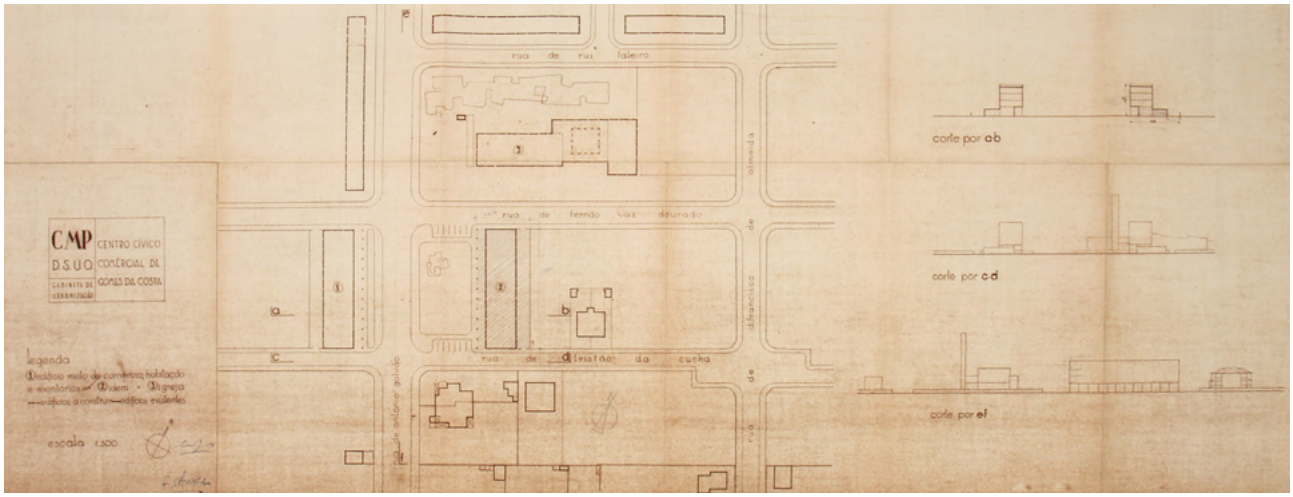
The blocks, east and west, would share the same volumetric and functional solution giving a certain unity to the entire complex: a commercial gallery on the ground floor and houses with terraces on the roof. These buildings would top off blocks of modern single-family homes, contributing to the increase in the scale of construction in that public space designed at the scale of the neighborhood. The "square"– a designation attributed by Távora in the study of the civic and commercial centre – appeared not as an island, but as a part of the residential block itself, a public space whose use would be enhanced by the proposed commerce. The street no longer runs through the square, it moved a little to the east. Without writing anything in the memory about the church and ecclesiastical residence, Távora defines it in the drawing, proposes a volume and implants it parallel to the square, in a recessed position, giving protagonism to the churchyard dominated by the isolated bell tower. The evolution of the project led to a redefinition of the location of the church that ended up being built over the square. The conservative taste and the power exercised were not indifferent to this process: by the client, represented by Br. Estevão da Fonseca Faria op. and by the fundraising committee, chaired by José Nosolini, future Portuguese ambassador to the Holy See.

With this statement we do not intend to detract from the important role that the Dominicans had at that time in the center of Europe, demanding modernity for sacred art, a feat which only later would be claimed by the order in Portugal.



5

6




[6] It should be noted that Távora was later called to carry out a project - not built - for the chapel of the Dominican Convent of Fátima. However, in the project for the convent of Cristo Rei drawn up in Oporto throughout the first half of the 1950s, the language and implementation adopted would betray the modern conception of the complex that Távora had proposed and that the Municipal Aesthetics Commission tried at all costs to defend.

In the appreciation of the project of the new religious building, design by the architects Manuel Passos Júnior and Eduardo Reis, we read:

> The unity, harmony and scale of all the elements involved in the composition of any urban complex are expressions that today have a very different meaning. It is, quite simply, about designing a chapel/convent for a residential area of housing (...).

Fig. 5
Urbanisation plan area aside of Avenida Marechal Gomes da Costa, Porto 1950 (source: Cristo Rei Parish Archive).

Fig. 6
Fernando Távora, Civic and Comercial Centre Gomes da Costa, Porto 1949 (source: Câmara Municipal do Porto Archive).

6 About this subject: João Alves da Cunha and João Luís Marques, *Dominicanos. Arte e Arquitetura Portuguesa. Diálogos com a Modernidade* (Lisboa: Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa – Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Instituto São Tomás de Aquino – Província Portuguesa da Ordem dos Pregadores, 2019).

> Let us, therefore, focus on the overall scale and move away from anything that, conventionally, tends to give a religious character to the building to be designed (...).
>
> Do understand the goal of this Committee, whose attitude intends to dignify present day's architecture that finds its most determined bastion among professionals from the north [of the country].[7]

Tavora's project was approved and the first phase of the convent woul be inaugurated in May 1954. The remaining phases, which would close the cloister, were never built. Today, the different languages of the convent and of the surrounding blocks do not reveal Távora's modern proposal, which provided the neighborhood with small spaces for the population to meet and socialize [Fig. 7], including a place for religious practice – a program that met the concerns discussed at the International Congresses of Modern Architecture, CIAM 8 – The heart of the city (Hoddesdon, 1951), in which Távora had participated as an observer. Regarding the discussion that took place at that congress, he recalled in an interview:

> "The theme was the core, interpreted as the heart, the center. Not only referred to the urban center but especially to the problem of the need for a center at any level of architectural and urban planning organization. (...) a very broad architectural, urbanistic and human vision of the need for the core as an element of spontaneous or organized life, either individual or collective."[8]

Years later, the area between the avenues Marechal Gomes da Costa, Boavista and Montevideo/Brazil would be launched as a competition test for the position of professor of Urbanology at ESBAP (1962), bringing into debate the organization of neighborhood units and their centers. The statement released to the candidates, based on the study of arch. Carvalho Dias, addressed once again the creation of a religious center for the new parish headquarters of Nevogilde, close to the convent. One of the candidates, Távora's colleague João Andresen, wrote:

> (...) the presence of the Dominican Fathers, with their Church and Convent, makes this area known as the Dominican Zone (...) it is also a strictly residential area, made up of houses that reveal the fair good living standards of its population. It is worth noting the presence of a recent square, overlooking the Church of the Dominicans, a two-story building whose ground floor is occupied by commerce. This small set, outlines a principle of center of interest on a local scale".[9]

---

7 Carlos Teixeira da Costa Júnior e [Comissão Municipal de Arte e Arqueologia], "Parecer ao ante projecto do convento de Cristo-Rei," *Arquivo CMP*, (17th June 1950) (Translation by the author).

8 Fernando Távora, "Entrevista a Fernando Távora," *Arquitectura* (September-October 1971): 152 (translation by the author).

9 João Andresen, "Concurso de provas públicas para provimento dum lugar de professor do 2º grupo (Urbanologia)," in *Boletim especial da Escola Superior de Belas-Artes do Porto 1962-1963* (Porto: Escola Superior de Belas Artes, 1963) (translation by the author).





In 1961, Távora would design his first convent built from scratch, on the outskirts of Porto. At the Convent of the Franciscan Sisters of Calais (Gondomar 1961-1971), echoes of the Dominican project can be observed, particularly in the use of the cloister and the volumetric importance of the church building [Fig. 8]. The design for the Chapel of the Dominican Convent in Fátima (1961), was never realized and was later carried out by Luíz Cunha, a former student of Fernando Távora [Fig. 9].

## One Lecture

In January 1958, Fernando Távora delivered a lecture titled *Characteristics of Southern Religious Architecture* as part of the Sacred Architecture Course, organized to support preparations for the architectural competition for the new Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Lisbon). The discovery of a magnetic tape containing a partial audio recording of the course, has shed light on the themes explored by the senior Swiss architect Hermann Baur and the young Portuguese architect Fernando Távora. This event marked MRAR's most widely attended activity, drawing approximately 200 participants to Lisbon and receiving extensive coverage in the national press.

The lecture by Fernando Távora was prepared and discussed in collaboration with professors Mário Chicó, Artur Nobre Gusmão, and architect António Freitas Leal. The conference was divided into three parts and concluded with a presentation of slides.

In the first part, Távora acknowledged the impossibility of providing a precise response to the organization's request. From his perspective, rather than focusing on the "characteristics of architecture," it was necessary to understand the "characteristics of a particular type of spatial organization" – a theme that would later lead to his dissertation *Da organização do espaço* (1962). This required a cross-disciplinary reading that did not disregard humanity, integrated within

Fig. 7
Civic and Comercial Centre Gomes da Costa, design by Fernando Távora for CMP with the dominican convent (Manuel Passos Júnior and Eduardo Reis arch.) and the housing block (Pereira da Costa arch.), Porto c.1954 (source: Casa da Imagem – Fundação Manuel Leão FML PT-FML-TR-COM-833-2).

a specific environment and inhabiting it in various ways. However, the desired synthesis of urbanism and architecture had yet to be achieved, as knowledge at the time remained overly compartmentalized and rigid.

> "There is research by archaeologists, there is research by sociologists, there is research by economists, but in truth the synthesis, which will naturally come one day, is yet to be achieved. We are still groping around this matter, still a little linked to a sensitivity, to a knowledge through sensitivity, but not really to a scientific understanding of the underlying phenomena."[10]

Távora revealed the expectation and confidence he had in the ongoing work of the Inquérito à Arquitectura Regional Portuguesa, which sought to deepen the study "of a certain organized space", proposing a more global reading.

In the second part, Távora explored the importance of understanding the characteristics of southern architecture, particularly the Portuguese one, and how this knowledge could have a "tangible, useful, and practical application." He outlined the path that had led to the concept of international architecture and questioned the understanding of the "human scale."

> An architecture that knows neither men, nor climates, nor materials. A pure architecture, for a pure man, living in a pure land. The reality, however, which we recognize day by day, is that neither all men are equal, nor the conditions of the Earth are all similar. It's a bit like 'the emperor is naked'. The problem then arises: if men are different from each other, if the land they walk on is full and so rich in diversities, why should one force reality and move towards an architecture and urbanism of essences?[11]

In this context, Távora recognized the timeliness and importance of MRAR's action, as a movement that, conversely to the 'idea of international architecture', defended the need for knowledge of reality, in order to "integrate each architecture into a specific physical, human and historical environment", stating:

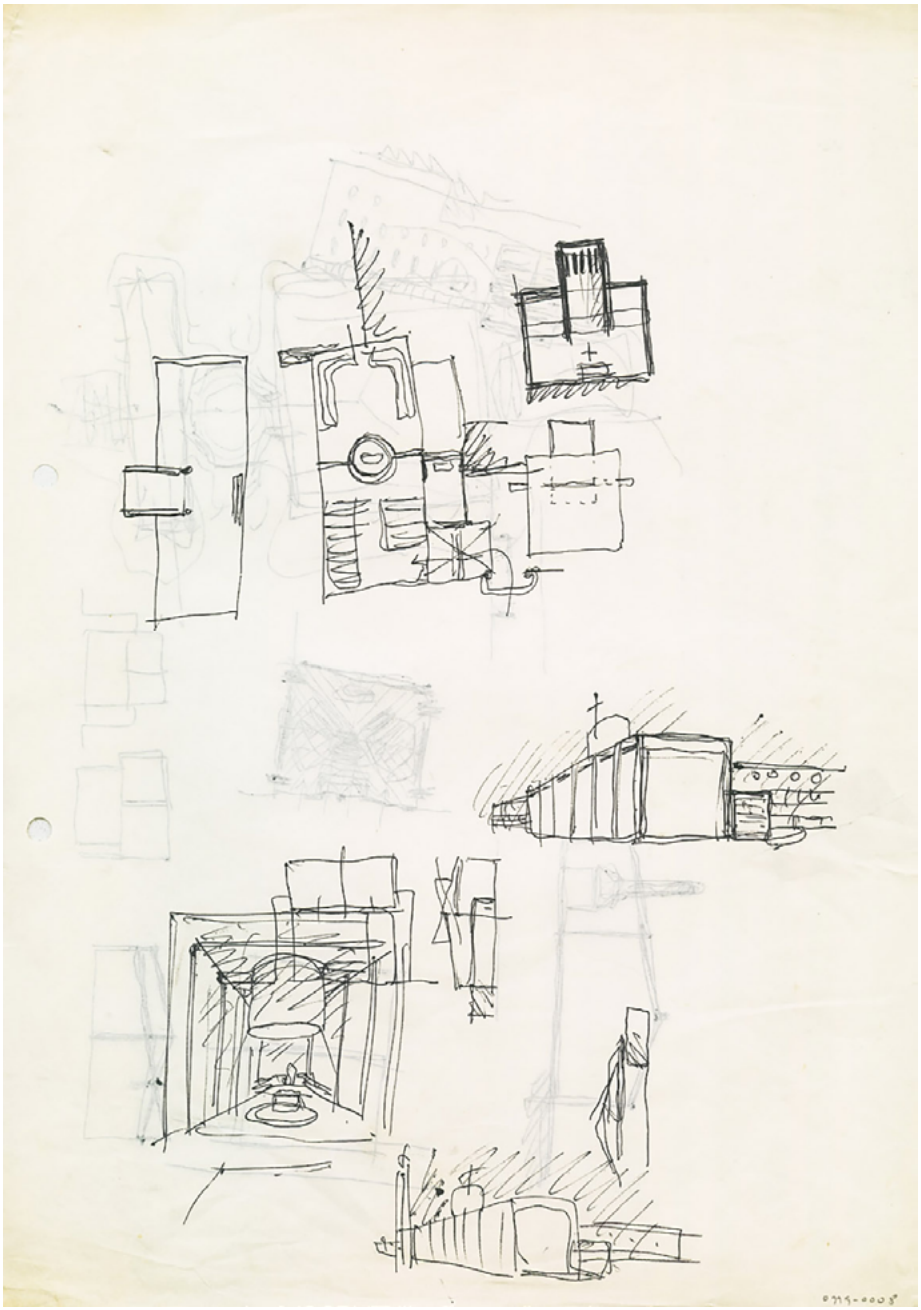
> (...) we have to become aware of our reality. In a very broad sense. And really, when talking about human scale in architecture and urbanism for the Man [mankind], we do not really consider the geometric man, but a human Man, with his sense of the [surrounding] realities – cultural, social, economic, geographic, historical, etc. – and [one has to]analyze everything and know everything with a creative sense; not looking for a history lesson that is pure dilettantism, pure knowledge; [but] as far as possible, apply, carry out, that is, analyze with a synthetic and creative sense.[12]

In the third part of his presentation, Távora highlighted themes he associated

10 Fernando Távora, "Características da arquitectura religiosa meridional," in João Luís Marques, "A Igreja na cidade. Serviço e Acolhimento. Arquitectura Portuguesa 1950-1975," (PhD Diss., FAUP, Porto, 2017), 658 (translation by the author).

11 Marques, "Igreja," 659 (translation by the author).

12 Marques, "Igreja," 659 (translation by the author).



with the hypothetical characteristics of southern architecture. He discussed the differences between northern and southern Portugal, such as the distribution of vegetation masses in each region, and the sobriety of design, which could not simply be attributed to economic austerity. He spoke of the square proportions connected to the earth, the concentration of strong decoration, the integration of buildings into the landscape (in contrast to Nordic architectural practices), and the "certain family resemblance" he referred to as a "domestic scale."

Finally, visual materials were presented. The first series featured examples from the history of international religious architecture, followed by Portuguese churches: small Romanesque churches (used to discuss "decoration," "mystery," "material," and the "assertion of volumes") and "anonymous architectures" along the coastline (intended to spark interest in the use of lime and to observe the presence of different layouts—"more rectangular in the north" and "more irregu-

Fig. 8
Fernando Távora, CNSR – Convento Nossa Senhora do Rosário de Fátima, unbuilt chapel, Porto 1961 (Fundação Marques da Silva, Fernando Távora Archive, FIMS/FT/0119-pd0008).





lar in the south"). The sequence concluded with plans and photographs of Lisbon churches that the group would visit in the following days: the Cathedral (Sé), Jerónimos Monastery, São Vicente de Fora, Santa Engrácia, São Paulo, Nossa Senhora de Fátima, and Moscavide.

Távora emphasized two key themes in this sequence: the integration of churches into the urban fabric, as seen in the case of São Paulo Church, and the design of entry porticos, exemplified by the Lisbon Cathedral. Diplomatically, in the following slides, he shifted the discussion to contemporary religious architecture, focusing on the modern churches of Lisbon: Nossa Senhora de Fátima (1938) and Moscavide (1956). He compared the two, expressing admiration for the solution developed by João de Almeida and António Freitas Leal, which explored the "concept of the square church. He then revisited the theme of the integration of churches into their surroundings, as well as the Lisbon – Oporto dichotomy.

> It gives me the impression that Moscavide was a church that, to a certain extent (if not sent from Lisbon to Oporto, which was also possible), is doing very well here (...). There is a certain proportion, an amenity that we think is good, although we might not do like that.[13]

If not for the slides of works from foreign and Portuguese churches, the conference would have seemed poorly focused on religious architecture. In fact, Távora did not mention any liturgical aspects – an expected topic in a conference dedicated to the "Characteristics of Southern Religious Architecture." However, the topics discussed suggested a broad framework for addressing architectural issues, to which churches were no strangers.

Fig. 9
Fernando Távora, Convento de Gondomar, 1961-1971 (source: Fundación DOCOMOMO Ibérico).

13 Marques, "A Igreja na cidade," 666 (translation by the author).

## Design Exercises and Real Commissions

In 1962, already in the framework of the ESBAP's reform, Távora launched for his students of 'Architectural Composition', project exercises like real commissioned projects, to be developed along with other academic activities.

Since a significant part of Távora's commissions in the 1960s were of a religious nature, he proposed several works in successive academic years: convents (1961-1962, 4th year), chapels (1963-1964, 6th year) and parish churches (1965-1966 and 1966-1967, 5th year). We just found references to these works in the catalogues of the ESBAP annual Exposição Magna [Great Exhibition] of those years.

Távora sought to make the classroom a space for debate and exchange of ideas, well beyond the basic problems of typological and liturgical organization that he was well aware of. We highlight the direct interventions of the prelates of Oporto in the processes commissioned to Fernando Távora: D. António Ferreira Gomes accompanied him in the study of a location for the new church of S. João de Ver (1959), and D. Florentino de Andrade e Silva recommended him to carry out the project for S. João de Ovar (1967). No less important was the role of Manuel Falcão, director of the Secretariat for New Churches in the Patriarchate (SNIP, Secretariado das Novas Igrejas do Patriarcado – Lisbon), and responsible for suggesting the commission of the church of Nazaré (1962) to Fernando Távora.[14]

On the school's drawing boards, the challenges posed by each project were also addressed, whether related to urban integration, the definition of criteria for site selection, the exploration of the interiority of a plot and its cross; or concepts of monumentality and volumetry, care in the distribution of the program, the creation of transition and gathering spaces. These are topics that we can identify in many Projects Descriptions written by Távora at that time:

> The solution as a whole [Senhor dos Mares, Nazaré], is extremely clear: the Church occupies a central position on the land, surrounded by access on the west and south sides and by the parish center and residences on the north side. (...)There is a clear intention to provoke a movement, which we consider to be of the greatest interest.[15] [Fig. 10, 11]

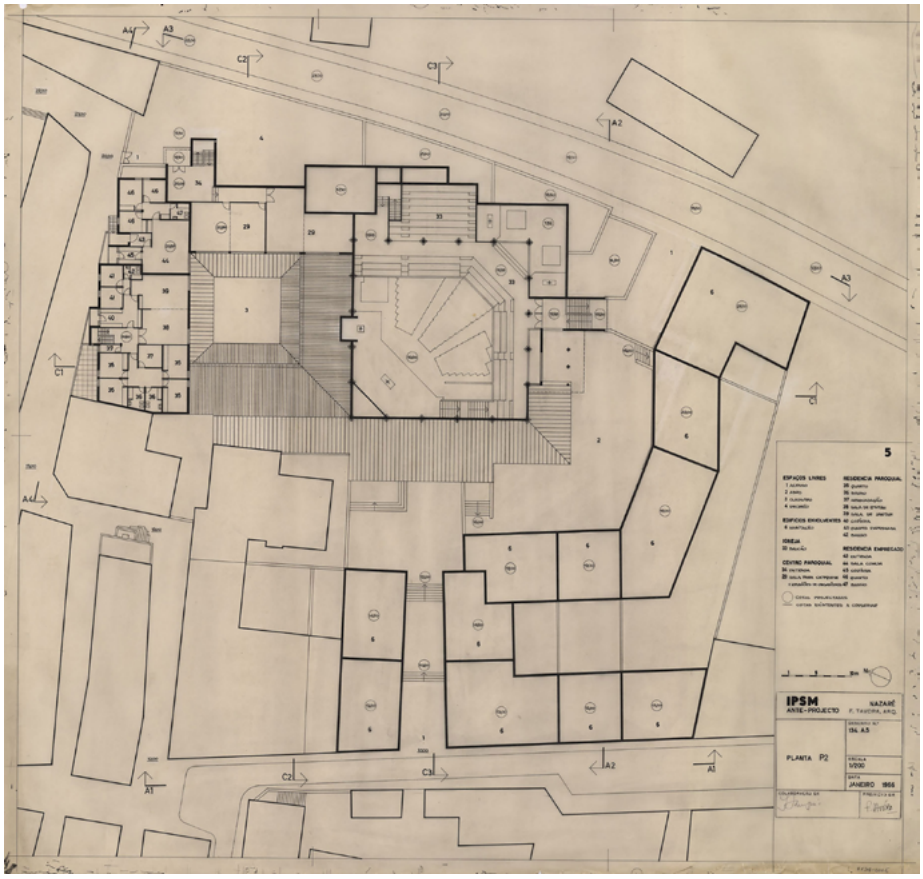
> (...) [São João de Ver] sought to combat a certain idea of monumentality, always tempting, of a House of God that well reflects the spirit of the men who built it and knows well the place in which it is located.[16] [Fig. 12, 13]

---

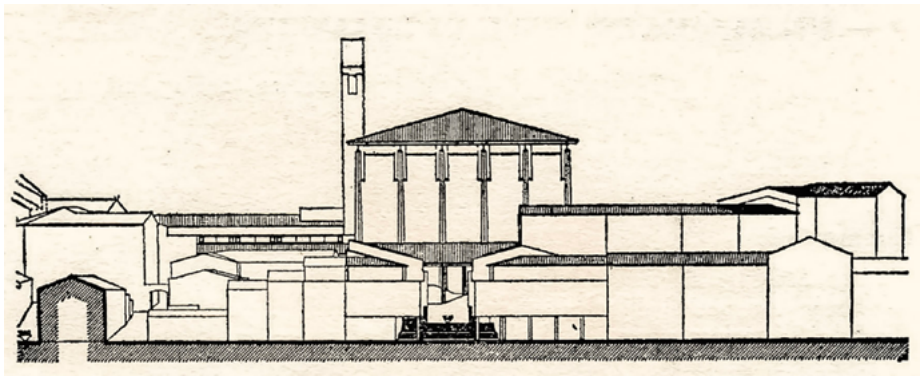
14 See João Luís Marques, "'Igrejas para a comunidade' um projecto do arquivo de Fernando Távora – Igreja Paroquial Senhor dos Mares, Nazaré," in *Sobre o 'Projeto-de-Arquitetura de Fernando Távora'*, ed. Manuel Mendes (Porto: Fundação Marques da Silva, 2015), 72-95.

15 Fernando Távora, Memória Descritiva e Justificativa do anteprojecto para a igreja paroquial Senhor dos Mares, Nazaré, *Arquivo FIMS-FT*, January 1966 (translation by the author).

16 Fernando Távora, Memória Descritiva e Justificativa da igreja paroquial São João de Ver, *Arquivo FIMS-FT*, December 1966 (translation by the author).




10



11

> (...) the desire to unify three buildings as diverse as the church, the center and the residence, led us to a solution in [São João de Ovar] which the whole is structured around a large churchyard facing south, its point of access and confluence, center of gravity, of the parish family (...).[17] **[Fig. 14, 15]**

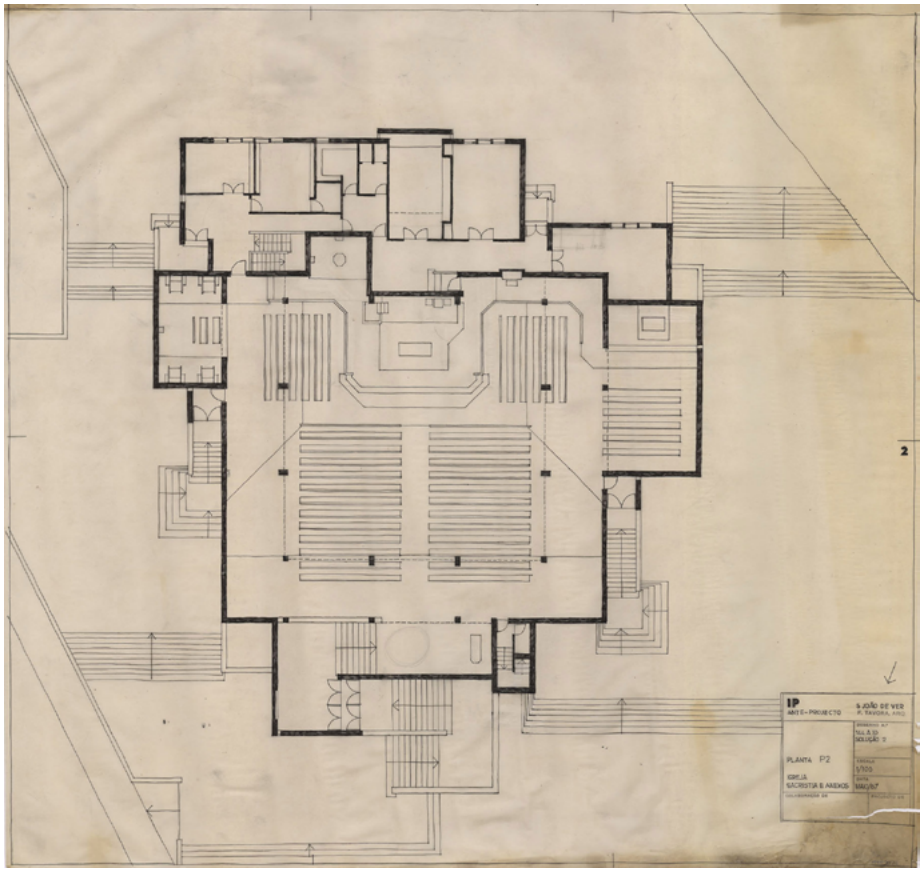
The discussion of these themes did not take place only in his studio or in the school where he taught – preliminary projects for the convent of Gondomar and the church of Nazaré were presented and discussed in the MRAR events.

In the particular case of parish church complexes, we highlight the meetings that Távora held with the communities, not only presenting and explaining the project, but sharing an entire international culture with the populations. Taking

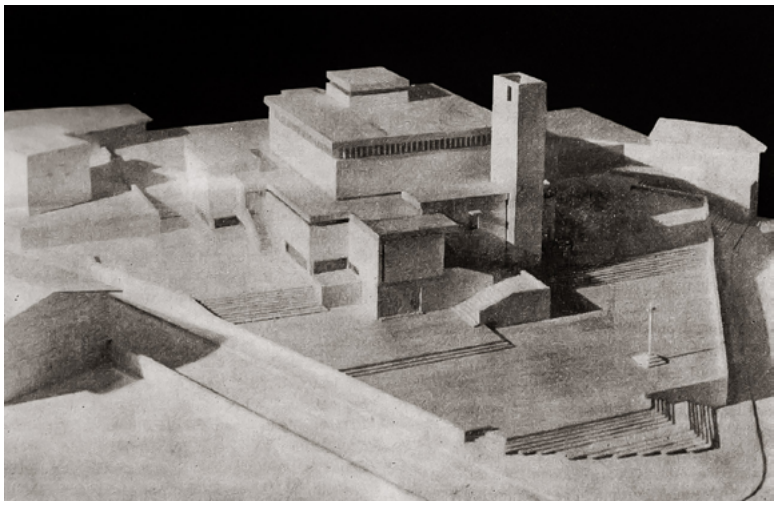
17 Fernando Távora, Memória Descritiva e Justificativa da igreja paroquial São João de Ovar, *Arquivo FIMS-FT*, January 1969 (translation by the author).

Fig. 10
Senhor dos Mares, Nazaré, 1966 [unbuilt], plan (Fundação Marques da Silva, Fernando Távora Archive PT/FIMS/FT/0134-pd0006).

Fig. 11
Senhor dos Mares, Nazaré, 1966 [unbuilt], last elevation (private collection)



12



13

advantage of his qualities as speaker and his status as a professor, he worked with the communities in the search for their acceptance and identification with the modern proposals he presented, as reported in local newspapers and correspondence with parish priests. The meetings were an "(...) opportunity to see the preliminary project, listen to its author, naturally formulate questions and observations, in short, dialogue with the author about the work, since it is intended for everyone and for which almost everyone has already contributed a share."

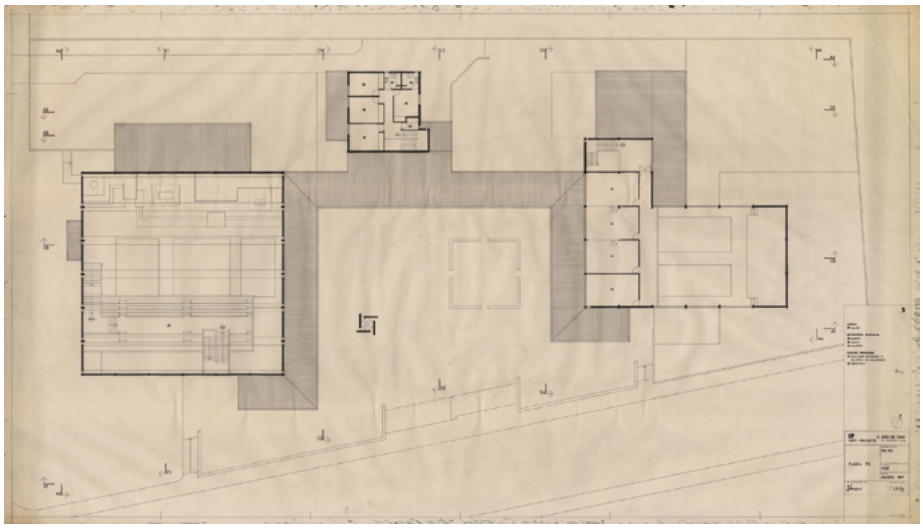
One could already sense here, in the context of the religious commission, the dynamics that would shape the participated architecture. The pedagogy thus left the school space to meet the population to be served:

Fig. 12
Fernando Távora, São João de Ver Parish Church, 1967 [built 2005-2008], plan (Fundação Marques da Silva, Fernando Távora Archive FIMS/FT/0144-pd0023).

Fig. 13
Fernando Távora, São João de Ver Parish Church, 1967 [built 2005-2008] maquette (source: São João de Ver Parish Archive).

"Demonstrating that Távora is up to date with everything that the Council and the Liturgical Commissions determined regarding a type of model church, expressing his interest in the work and the way in which he conceived it, and giving an account of his knowledge, obtained both on trips and specialized publications, from modern temples in Germany and Switzerland, the architect held the audience for two hours."[18]

Despite the specificities and constraints of each project, we found common research around themes covered at the time across Europe – for example, on transitional spaces, churchyards, courtyards and cloisters, outdoor distribution and meeting spaces. We highlight the outdoor spaces of Nazaré and S. João de Ovar, where the parish complex was organized around a large open square, punctuated by a tower that would dominate the plain. As for the liturgical space, we find in the churches that he designed in the 1960s the exploration of the same shape – the square, and the organization around the altar. In fact, we recognize this form in the chapel of the Santo Tirso Jesuit college **[Fig. 16]**, in the church of Nazaré, and also in those of S. João de Ver and S. João de Ovar, regardless of the internal organization of the assembly, more or less surrounding the altar. He thus revisits the theme of 'squareness' already stated in the 1958 lecture when, at the MRAR Sacred Architecture Course, he was asked to speak about the characteristics of southern religious architecture. He then remembered the "Invariantes Castizos de la Arquitectura Española" by Chueca Goitia, sensing that also in the North of Portugal that attribute was felt in a particular way in the "anonymous (...) Romanesque architecture made by some guys we don't know who they were – men of the land". There, as in the named churches, Goitia's writing echoes:



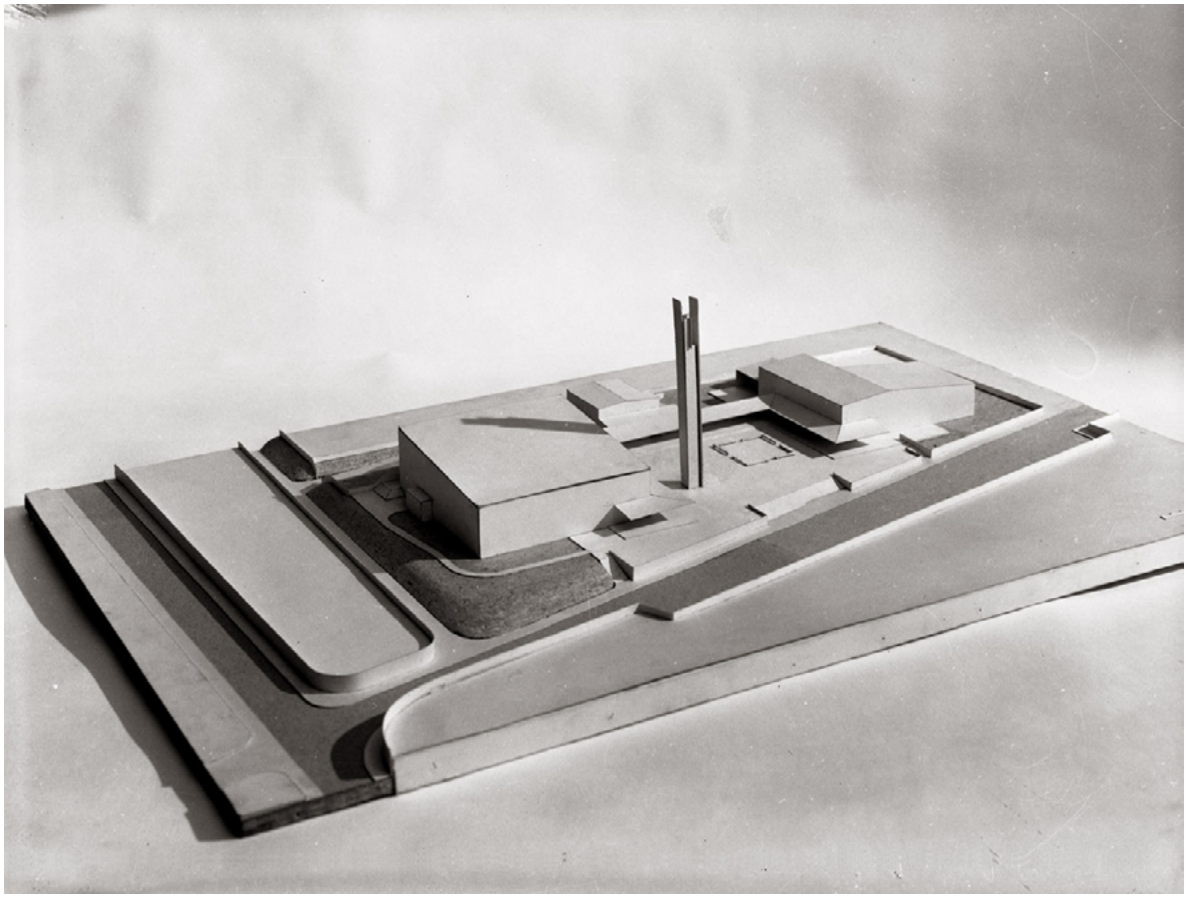
14

"(...) the square proportion, thanks to which this sensation of calm, of perfect rest, is achieved. The square proportion provides architectural compositions with that virile solidity that always holds the architecture of our country."[19]

Fig. 14
Fernando Távora, São João de Ovar Parish Church, 1967 [unbuilt], plan (Fundação Marques da Silva, Fernando Távora Archive FIMS/FT/0134-pd0006).

18 Alfa, "A moderna igreja de S. João de Ovar," *Notícias de Ovar – semanário nacionalista e regional*, September 21, 1967 (translation by the author).

19 Fernando Chueca Goitia, *Invariantes Castizos de la Arquitectura Española* (Madrid: Dossat, 1947).



## Working with the Community

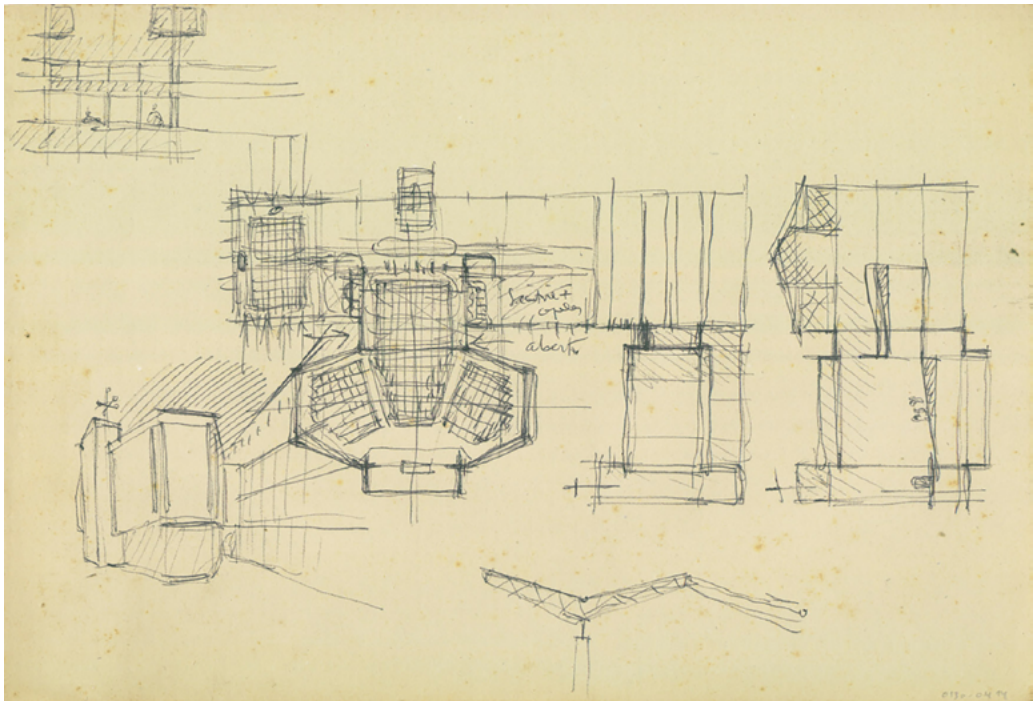
The name of Fernando Távora would once again be associated with the history of the Church in the city of Oporto after the return of D. António Ferreira Gomes, the bishop of Oporto who was in exile between 1959 and 1969.

D. António felt the need to reinforce the presence of the Diocesan Work for Social Promotion (ODPS, Obra Diocesana de Promoção Social) created in 1964 by the apostolic administrator D. Florentino Andrade e Silva, following the work carried out in the neighborhoods by the Diocesan Secretariat for Social Action. D. António Ferreira Gomes identified two names from Oporto's cultural circles whom he invited to join the direction of the diocesan institute: the professor and architect Fernando Távora and the lawyer Francisco Sá Carneiro, then deputy of the National Assembly. In this way, the Church sought to open up to the world through greater participation of lay people in its structures.

If the invitation to Francisco Sá Carneiro was the result of recognition of his political intervention with Marcelo Caetano for the return of D. António, the invitation to the architect Fernando Távora, a Catholic militant since his youth[20] with recognized academic merit, culminated a decade of his collaboration in some causes in the diocese of Oporto. Beyond the works already identified,

Fig. 15
Fernando Távora, São João de Ovar Parish Church, 1967 [unbuilt], maquette (Casa da Imagem – Fundação Manuel Leão FML PT-FML-TR-COM-460-7).

20 About this subject: Manuel Mendes, ed., *Fernando Távora: as raízes e os frutos: palavra, desenho, obra 1937-2001* (Porto: Fundação Instituto Arquitecto José Marques da Silva Universidade do Porto. Faculdade de Arquitectura U.Porto Press, 2020).



Távora had assisted Luiz Cunha, his former student and an active member of the MRAR, in the exhibition proposal for the Museum of Art and Archaeology of the Major Seminary of Oporto (former Jesuit College of Oporto near Barredo), inaugurated in 1958.

But more significant in the context of D. António's invitation, was the collaboration that Távora had been developing, where

> he had confirmed his role as a 'man of the people and with the people' in the Barredo Social Center, which was built in the square under the lower deck of the D. Luís Bridge. The Work's assistants, having the best impressions of Távora, had shown they wished to see him in the directorate.[21]

Despite Fernando Távora beginning his teaching career at ESBAP earlier than Octávio Lixa Filgueiras, the theme "Zona do Barredo – Estudo de Recuperação Parcial" (Zone of Barredo – Partial Recovery Study) in Távora's Composição de Arquitectura 3rd part course (1967-1968) emerged after the "operations" initiated by Filgueiras in the Arquitectura Analítica 1 and 2 courses (1964-1965), who in that year began studies in that poor and central area of the city.

A Social Centre was established in the Barredo area in 1961 [**Fig. 17**], described as a "point of support and an element of contact with the population," as detailed in the Urban Renewal Study of Barredo (May 1969), coordinated by Fernando Távora for the Oporto City Council. At that Social Centre, students from the Social Service Institute (created in 1956 within the Diocese of Oporto) conducted surveys that provided an in-depth understanding of the socio-economic and housing realities. This work was complemented by ESBAP students,

Fig. 16
Fernando Távora, Chapel and pavilion of Nun'Álvares Institute, Porto 1963-1965 (Fundação Marques da Silva, Fernando Távora Archive FIMS/FT/0019-pd0055).

21 João Alves Dias, *Nos Alvores da Obra Diocesana* (Porto: Obra Diocesana de Promoção Social, 2013), 53 (translation by the author).





who made building surveys in the area. These collaborative efforts allowed the Barredo to be perceived as a "theoretical space for the articulation between architectural education and social practice; and as a stage for constructing a new humanist paradigm for urban policies."

Similar to the various religious architectural projects Távora proposed to students at ESBAP, the urban renewal study he developed for the City Council also became an academic project. Beyond its focus on housing, the study identified the "essential construction of a new Social Centre in Barredo – one that works with the population, not for the population." As was noted when the institution was created in 1961, "responsibility will rest with the people themselves."

The new programme, devised in the late 1960s under the direction of the Social Centre, was in many ways like a parish complex, except for the liturgical space. It included facilities such as a reception office, cafeteria, library, auditorium (with stage and dressing rooms), meeting and social rooms (for youth groups and study purposes), as well as rooms for childcare, nursing, a kitchen, etc. Despite the specificities of Barredo's social and heritage surroundings, similarities can be established with the debate on the construction of new churches that go beyond their specific program. On the one hand, the desire to integrate the equipment in the community, implementing it at crossing points and offering a diverse program to the population that enhanced its use; but, above all, the call for the community participation, from the conception of the project to the exploitation of the spaces.

The invitations to join the management of the ODPS between 1971 and 1974 115, accepted by Távora and Sá Carneiro, were made by the 'communist priest' João Alves Dias, responsible for monitoring the population of the Cerco neighborhood, and there resident, who, since 1964, pursued the process of establishing that new community – a social amalgam.

Fig. 17
Cathedral and the seminar and Barredo, Porto (Private Collection).

It should be noted that the work of the diocesan community in the neighborhoods was fundamental to the social cohesion and human development of the population, particularly those rehoused in neighborhoods under the city improvement plan, as Távora recognized in 1969 in the proposal for urban renewal of Barredo. The municipal response to social problems was not enough and, on several occasions, the municipal reports identified the contribution of religious institutions in the area of assistance. Thus, in 1964, following the proposal of the Mayor Nuno Pinheiro Torres' Office, assistance was delegated to the Diocesan Secretariat for Social Action which, as reported in the municipal minutes, highlighted the technical capacity and spirit of that institution. In fact, the spirit of the association – "an ecclesiastical work but not (...) clerical" – and its practices were pioneering in the 1960s, as highlighted in the 1966 municipal report:

> "(...) the Diocesan Secretariat for Social Action was introduced, mainly in the neighborhoods of Cerco do Oporto, Pasteleira and Fonte da Moura, where it developed very intense action, organizing committees and creating groups with local residents for purposes of great educational and welfare interest, including: library, nursing station, cultural and recreational center, sports, etc. And the most remarkable thing is that the organizers awakened the residents, instigated and galvanized their enthusiasm and put it into action, but always convincing them that everything was their work.
>
> It is believed that this is the way to create lasting work."[22]

The Church of Oporto, alongside parish work, developed programs to integrate and promote the social development of local communities, moving away from welfare models, as recalled by António Teixeira Fernandes – priest, private secretary to D. Florentino de Andrade e Silva and pioneer of the study of Sociology in the diocese of Oporto. These initiatives stimulated the autonomy that was fundamental for the social transformations that took place after the 25th of April.

> SAAL (Local Outpatient Support Service) or Barredo were raising an issue that would later be widely discussed in municipal planning experiments in other municipalities: should a plan be made from the bottom up to the top, or from the top down to bottom? Making a plan from the bottom up, that is, starting from the neighborhoods to the entire city or, conversely, starting from a general view of the entire city to say what is of interest to each neighborhood, which was how it was done before and how it is still done in most places, even abroad.[23]

More than social action in the neighborhoods, the work of Oporto's diocese

22 Câmara municipal do Porto, *Relatório e Contas da Gerência referentes a 1964* (Porto: Câmara Municipal do Porto, 1964), 228 (translation by the author).

23 Nuno Portas, "O processo SAAL: Entre o Estado e o Poder Local," *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, no. 18-20 (February 1986): 641 (translation by the author).

sought the participation and social promotion of the city's inhabitants, meeting with residents, encouraging them to identify needs and motivating them to form committees to solve problems. The Church placed itself at the service of the City and this intention was expressed in the name of the institution.

> I still wonder today: how was it possible for the Salazar Government to give legal status to a Work whose objective was to promote the social development of human groups… raising the awareness of their potential? The Diocesan Work was unique in the country. It was not about assistance, but about social development. It developed a community activity in which the citizens themselves were the authors of their development.
>
> They were inconvenient for the established powers: they were aware of their needs and demanded their rights. The "poor" were agents of their own transformation, of their growth as a community.[24]

By accepting the invitation of the Bishop of Oporto, and being a regular presence at the weekly board meetings, Fernando Távora joined the group of people who advocated listening to the communities and seeking solutions with them. In the 1970s, working for the Church implied political participation in the construction of the City. This was the spirit that guided the work that, together with Sá Carneiro and the Board team, they carried out with the bodies of the Oporto City Council and the Ministry of Health and Welfare, at a time of some hostility towards the Church following the death of Mayor Nuno Pinheiro Torres.

If in the 1960s we witnessed, in the ESBAP school space, the development of projects that anticipated the importance of community participation, the testimony of the beginning of the following decade takes us to another magnitude of problem – an architecture of and for the community, as Távora wrote in 1952, in the 'Lição das Constantes' (Lesson on Constants) regarding the climate of close collaboration necessary between the inhabitants in the construction of the city endowed with works of architecture and urban planning:

> (...) in fact, it will not be enough to build houses or cities or temples, it is necessary to have the guarantee of their interest for those for whom such works are intended; by living them, they collaborate not in the creation but in the very existence of these manifestations. As works of collaboration, the works of Architecture and Urban Planning will be syntheses, plastic translations in the organized space of those by whom and for whom they are carried out; translations that are unique, characteristic, diverse, varied and changeable. Previous and common to all of them is the fact that, without a spirit of collaboration and collective effort, these works could not be carried out.[25]

* * * * *

---

24 João Alves Dias, "Grande Entrevista a João Alves Dias," *Espaço Solidário*, no. 7 (May-June 2007): 18 (translation by the author).

25 Fernando Távora, "A lição das constantes," *Lusíada – revista ilustrada de cultura 1*, no. 2 (November 1952) (translation by the author).

With the selection of cases presented, an effort was made to highlight the importance of religious commissions in Fernando Távora's professional career, which has been rarely acknowledged in the history of Modern Religious Architecture. However, the diversity of topics he addressed is evident. These works included reflections on the role of the church in the urban context, the renewal of liturgical forms, and the development of pioneering and participatory social processes. It is therefore deserved and fair to celebrate and remember Fernando Távora, a man of remarkable sensitivity, vast experience, profound vision, exceptional ability for dialogue (listening, making himself heard, and captivating others), and immense tenacity in action over decades, who significantly contributed to the prestige of his school of architects.

**Acknowledgements** to the Manuel Leão Foundation – House of the Image and to the Marques da Silva Foundation.

## Bibliography


Alfa. "A moderna igreja de S. João de Ovar." *Notícias de Ovar – semanário nacionalista e regional*, September 21, 1967.

Alves da Cunha, João, and João Luís Marques. "Catholic parishes in Lisbon master plano of 1959. The legacy of the SNIP and the MRAR." In *Territories of faith. Religion, Urban planning and demographic change in post-war architecture*, edited by Sven Sterken and Eva Weyns, 191-220. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022.

Alves da Cunha, João, and João Luís Marques. *Dominicanos. Arte e Arquitetura Portuguesa. Diálogos com a Modernidade*. Lisboa: Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa – Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Instituto São Tomás de Aquino – Província Portuguesa da Ordem dos Pregadores, 2019.

Alves Dias, João. "Grande entrevista com João Alves Dias." *Espaço Solidário*, no. 7 (May-June 2007): 18-19.

Alves Dias, João. *Nos Alvores da Obra Diocesana*. Porto: Obra Diocesana de Promoção Social, 2013.

Andresen, João. "Concurso de provas públicas para provimento dum lugar de professor do 2º grupo (Urbanologia)." In *Boletim especial da Escola Superior de Belas-Artes do Porto 1962-1963*. Porto: Escola Superior de Belas Artes, 1963.

"Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporânea." *Arte Portuguesa. Boletim da Escola Superior de Belas Artes do Porto*, no. 2-3 [1951-1952 and 1952-1953] (1954): 11.

Câmara Municipal do Porto. *Relatório e Contas da Gerência referentes a 1964*. Porto: Câmara Municipal do Porto, 1964.

de Pina, Luís. "O Porto e S. Domingos (22nd March.1952)." *Cristo Rei, Boletim Religioso da Igreja de Cristo-Rei Dominicanos*, no. 1, Year I (1952): 1.

Goitia, Fernando Chueca. *Invariantes Castizos de la Arquitectura Española*. Madrid: Dossat, 1947.

Lixa Filgueira, Octávio. "A escola do Porto 1940/69." In *Carlos Ramos, exposição retrospectiva da sua obra*. Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1986.

Marques, João Luís. "A Igreja na cidade. Serviço e Acolhimento. Arquitectura Portuguesa 1950-1975." PhD. Diss., FAUP, Porto, 2017.

Marques, João Luís. "'Igrejas para a comunidade' um projecto do arquivo de Fernando Távora – Igreja Paroquial Senhor dos Mares, Nazaré." In *Sobre o 'Projeto-de-Arquitetura de Fernando Távora'*, edited by Manuel Mendes, Porto: Fundação Marques da Silva, 2015.

Mendes, Manuel, ed. *Fernando Távora: as raízes e os frutos: palavra, desenho, obra 1937-2001*. Porto: Fundação Instituto Arquitecto José Marques da Silva Universidade do Porto. Faculdade de Arquitectura U.Porto Press, 2020.

Portas, Nuno. "O processo SAAL: Entre o Estado e o Poder Local." *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, no. 18-20 (February 1986): 641.

Távora, Fernando. "A lição das constantes." *Lusíada – revista ilustrada de cultura 1*, no. 2 (November.1952).

Távora, Fernando. "Entrevista a Fernando Távora." *Arquitectura* (September-October 1971): 152.

Távora, Fernando. "O Porto e a Arquitectura moderna." *Panorama – revista portuguesa de arte e turismo*, II série, no. 4 (1952).

**Lorenzo Grieco**

# Multifunctionality and Ecumenism in Post-War British Church Architecture: Two Projects by Martin Purdy

ARTICLE

*Britain; Liturgy and Architecture; Multi-purpose Church; Martin Purdy; Ecumenism*

**/Abstract**

**In the years following the Second World War, Christian liturgy underwent significant transformations, largely influenced by the Liturgical Movement. Within the Church of England, these changes found expression in the designs of post-war Anglican parish churches, which became pivotal spaces for community engagement. This text explores the developments that led to a greater involvement of the congregation in the liturgical rites, with notable effects on the functional layout of sacred spaces. It then considers the specific urban contexts of the New Towns and suburban areas, where new churches assumed a vital social role, integrating extra-liturgical functions within parish centres and dual-use buildings. The adoption of multiple functions within a single structure gave rise to the concept of the "multi-purpose church," exemplified by SS Philip and James in Hodge Hill, Birmingham, a project developed by architect Martin Purdy in collaboration with the Institute for the Study of Worship and Religious Architecture at Birmingham University. Lastly, the ecumenical centre in Skelmersdale, designed by Purdy's firm, APEC, exemplified the idea of not only concentrating diverse functions but also uniting different denominational communities within one building, sharing spaces for worship. For such buildings, the principles of inclusivity and spatial flexibility became crucial design criteria, aimed at engaging believers—sometimes of different faiths—and fostering a collective identity through the new worship facilities.**

**/Author**

**Lorenzo Grieco**
**Università Roma Tor Vergata**
**lorenzo.grieco@uniroma2.it**

Lorenzo Grieco holds a Ph.D. in 'Civil Engineering: Architecture and Construction' from the University of Rome Tor Vergata, and in 'Architecture' from the University of Kent, Canterbury. Specializing in architectural history, his doctoral research focused on post-war ecclesiastical architecture in Britain. With expertise in Renaissance, early twentieth-century, and contemporary architecture, he explores the technological and propaganda aspects within architectural projects. He is currently a research fellow at the University of Rome Tor Vergata.



CC BY 4.0
https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/19673
Copyright © 2024 Grieco

## Liturgical Renewal in the Church of England

In the second half of the twentieth century, the Church of England underwent a significant transformation. Understanding this change requires looking at the theological and architectural movements that had already shaped it long before the Second World War.

Already in the first half of the nineteenth century, a renewal of liturgy and architecture was advocated by some members of the Catholic wing of the Church of England.[1] They were influenced by the ecclesiological theories of the Cambridge Camden Society, an association for the study of ancient architecture, with a particular interest Gothic architecture, established within the Oxford Movement.[2] Founded in the 1830s, the movement grouped members of the higher clergy in favour of a liturgical revival and the restoration of religious orders dissolved by Henry VIII. In the first half of the twentieth century, Anglican renewal movements, influenced by the wider international Liturgical Movement, found their strongest footing within religious orders such as the Anglican Order of Saint Benedict. Figures like the Dominican scholar Gregory Dix played a key role in this revival, arguing in his seminal work, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, that the structure and rhythm of worship were just as significant as the words themselves.[3] He identified four fundamental actions at the heart of the liturgy: the offertory, prayer, fraction, and communion. Dix's work had a profound influence on Anglican liturgical reform, reinforcing the importance of structure and symbolism in worship and shaping the Parish Communion movement.

Founded in 1949, the movement drew heavily on the writings of Arthur Gabriel Hebert, an Anglican monk of the Society of the Sacred Mission at Kelham, Nottinghamshire, whose publications provided key theological foundations.[4] These included *The Parish Communion* (1937) and the bulletin *Parish and People*, launched in 1950, both of which articulated the movement's vision for a renewed liturgical life.[5] In particular, the Parish Communion movement championed a communal ethos, emphasising the spiritual essence of the Eucharist while sparking debate on the ideal liturgical setting. It sought to replace the fragmented Sunday service—where an early morning communion was followed by a later, communion-less matins—with a single, unified mass at around 9 or 9:30, marked by music, full congregational participation, and a shared sense of purpose. This approach, initially considered progressive in

---

1 This article is dedicated to the memory of Elain Harwood (1958–2023), an architectural historian who brought a fresh and personal perspective of twentieth-century English architecture and church buildings. Thanks to Andrew Bailey and Bob Andrews for their valuable testimonies on the Skelmersdale Ecumenical Centre.
For an overview: Louise Weil, "Liturgical Renewal and Modern Anglican Liturgy", in *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, volume IV. Global Western Anglicanism, c. 1910-present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 50-67.

2 Christopher Webster, John Elliot, eds., *'A Church as it Should Be'. The Cambridge Camden Society and Its Influence* (Stamford: Shaun Tyas, 2000).

3 Gregory Dix, *The Shape of Liturgy* (London: Dacre Press, 1945).

4 Christopher Irvine, *Worship, Church and Society. An exposition of the work of Arthur Gabriel Hebert to mark the centenary of the Society of Sacred Mission (Kelham) of which he was a member* (Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1993).

5 Arthur Gabriel Hebert, ed., *The Parish Communion: a book of essays* (London: S.P.C.K., 1937).

Fig. X



1

the post-war years, was only endorsed by the National Evangelical Anglican Congress in 1967 and remained dominant until the rise of charismatic worship in the 1980s. The Parish Communion also introduced the idea of the 'Parish Breakfast,' a social gathering after mass, fostering community life in purpose-built parish halls adjacent to the church.[6]

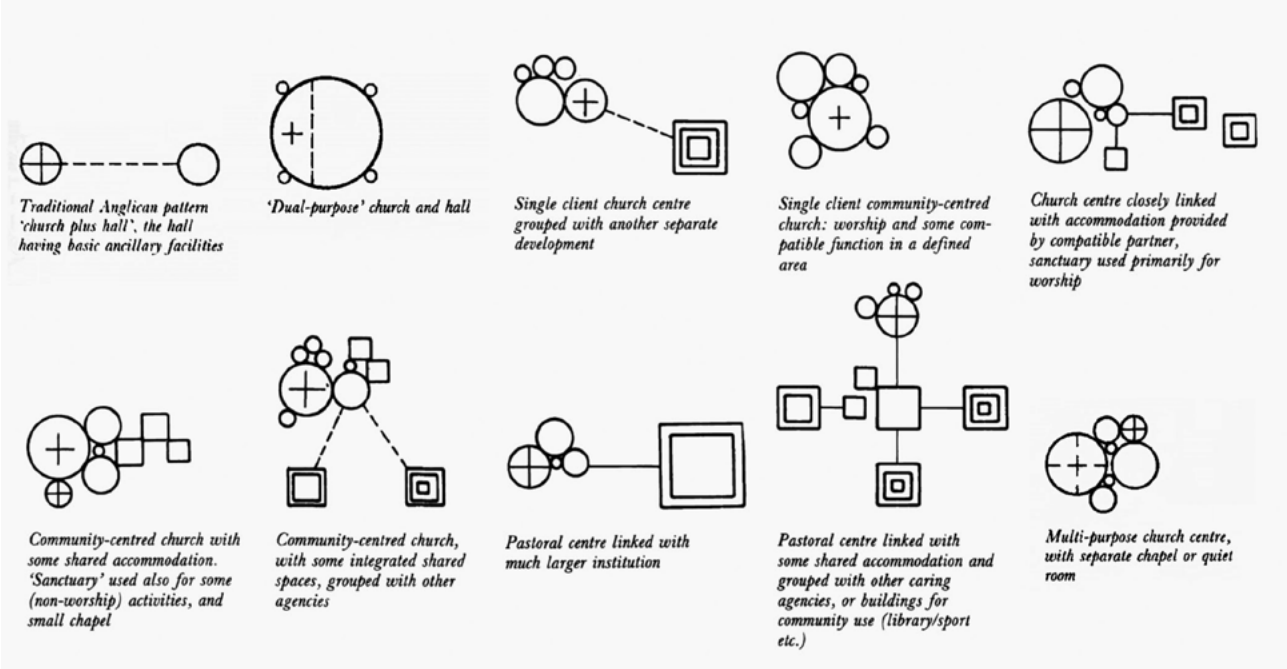
The architectural impact of these liturgical shifts was profound. As in contemporary Catholic design, the altar took on a renewed centrality, while the choir space became a focal point of worship. A striking example is St Paul's, Bow Common **[Fig. 1],** in London's East End, completed in 1960 by architects Robert Maguire and Keith Murray, both members of the New Churches Research Group, an interdisciplinary forum for exploring the relationship between worship and design.[7] Praised by Anglican priest Peter Hammond in his 1962 book *Liturgy and Architecture*, the church was conceived with a strong communal ethos. Its rectangular plan featured a continuous walkway, interrupted only by the baptismal font at the entrance, while the sanctuary was defined by a bold suspended metal candelabrum, with the altar placed beneath a canopy: an arrangement that reinforced both liturgical focus and spatial cohesion.[8] Although dedicated spaces for secular community activities were relatively limited, the garden, enclosed by the church, parish house, and meeting hall to the south, functioned as a generous open-air gathering space. Drawing on monastic tradition, the courtyard introduced a sequence of open and semi-enclosed

6 Hebert, *The Parish Communion*, 181.

7 On the architects, see Gerald Adler, *Robert Maguire & Keith Murray* (London: RIBA Publishing, 2012).

8 Peter Hammond, *Liturgy and Architecture* (London: Barrie & Rockliff, 1960), 4th ed. 1963, 111, 113-114.

Fig. 1
St Paul, Bow Common, London, by Robert Maguire and Keith Murray, exterior view (© The Courtauld).




areas, subtly negotiating the boundary between public and private. This flexible arrangement allowed the space to adapt to different uses, reinforcing its role as a focal point for communal life.



## New Functions for New Areas

In Britain, the post-war period witnessed a profound transformation driven by demographic changes, the reconstruction of city centres ravaged during the Second World War, and advances in transportation technologies. These developments led to a decentralisation policy that encouraged people to move away from city centres to suburban and newly developed areas, such as the large settlements made possible by the New Towns Act of 1946 and the Housing Act of 1952. The planning of these New Towns and housing estates around industrial centres was accompanied by provisions aimed at fostering community well-being, though the implementation of these plans often faced considerable delays.

In a context where the integration of work and daily life was often fragmented, religion played a pivotal role in cultivating a sense of belonging and influencing various aspects of citizens' lives. The social significance of the new parish churches stood in contrast to their peripheral locations, as they were predominantly built on the outskirts of towns. This strategic positioning aimed to reduce land acquisition costs, particularly for community projects, while also allowing for future expansion in response to demographic changes. In these areas, where services were often scarce, the parish church became a crucial piece of infrastructure, merging sacred space with additional extra-liturgical functions to serve the wider needs of the community.

If additional functions had been linked to the church centre, their integration could have been more fluid, as demonstrated in the diagrams drawn by architect

Fig. 2
Aggregation schemes from Martin Purdy, *Churches and Chapels: A Design and Development Guide* (Oxford: Butterworth, 1991).

Martin Purdy and featured in his 1991 book *Churches and Chapels: A Design and Development Guide*.[9] The book offered guidelines for the design of Christian parish centres, drawing from the collected experience of Purdy's work as a church designer for the firm Architects Planning and Ecclesiastical Consultants (APEC), established in 1969 with Peter Bridges. Purdy's diagrams demonstrated several combinations of aggregation for religious complexes, showcasing different ways in which additional functions could be incorporated seamlessly into the design **[Fig. 2].**

Depending on the level of integration between these functions, two distinct approaches to conceptualising churches and their associated parish centres emerged during the 1960s and 1970s.

The first approach saw the sacred building primarily as a place for worship, with a clear emphasis on the church's role as the focal point of spiritual life. It advocated for the idea that churches should stand apart from the surrounding urban fabric, as monumental complexes that were immediately recognisable and visually distinct. This prominence was not merely a matter of aesthetic preference but was rooted in ethical considerations—namely, the belief in the importance of shared beauty within sacred spaces.[10] Rather than adopting the utilitarian forms of industrial buildings, churches were encouraged to draw inspiration from the grandeur of cathedrals, with the belief that such design would provide the working class with one of their few direct encounters with art. Moreover, in contrast to polyfunctional buildings, uncertainties persisted regarding the willingness of the faithful to engage with parish centres, even in their leisure time. These ideas found expression in the design of liturgical spaces, which maintained their distinct autonomy, with extra-liturgical functions relegated to smaller volumes, often constructed separately from the main church building and frequently added at a later stage. For instance, architect Gerard Goalen advocated for this approach, as exemplified in the design of the Catholic Church of Our Lady of Fatima in the New Town of Harlow..[11] Similar principles were evident in its almost symmetrical Anglican counterpart, the church of St. Paul designed by the Humphrys and Hurst studio **[Fig. 3]**.[12] Both buildings emerged as striking landmarks, their massive volumes and cathedral-like forms asserting a visual dominance over their surroundings. In each case, the parish centre was positioned at the rear of the site, intentionally separated from the main liturgical space by a low, connecting walkway.

The opposite trend sought to integrate the functions of the parish centre with the church, creating a multi-use organism designed to foster community and reduce building management costs. The first degree of this integration was seen in the dual-purpose churches that spread across the UK after the Second

9 Martin Purdy, *Churches and Chapels. A Design and Development Guide* (Oxford: Butterworth, 1991).

10 Gerard Goalen, "The House of God", *Churchbuilding*, no. 2 (January 1961): 3–5.

11 Gerald Adler, "Our Lady of Fatima", in *100 Churches 100 Years* (London: Batsford, 2019), ed. Susannah Charlton, Elain Harwood, and Clare Price, 84; Robert Proctor, *Building the Modern Church: Roman Catholic Church Architecture in Britain, 1955 to 1975* (London: Routledge, 2016), 289–91.

12 Des Hill, "St Paul", in Charlton, Harwood and Price, *100 Churches 100 Years*, 78.



3

World War, largely for economic reasons. These buildings typically featured a large hall with the sanctuary at one end, which could be screened off during non-religious activities. Notable examples include the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Harlow, designed by Maguire and Murray, and several churches by Michael Farey in London's suburbs.[13]

## Cathedrals Versus Civic Centres

While Peter Hammond, in his seminal *Liturgy and Architecture*, contended that style was secondary to functional planning in church design, the debate surrounding the architectural language of churches in new areas was both vibrant and multifaceted.[14] From a planimetric standpoint, the integration of multiple functions within a single complex often resulted in flexible spaces, adaptable outside worship hours. Multifunctionality was expressed architecturally through a departure from visual unity, favouring volumetric groupings that reflected the varied internal spaces. The inclusion of secular functions, alongside shifting cultural priorities, encouraged the emergence of a new style—more suited to urban settings, less monumental, and distinctly functional.

The exploration of polyfunctionality and temporality in church buildings in new

13 Adler, *Robert Maguire and Keith Murray*, 89–93; Michael Farey, "The Church Centre", *Churchbuilding*, no. 2 (January 1961), 6–10.

14 Hammond, *Liturgy and Architecture*, 169–70: "It is high time that churchmen awoke to the fact that serious architects to-day are not primarily concerned with questions of style, or with the pursuit of a contemporary idiom."

Fig. 3
St Paul, Harlow, by Humphrys and Hurst, 1957-1959, exterior view (photo: the JR James Archive, University of Sheffield).

areas prompted a wider discussion on the architectural approach best suited to convey these principles. For example, in a lecture at the Derby Diocesan Clergy School on April 26th, 1962, George Every, of the Society of Sacred Mission at Kelham, examined the architectural nuances necessary to support both liturgical and social change within ecclesiastical spaces.[15]

In his discourse, Every reflected on the challenge of constructing churches in new estates, where congregations often formed gradually. He argued against the immediate construction of large churches for small congregations in new areas, deeming it a misstep. Instead, he advocated for the establishment of several smaller churches, where a sense of participation could be fostered through an "intimate togetherness."[16] Moreover, he recommended a phased approach, advocating for the construction of small-scale buildings initially, prioritising the creation of an appropriate Eucharistic space, with additional areas added incrementally as the congregation grew and its needs evolved over time. [17]

Despite Every's preference for smaller spaces, he ardently advocated for the construction of buildings that conveyed a sense of permanence and solidity. His rationale stemmed from the desire to balance the informality of certain rites, such as the administration of the Eucharist without an ordained priest. By imbuing these spaces with a sense of enduring solidity, Every sought to elevate the solemnity and reverence of the rituals, highlighting their significance despite their informal nature:

"We do need churches, with church buildings symbolizing permanence and solidity, but on a small scale, prepared to be left behind in another movement of population. […] The more informal, the less sacerdotal, our assemblies and eucharists may become, the more important it is that the room, the naos, should convey the flock the sense of being contained in the wholeness of the church."[18]

On the flip side, Canon Michael J. Jackson's discourse at a conference held in Leeds in September 1961 explored the intersection of sociology and church architecture.[19] Jackson examined the evolving role of the church within industrial society, particularly in the context of new settlements. He noted how the dissolution of traditional geographical unity—where communities were centred around a common locality—had shifted the church's focus. No longer anchored solely by physical proximity, the church began to prioritise a more functional approach, where its role was defined less by its location and more by its capacity to serve the diverse needs of a dispersed and changing population. This shift had significant implications for parish organisation, prompting a re-

15 George Every, *The Setting of Liturgical Change / Building for Change in the Liturgy / Appendix: Forward from the Font. Two lectures given to the Derby diocesan clergy school on April 25th and 26th, 1962* (S.l.: New Churches Research Group, 1962).

16 Every, *The Setting of Liturgical Change*, 22.

17 According to Every, the room, which should feature an altar positioned away from the wall, a sedilia, and a font, needed to be large enough to accommodate around a hundred people standing, with fewer able to kneel or sit. If the congregation increased, a school or club could be used for Sunday liturgy. If the increase was stable, then it was possible to add aisles to the chancel.

18 Every, *The Setting of Liturgical Change*, 23.

19 Michael J. Jackson, *Sociology and Church Building. Tex of a talk given at a Conference at Leeds, September 1961* (S.l: New Churches Research Group, 1961).

evaluation of the centrality of parish buildings and the wider mission of the Church. Jackson also questioned the traditional ideals of permanence and grandeur in church architecture, suggesting that the opulence and durability of such buildings might be at odds with the transient nature of modern life:

"At least a provisional nature is suggested for the church building: whether the sumptuousness and durability of many churches is not a contradiction here is another question. In any case the building requires to express something of the Church's incompleteness and sense of having no abiding citizenship in this world. Prefabricated techniques and buildings might therefore have sociological as well as theological support."[20]

## Missionary Plans and Ecumenism

In the expanding urban landscape, religious buildings were more than infrastructure: they became vital contributors to the cultivation of communal identity. However, in these evolving urban areas characterised by rapid population growth and frequent turnover, establishing a traditional parish system was often impractical. The conventional parish model relied on a strong bond between the parish community and the surrounding urban community, which was difficult to achieve amidst the flux of urban development. To address this challenge and foster a shared identity, new development areas were designated as mission areas.[21] Within these mission areas, groups of priests collaborated with local authorities and social agencies to create the necessary social infrastructure for establishing a parish community.[22] Once the conditions for establishing a new parish were met, particularly in the initial phases of low-density New Town developments, new parish churches were constructed alongside their accompanying parish buildings.

During missionary expansion, flexibility and multifunctionality became essential principles in in gradually forming religious communities.[23] Prior to the establishment of permanent parish churches, missionary plans often included pastoral units. These units typically combined residential quarters for staff with a ground floor dedicated to a range of pastoral activities, including worship, social support, and educational initiatives for children. While these units operated with a degree of autonomy, they were integrated within a larger institutional framework, such as a major parish church or an ecumenical centre. The ecumenical centre, representing a broader Christian unity, sought to accommodate various faith traditions within the region, promoting a sense of collective identity that transcended denominational boundaries. This concept of an interdenominational space mirrored the rising momentum for religious unity,

---

20 Jackson, *Sociology and Church Building*, 4.

21 Alfred R. Shands, *The Liturgical Movement and the Local Church* (New York: Morehouse-Barlow, 1959).

22 Ronald Smythe, Susan Harrison, 'The New Town Mission Field', *Churchbuilding*, no. 5 (January 1962), 14-15; See also the evangelical initiative summarised in *Evangelical Strategy in the New Towns. Report of the Evangelical Alliance New Towns Study Groups* (London: Scripture Union, 1971).

23 National Plan for a Christian Centre, *Churchbuilding*, no. 29 (January 1970), 3–6.

championed by global organisations like the World Council of Churches.[24] This burgeoning interest in religious unity fostered the shared use of church buildings across Britain, a practice formally enshrined in the Sharing of Church Buildings Act of 1969. From the 1970s onwards, it reflected a shift towards ecumenical cooperation, with sacred spaces serving a collective purpose.[25]

In addition to spaces for worship, both traditional and ecumenical, the centre provided facilities for youth activities, offices for various Churches, consultation rooms, recreational areas, and essential amenities. The sharing of churches emerged as a pragmatic response to the multiculturalism of post-war British society, further influenced by recent waves of immigration, especially in industrial areas.[26] However, beyond its socio-cultural implications, this approach was primarily driven by economic necessity. The construction of new religious buildings posed a significant financial burden, which was alleviated interdenominational collaboration.

The need to consider parish creation in new areas and the potential for sharing church buildings was already advocated by Gilbert Cope of the Institute for the Study of Worship and Religious Architecture. He wrote extensively on this issue, stressing the need to rethink traditional church construction and the importance of understanding the community's behavioural and functional needs. This led to a different conception of parish building spaces, organised according to their function and their continuous integration within the urban community. In a 1965 memorandum, Cope used diagrams and analyses to argue for the integration of three fundamental units: the worship room, other functional spaces, and housing for clergy.[27] He suggested these units could be combined in various configurations and dimensions, based on local needs, and advocated for extensive functional research on church layouts to support this integrated approach. Furthermore, he emphasised the necessity of delving into issues such as liturgical requirements, functional utility, missionary context, and ecumenical concerns to inform comprehensive decision-making in church design. Central to Cope's argument was the assertion that perpetuating the division of Christendom in new urban areas was both financially wasteful and theologically undesirable. Instead, he advocated for a collaborative approach that transcended denominational boundaries, reflecting the imperative of unity and harmony within the Christian community:

"It is both financially wasteful, humanly frustrating and theologically undesirable to perpetuate in new areas the present division of Christendom: in a phase of growing together in harmony every denomination must ask itself heart-searching questions about the desirability of setting up its own exclusive

24 Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England, Book 3: The Ecumenical Century, 1900 to the Present* (Grand Rapids, M; Cambridge: W.B. Eerdmans, 1996).

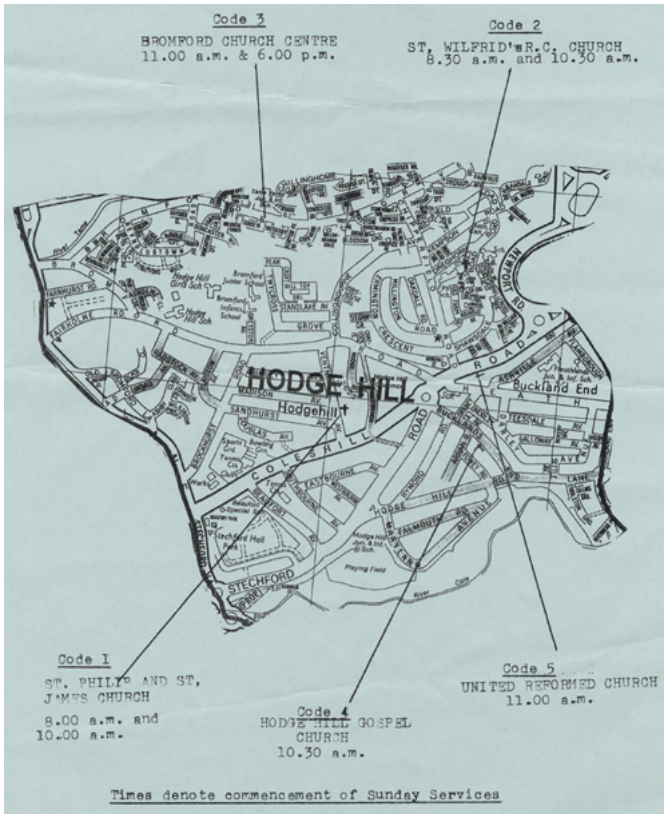
25 On shared church buildings, see Robert Proctor, *Building the Modern Church*, 308-318.

26 Edward R. Wickham, *Church and people in an industrial city* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1957).

27 Gilbert Cope, *Church Buildings in New Areas* (London: New Churches Research Group, 1965).

centre in a new housing area."[28]

In an article published a couple of years later in the *Architect's Journal*, he reconsidered ecclesiastical buildings in new areas, on the basis of an analysis of pastoral activities.[29] He identified three possible ecclesiastical building types for New Towns, each responding to varying population densities: the town centre church, the pastoral centre, and the worship centre. The town centre church, situated in the denser urban core, would prioritise function over aesthetic considerations. Cope argued that a church integrated with the civic centre would better serve the community than a mini-cathedral. The pastoral centre, for less densely populated areas, would be a small facility for meetings and occasional worship, primarily acting as a satellite of a larger worship centre. The worship centre itself would function as a parochial hub, combining residences, a church, and ancillary spaces. Ideally ecumenical, it would serve as a truly "multi-purpose" facility—distinct from the dual-purpose church hall, which Cope found too rigid for specific events. A multi-purpose church, by contrast, would accommodate regular worship, para-liturgical activities, and concerts without extensive internal modifications.




4

## The Multipurpose Church: SS Philip and James, Hodge Hill

Cope's article heralded a new trend in British church architecture, focusing on integrating both religious and secular activities within the same building. This approach led to the development of multipurpose churches, such as SS. Philip and James Church in Hodge Hill, completed in 1968 and demolished in 2008.[30] The church was located in a suburban area of Birmingham, about 7 kilometres east of the city centre, which had grown rapidly in the post-war period **[Fig. 4]**. Despite the presence of a church hall in the area, which had accommodated the local primary school since 1952, it was insufficient for the growing population.

Reverend Dennis Ede entrusted the project for the new church to the Institute for the Study of Worship and Religious Architecture, established at the University of Birmingham. The design process involved students, professors from the

28 Cope, *Church Buildings in New Areas*, 4.

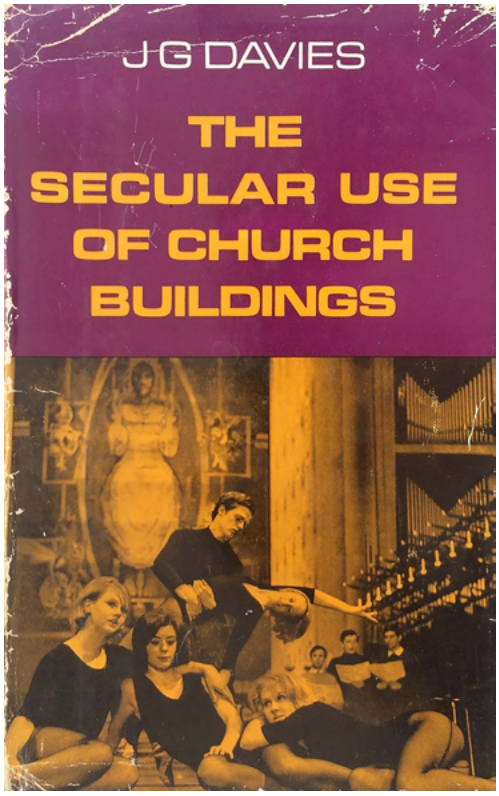
29 Gilbert Cope, "Pastoral Centres", *The Architect's Journal* (September 20, 1967), 763-766.

30 On the church see: Reinhard Gieselmann, *Contemporary Church Architecture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1972), 146-149; Elain Harwood, "Liturgy and Architecture: The Development of the Centralised Eucharistic Space", in *TheTwentieth Century Church,* ed. Roland Jeffrey (London: Twentieth Century Society, 1998), 74; Michael Gilman, *A Study of Churches built for the Use of Congregations of the Church of England Between 1945 and 1970 and of their Effectiveness in Serving the Needs of their Congregations Today,* (PhD Diss., University of Sheffield, Sheffield, 2000), vol. 2, 311-315.

Fig. 4
The Hodge Hill area with indications of the main churches and the service hours (Private Archive).

University of Birmingham, community representatives, and the diocese. The lead architects were Martin Purdy and Denys Hinton of the Birmingham School of Architecture. Hinton was already an affirmed church architect, having previously designed several church buildings in the Midlands.[31] Purdy studied architecture at the Polytechnic of Central London and the University of York before earning a PhD at Birmingham University, where he later began collaborating with the institute.[32]

A key influence on the design was the Institute's director, Anglican theologian John Gordon Davies. At the time of the church's construction, Davies was working on his book *The Secular Use of Church Buildings* (1968) **[Fig 5]**.[33] In this work, he revisited the secular activities traditionally conducted within religious buildings, advocating for their reintegration into modern church life. Davies argued that the multifaceted, extra-religious functions of the church, rooted in its historical use, could engage the broader community during their leisure time. In this sense, he historicised an extra-liturgical activity that, when adapted to industrial society, became crucial to the post-war church's missionary aims. Although his reconstruction of history was not without its flaws, the book had a lasting influence, shaping the flexible layouts of church spaces during this period. Its principles also guided the design of the new SS. Philip and James Church.




5

The original design for SS. Philip and James aimed to preserve the existing church hall, repurposing it for extra-liturgical activities. However, in 1966, a fire destroyed the building entirely, leading to a revaluation of its functions, prompting their integration into a single, cohesive structure. The design process itself was extensive, beginning in 1964 and continuing through to the start of construction in 1966, with further revisions made in response to the fire.[34] The process involved discussions between the architect and the diocese, a course with lectures and debates for the community, parishioner visits to other recently built churches, discussions with local authorities, sociological surveys, and debates on the church's design and functions. A diagram detailing the planned activities, their schedule, and necessary spaces was created to establish the building's final functions.

Special attention was given to defining the range of activities that could take place in the worship hall, in addition to regular and extraordinary celebrations. The general principle was that any secular activity in which every Christian

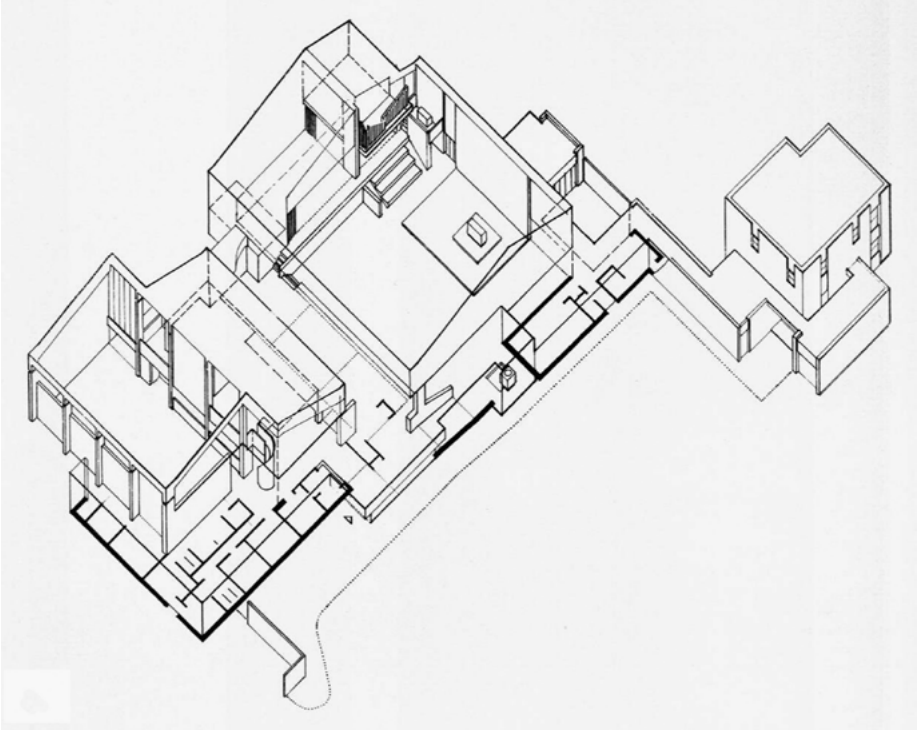
31 Among them, St. George in Rugby (1962–3), considered his masterpiece. See the obituary "Professor Denys Hinton: Architect", *The Times* (April 3, 2010), retrieved from https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/professor-denys-hinton-architect-qhlg8xd9x0h (last accessed May 2024).

32 See the obituary "Martin Purdy", retrieved from https://www.apec.ac/martin-purdy-obituary/ (last accessed May 2024).

33 John Gordon Davies, *The Secular Use of Church Buildings* (New York: Seabury Press, 1968).

34 The process is described in John Gordon Davies, ed., *Hodge Hill – St Philip and St James. The Multipurpose Church* (Birmingham: The University of Birmingham, 1971).

Fig. 5
Cover of John Gordon Davies, *The Secular Use of Church Buildings* (New York: Seabury Press, 1968).



could legitimately participate could be conducted in front of the altar: theatrical performances, concerts, slide and film screenings, dances, meals, games, and gymnastics. The resulting building perfectly fit the idea of a 'multipurpose church'.[35] The main difference between the multipurpose church and the dual-purpose church laid in the blending of activities: liturgical elements, such as the font and altar, were left exposed, reflecting the belief that because the sacred and the secular were two facets of the same reality.

The layout of SS. Philip and James consisted of interconnected volumes, topped by pitched roofs with skylights that flooded the interior with natural light [Fig. 6]. The eastern volume housed a bar, a game room, and various services, while the western volume contained the worship area and stage. In between, a long lounge could be opened up to connect to the sanctuary. The baptismal font was housed in a transparent alcove. Behind the altar, compact rooms housed a quiet room and sacristy, while a corridor connected to the priest's residence, built separately due to differing funding and schedules. In front of the altar, positioned on the west side, the worship space could be expanded by opening a partition into the lounge, thereby increasing the church's versatility.

This flexibility allowed for the maximisation of space utilisation, fostering a vibrant sense of community engagement that extended beyond religious services. This was vividly captured in the photographs featured in a special 1970 edition of *Manplan*, a publication by *Architectural Review*, dedicated to religion [Fig. 7].[36] These images showcased the diverse range of activities and gatherings facilitated by the church, illustrating its role as a hub for both spiritual

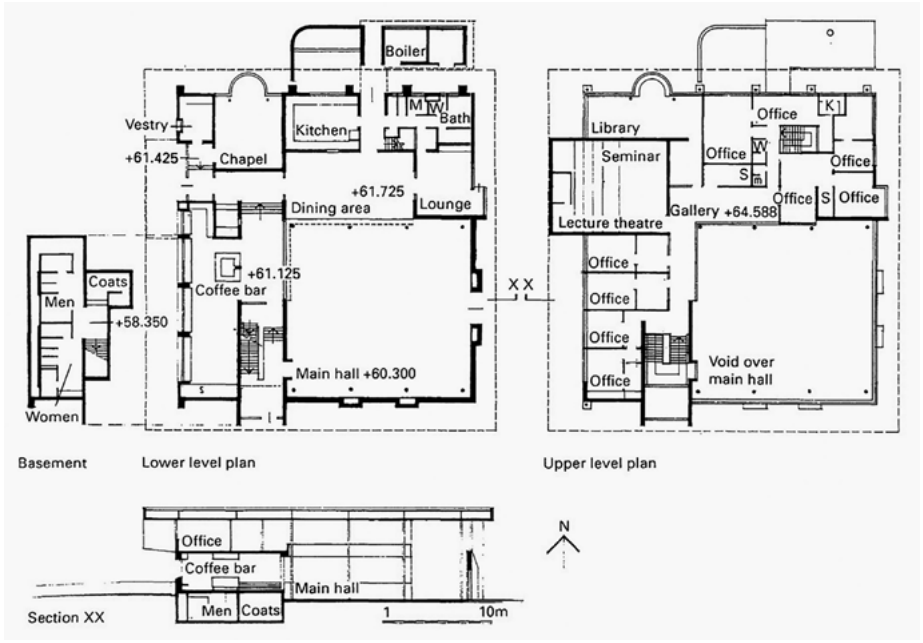
Fig. 6
St Philip and St James, Hodge Hill, Birmingham, axonometric drawing (source: Reinhard Gieselmann, *Contemporary Church Architecture*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1972).

35 Davies, ed., *Hodge Hill – St Philip and St James*, 9-10.

36 "The Present State of Church Building", *Manplan*, no. 5 (March 1970), *Religion*, 216, 217.



7




8

and secular interactions. From worship ceremonies to various lay events, the building exemplified a dynamic fusion of sacred and profane realms, embodying the evolving needs and aspirations of the local community. The photographs remain as poignant reminders of the vibrant existence of this structure, which, despite its bold and experimental design, was demolished in 2008.

## A Church for All: The Ecumenical Centre, Skelmersdale

In Skelmersdale, a suburban area developed to alleviate overcrowding in Liverpool, the Church of England, alongside the Methodist, Baptist, and United Reformed Churches, collaborated to establish an interfaith centre, which opened its doors in 1973.[37] Designed by Martin Purdy and Peter Bridges, who had

37 Martin Purdy, *Churches and Chapels*, 20.

Fig. 7
St Philip and St James, Hodge Hill, Birmingham, interior view (source: *Manplan*, no. 5, March 1970.

Fig. 8
Ecumenical Centre, Skelmersdale, by APEC – Architects Planning and Ecclesiastical Consultants, plans and section (source: Martin Purdy, *Churches and Chapels: A Design and Development Guide* (Oxford: Butterworth, 1991).



formed their partnership at the Birmingham University Institute for the Study of Worship and Religious Architecture, the Skelmersdale Ecumenical Centre was their inaugural project.[38]

Departing from the conventional separation of secondary functions into detached volumes, the architects consolidated all activities within a single, three-level structure **[Fig. 8]**. Constructed predominantly from prefabricated elements, including steel pillars and corbelled beams, the centre featured a striking main worship area free from central obstructions. Internally, the exposed pillars contributed to the space's aesthetic, while externally, they were concealed behind an independent masonry facade punctuated by expansive fenestration, including a distinctive ribbon-window on the upper part of the worship hall **[Fig. 9]**. This double-height worship space featured an upper gallery equipped with curtains that could be drawn to accommodate additional seating as needed. Movable furnishings, including the altar dais, ensured adaptability for various occasions. Encased within a thick parallelepiped roof, steel beams supported the structure, imparting a modern civic aesthetic reminiscent of medical facilities, libraries, or even bowling alleys.

The centre's versatility extended beyond religious functions to encompass a wide range of activities, including worship, concerts, games, and community events **[Fig. 10]**. Additionally, the building housed various welfare agencies and administrative offices, transforming it into a vibrant community hub where individuals from diverse backgrounds could converge. This deliberate design ethos aligned with the state's mandate for neutrality in community centres, as outlined in a 1944 Report of the Ministry of Education, which aimed to foster inclusivity and unity while mitigating sectarian divisions within neighbourhoods.[39]

In summary, the Skelmersdale Ecumenical Centre stands as a testament

38 On Bridges: Martin Purdy, *The Ven. Peter Sydney Godfrey Bridges* (February 24, 2015), retrieved from churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2015/20-february/gazette/obituaries/the-ven-peter-sydney-godfrey-bridges, (last accessed May 2024).

39 Ministry of Education, *Community Centres* (1944), 7-8, from James Greenhalgh, *Reconstructing modernity Space, power and governance in mid-twentieth century British cities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press

Fig. 9
Ecumenical Centre, Skelmersdale, by APEC – Architects Planning and Ecclesiastical Consultants, rendering of the exterior (source: APEC Archive).

to the collaborative spirit and forward-thinking vision of its designers, Martin Purdy and Peter Bridges. Their innovative approach to church architecture transcended denominational boundaries, creating a space that serves as a dynamic hub for worship, community engagement, and social services. By embracing contemporary design principles, the centre embodied adaptability and inclusivity, welcoming individuals of all faiths and backgrounds. As a beacon of unity and cooperation in a diverse society, the Skelmersdale Ecumenical Centre exemplifies the enduring relevance of ecumenism and the transformative potential of shared spaces in fostering harmony and mutual respect.



10

However, despite its profound significance and enduring impact, the future of the Skelmersdale Ecumenical Centre hangs in the balance. In recent years, efforts were made to adapt the building to modern needs, including the installation of a lift, the glazing of the landing overlooking the main Space, and the extension of the chapel. The extended chapel, which was rarely used for worship, may have been required due to a desire among church members to revert all worship to a separate, 'sacred' space. However, funding ran out before the renovations could be completed, and the onset of COVID-19 further disrupted these efforts, leading the congregation to gradually disperse to neighbouring churches, making it difficult to restore Sunday worship services.

The demolition of SS Philip and James and the challenges faced by the Skelmersdale Ecumenical Centre underscore the fragility of church buildings and the difficulties in maintaining communal spaces that once embodied shared values and aspirations. As discussions about its future continue, the two cases serve as poignant reminders of the need to preserve and adapt places that foster unity, diversity, and collective identity in an ever-changing urban landscape.

## Conclusion

The trajectory of Anglican churches and parish centres in the post-war period unfolded a complex narrative, shaped by both religious and societal

Fig. 10
Ecumenical Centre, Skelmersdale, by APEC – Architects Planning and Ecclesiastical Consultants, exterior view (source: Skelmersdale: A New Town Project Archive).

2017), 162: "The community centre is not intended to serve as a substitute for home, church or other traditional rallying points of social life […] [The community centre] can supply an absolutely neutral meeting place […] Nearly all other social agencies […] tend to draw people together on a corporative basis. In the community centre […] they should meet as individuals."



transformations. At its heart, this evolution marked a shift from an inward, individualistic approach to religion towards a more communal and inclusive ethos. Central to this transformation was the reconsideration of liturgical space, echoing developments seen across various denominations. The revival of communal practices, such as the shared act of Communion, alongside innovations like the Parish Breakfast, redefined the role of the church as not just a place of worship but as a dynamic centre for community engagement and social cohesion. Parish centres, as extensions of this vision, became focal points for these activities, symbolising the church's commitment to addressing the broader needs of its congregation and the surrounding community. In parallel, there was a gradual decline in the monumental scale traditionally associated with churches, replaced by a shift towards multifunctional spaces that could accommodate both sacred rituals and secular community functions. These parish centres, with their adaptable design, became central to this new church model, fostering a sense of shared identity through their varied offerings of worship, social interaction, education, and more.

This evolution mirrored broader societal shifts, where spirituality became just one element of a wider array of services offered to citizens—albeit one of the least economically viable. As urban landscapes transformed in the late 1960s and 1970s, the rise of shopping malls and entertainment venues in city centres highlighted a shift in societal priorities. In this context, religious buildings were increasingly relegated to the urban periphery, signalling the challenges faced

Fig. 11
Ecumenical Centre, Skelmersdale, by APEC – Architects Planning and Ecclesiastical Consultants, interior view from the gallery (source: Skelmersdale: A New Town Project Archive).



by organised religion in maintaining its relevance in a rapidly changing cultural environment. Yet, within these challenges lay a narrative of adaptation and resilience. Anglican churches and parish centres evolved not as remnants of a past era but as vibrant spaces meeting the diverse needs of their communities. They became places where tradition and modernity coexisted, where sacred and secular functions merged, and where the pursuit of spiritual fulfilment was interwoven with the drive for social cohesion. Indeed, the trajectory of Anglican churches and parish centres in the post-war period reflected broader societal transformations—a testament to the enduring ability of faith to both shape and adapt to the communities it served.

The vision of these buildings as dynamic, evolving spaces now stands in stark contrast to their current fate—many having been demolished or fallen into neglect. Once symbols of innovative spiritual practices and communal integration, their decline may reflect the ongoing changes in religious and social landscapes. Factors such as declining church attendance, increasing secularisation, and shifting urban priorities have all contributed to diminishing their relevance. The use of experimental construction techniques, which often made maintenance more challenging, coupled with economic considerations—particularly in the UK where profitable redevelopment frequently leads to the demolition of older structures—has further hastened their removal. Paradoxically, the very adaptability that once defined these buildings has led to their redundancy. Their demolition is not a contradiction but rather a continuation of the cyclical process of change that these spaces were designed to reflect. Religious buildings, much like the communities they serve, are markers of their time—shaped by and responsive to the social currents of their era. As those dynamics evolve, these spaces inevitably become obsolete, revealing the complex relationship between architecture, community, and the forces of societal transformation.

Fig. 12
Signing of the building contract for the Skelmersdale Ecumenical Centre, 1971. Peter Bridges standing on the left, and Martin Purdy, wearing glasses, looking down on the right (Andrew Bailey's Archive)

## Bibliography


Adler, Gerald. *Robert Maguire & Keith Murray*. London: RIBA Publishing, 2012.

Adler, Gerald. "Our Lady of Fatima." In *100 Churches 100 Years*, edited by Susannah Charlton, Elain Harwood and Clare Price. London: Batsford, 2019, 84.

Cope, Gilbert. *Church Buildings in New Areas*. London: New Churches Research Group, 1965.

Cope, Gilbert. "Pastoral Centres." *The Architect's Journal* (September 20, 1967).

Davies, Horton. *Worship and Theology in England, Book 3: The Ecumenical Century, 1900 to the Present*. Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: W.B. Eerdmans, 1996.

Davies, John Gordon. *The Secular Use of Church Buildings*. New York: Seabury Press, 1968.

Davies, John Gordon, ed. *Hodge Hill – St Philip and St James: The Multipurpose Church*. Birmingham: The University of Birmingham, 1971.

Dix, Gregory. *The Shape of Liturgy*. London: Dacre Press, 1945.

Evangelical Alliance. *Evangelical Strategy in the New Towns. Report of the Evangelical Alliance New Towns Study Groups*. London: Scripture Union, 1971.

Every, George. *The Setting of Liturgical Change / Building for Change in the Liturgy / Appendix: Forward from the Font. Two Lectures Given to the Derby Diocesan Clergy School on April 25th and 26th, 1962*. London: New Churches Research Group, 1962.

Farey, Michael. "The Church Centre." *Churchbuilding*, no. 2 (January 1961): 6-10.

Gieselmann, Reinhard. *Contemporary Church Architecture*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1972.

Gilman, Michael. "A Study of Churches Built for the Use of Congregations of the Church of England Between 1945 and 1970 and of their Effectiveness in Serving the Needs of their Congregations Today." PhD diss., University of Sheffield, 2000, vol. 2, 311-315.

Goalen, Gerard. "The House of God." *Churchbuilding*, no. 2 (January 1961): 3-5.

Greenhalgh, James. *Reconstructing Modernity: Space, Power and Governance in Mid-Twentieth Century British Cities*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017.

Hammond, Peter. *Liturgy and Architecture*. London: Barrie & Rockliff, 1960.

Harwood, Elain. "Liturgy and Architecture: The Development of the Centralised Eucharistic Space." In *The Twentieth Century Church*, edited by Roland Jeffrey. London: Twentieth Century Society, 1998.

Hebert, Arthur Gabriel, ed. *The Parish Communion: A Book of Essays*. London: S.P.C.K., 1937.

Hill, Des. "St Paul." In *100 Churches 100 Years*, edited by Susannah Charlton, Elain Harwood, and Clare Price, 78. London: Batsford, 2019.

Irvine, Christopher. *Worship, Church and Society: An Exposition of the Work of Arthur Gabriel Hebert to Mark the Centenary of the Society of Sacred Mission (Kelham) of Which He Was a Member*. Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1993.

Jackson, Michael J. *Sociology and Church Building. Text of a Talk Given at a Conference at Leeds, September 1961*. London: New Churches Research Group, 1961.

Ministry of Education. *Community Centres*. 1944.

"National Plan for a Christian Centre." *Churchbuilding*, no. 29 (January 1970): 3-6.

Proctor, Robert. *Building the Modern Church: Roman Catholic Church Architecture in Britain, 1955 to 1975*. London: Routledge, 2016.

"Professor Denys Hinton: Architect", *The Times*, April 3, 2010.

Purdy, Martin. *Churches and Chapels: A Design and Development Guide*. Oxford: Butterworth, 1991.

Purdy, Martin. "The Ven. Peter Sydney Godfrey Bridges." *Church Times*, February 24, 2015.

Shands, Alfred R. *The Liturgical Movement and the Local Church*. New York: Morehouse-Barlow, 1959.

Smythe, Ronald, and Susan Harrison. "The New Town Mission Field." *Churchbuilding*, no. 5 (January 1962): 14-15.

AR Editors. "The Present State of Church Building." *Manplan*, no. 5, *Religion* (March 1970): 216-217.

Webster, Christopher, and John Elliot, eds. *A Church as it Should Be: The Cambridge Camden Society and Its Influence*. Stamford: Shaun Tyas, 2000.

Weil, Louise. "Liturgical Renewal and Modern Anglican Liturgy." In *The Oxford History of Anglicanism*, volume IV, edited by Jeremy Morris. *Global Western Anglicanism, c. 1910-present*, 50-67. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Wickham, Edward Ralph. *Church and people in an industrial city*. London: Lutterworth Press, 1957.

**Kate Jordan**

# Beyond the Pale: Reading the White Interior in Contemporary Church Refurbishments

ARTICLE

*Church Architecture, Refurbishment, Conservation, Secular, Whiteness*

**/Abstract**

**Historic churches are an integral feature of British cities, serving not only as places of worship but also as cultural attractions that draw growing numbers of secular visitors. In recent years, several parishes in London have employed celebrated architectural practices to renovate their historic churches with the intention of raising the profile of these buildings. An observable trend in such refurbishments are whitewashed interiors often replacing previously colourful schemes. This paper explores whether a current trend for white interiors suggests new directions in the social and religious cultures of Christianity. For example, do white spaces offer neutral territory for encounters between the sacred and secular, appealing to both worshippers and cultural tourists alike? Do such design schemes reflect a growing move away from collective congregational worship and towards private spirituality and contemplation? The paper presents three recently refurbished historic churches in London as case studies through which to explore these questions: St John-at-Hackney; St Augustine's, Hammersmith; and St John's Waterloo. The selected case studies offer examples from both the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, suggesting possibilities for reading the trend as an expression of ecumenism. In conclusion, the paper asks whether austere white schemes, such as those presented in the case studies, offer unifying spaces for different worshipping and non-worshipping communities, or whether, as the Catholic priest and architectural theorist Peter Newby suggests, the emptying out of narrative content has stripped them of the 'full immersive experience' of Christian worship.**

**/Author**

**Dr Kate Jordan**
**School of Architecture and Cities, University of Westminster**
**k.jordan@westminster.ac.uk**

Kate Jordan is a Reader in Architectural History and Theory at the University of Westminster. Her research focuses on modern-era faith architecture with recent publications on contemporary church architecture in the journals *Architecture and Culture*; *Architectural Histories*; *the Journal of Architecture* and the *Journal of Architectural Conservation*. She is the co-editor of the volume *Architecture for Religious Communities: Building the Kingdom* published by Routledge in 2018 and, more recently, guest editor of a special issue of *Architecture and Culture*, entitled 'Sacred, spiritual, secular: places of faith in the twenty-first century'. She is currently leading a research project funded by the Royal Institute of British Architects entitled 'Moving pictures: reusing cinemas as places of worship in the diaspora'. She is founder and co-course leader of the MA Architecture and Sustainable Heritage at the University of Westminster.



CC BY 4.0
https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/20221
Copyright © 2024 Kate Jordan

In this paper I explore the significance of whiteness in the interior refurbishment of historic churches in London. I suggest that there is an observable trend for interior designs that employ whiteness thematically, often involving the painting over of colourful schemes and the removal of art works. Though this paper focuses on London, I have also visited a number of sites in the UK and some in Europe and the points I make may be extrapolated more widely. To examine this trend, I have refined my research to focus on three recently refurbished historic churches in London, two from the Anglican communion and one Roman Catholic. I will use these examples to investigate the claim made by the architectural theorist and priest Peter Newby about white minimal churches. On these Newby suggests that "the modern architectural desire for spiritual space [lacks] visual imagery and therefore raises the question whether such interiors may be described as Christian space" [1]. Newby's discussion centres on one of the following case studies, St Augustine's Hammersmith, but his points apply equally to my other case studies, St John-at-Hackney and St John's Waterloo.



1

I want to start, then, by thinking about what Newby means when he suggests that such interiors might be considered 'spiritual' rather than properly Christian spaces, which is a controversial claim. In his article "Immanence and Immersion", published in 2018, Newby makes the distinction between Christian and spiritual spaces, arguing that the latter has become increasingly prominent in recent years. In doing so, Newby does not discuss whiteness separately from minimalism; rather the two are conflated in what he calls "imageless and cool spaces"[2].

Newby's observations about churches such as St Augustine's reflect my own and the paper that follows draws from interviews, site visits and research published over the last five years. I have been increasingly interested in the theological significance of whiteness in contemporary church architecture and

1 Peter Newby, "Immanence and immersion: Peter Newby visits two Catholic Churches where recent reorderings pay close attention to symbolic detail in pursuit of an immersive experience," *The Free Library*, 2018 https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Immanence+and+immersion%3a+Peter+Newby+visits+two+Catholic+Churches...-a0547989319 (last accessed November 2024).

2 Newby, "Immanence and immersion: Peter Newby visits two Catholic Churches where recent reorderings pay close attention to symbolic detail in pursuit of an immersive experience".

Fig. 1
St. Augustine's Church, Hammersmith, refurbished by Roz Barr Architects, 2018 (courtesy Sirj Photography).



the extent to which, as Newby suggests, this gestures towards spirituality as a category that is distinct from religion. The prevalence of white purpose-built churches – not just in the UK but across the world – is an ecumenical trend that certainly deserves closer attention. In this paper, however, I will focus on the act of transforming historical churches into spaces that overlay new cultures of worship onto traditional ones.

Of course, churches, like all buildings, are dynamic and colour schemes reflect changing tastes and ideas. At St Mel's Cathedral in Longford, Ireland, for example, the refurbishment following a fire in 2009 was a departure from the original interior and now features a predominantly white scheme, which contrasts the distinctive blue limestone columns.[3] Such change is entirely consistent with the evolution of churches as living buildings: over time churches such as St Mel's are added to, edited, restored, refurbished and adapted. The superimposition of different aesthetic styles, cultures and rituals characterises historic churches and, in the case studies I discuss, I will explore earlier refurbishments and design schemes. Each historical phase of a church's life can be read in meaningful ways: the iconoclastic whitewashing of medieval churches, for example, tells us a great deal not only about the protestant reformation but also about the social and political turmoil of the 16th and 17th centuries. In the same way, I will argue that whiteness in church architecture reveals more than simply interior design tastes in the twenty-first century: the choice to paint St Mel's white following its reconstruction was not simply the whim of the architect. Instead, I suggest, whiteness tells us something about the particular religious and social conditions of the twenty-first century in Western Europe and the Anglophone world, and possibly beyond.

The first example that I would like to examine is the refurbishment of St Augustine's, Hammersmith which was completed in 2018 **[Fig. 1]**. A partner-

3 Marese McDonagh, "Restoration in Longford: raising St Mel's Cathedral from the ashes," *The Irish Times*, September 26, 2013, https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/homes-and-property/restoration-in-longford-raising-st-mel-s-cathedral-from-the-ashes-1.1539806 (last accessed November 2024).

Fig. 2
St. John-at-Hackney, original church completed to design by James Spiller, 1794 (photo by the author).

ship between Roz Barr Architects and the parish priest Father Gianni Notarianni, the aim of this project was to remove the colourful layers of paint, creosote and carpeting and expose the raw materials of the church. The aesthetics of the scheme were more than simply visual, as the architect Roz Barr made explicit in an interview with the author. "There is an honesty to our approach", Barr claims, "that aims to celebrate this urban room and create a more optimistic and purer interior"[4].



3

Built between 1915-1916, the church was founded by Augustinian Priors and continues to be served by the order from the neighboring priory. The original building is a solid but relatively prosaic example of early twentieth-century Neo-Romanesque, typical of its era. In the century following its completion, the interior of the church was redecorated in a succession of styles. In 2012, Father Notarianni, secured funds to begin the first phase of a major redevelopment of the site and Roz Barr Architects were appointed to undertake the work, beginning with a significant overhaul of the interior. By the time the renovation commenced in 2018, as many as six-layers of paint had been applied to each internal surface, including the stone piers, the roof timbers were stained dark brown, and the internal colour scheme was dominated by the sky-blue apse and red-carpeted chancel floor. The most striking element of the Barr/Notarianni refurbishment was the introduction of light into the space by stripping the roof timbers and treating them with a white oil to create a uniformly pale colour scheme. The limestone columns and timber floors have also been stripped and sealed. As I have noted elsewhere, the intention was to create a rationalised, readable space that generates a sense of unmediated spirituality[5]. Importantly, when I asked the architect – a self-identified atheist – how she had translated the brief, she emphasized that, though she wasn't religious herself, she wanted to capture her own interpretation of spirituality. This sentiment, which I have heard expressed often by architects working on churches, aligned – somewhat surprisingly – with the objectives of Father Notarianni, who has a background

4 Kate Jordan, "Truth and Light," *The RIBA Journal*, August 16, 2018 https://www.ribaj.com/buildings/st-augustines-church-refurbishment-hammersmith-religon-roz-barr-architects-kate-jordan (last accessed November 2024).

5 Jordan, "Truth and Light".

Fig. 3
Moritzkirche, Augsberg, refurbished by John Pawson, 2013 (photo by the author).



4



5



6

Fig. 4
St. John-at-Hackney, refurbished by John Pawson refurbishment, 2020 (photo by the author).

Fig. 5
St. John's, Waterloo, original church completed to designs by Francis Octavius Bedford, 1824. Katie Chan - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0 (source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=62180923).

Fig. 6
St. John's, Waterloo, refurbished by Thomas Ford and Partners, 1950 (photo by the author).



as an artist. Indeed, the aesthetic vision for St Augustine's is a genuine collaboration between sacred and secular visions of spirituality.

Similarly, the refurbishment of St John-at-Hackney, brought together the vision of the new Rector with the architect responsible for the interior design scheme, John Pawson **[Fig. 2]**. The £6 million refurbishment of this Grade II* listed church saw much of the interior stripped out and the walls painted white. The church, which was originally built in 1794 to designs by James Spiller, had been remodelled in the 1950s by the noted church architect N.F. Cachemaille-Day, to include a Festival of Britain-style colour scheme and fittings. In 2017 the newly appointed Rector Al Gordon was keen to bring the church up to date and introduce some architectural prestige. He engaged Pawson, known for his minimalism and fondness for white, to design the scheme. As Pawson's only religious project in the UK, St John-at-Hackney may be considered an architectural landmark. The completed interior has much in common with Pawson's austere refurbishment of Moritzkirche, Augsberg, which was rebuilt in 1946 by Dominikus Bohm and remodelled internally over the course of the twentieth century **[Fig. 3]**. The Moritzkirche refurbishment involved, in Pawson's words, the "meticulous paring away of selected elements of the church's complex fabric", in much the same way that elements were excised at St John-at-Hackney (Pawson 2024). The completed project has won acclaim for its sophisticated and highly photogenic white aesthetic **[Fig. 4]**. Though the refurbishment cannot be described as radical, it is perhaps surprising that the complete removal of the Cachemaille-Day fittings and decorative scheme met with little objection from any heritage bodies, including statutory consultee, the Twentieth Century Society.[6]

Fig. 7 St. John's, Waterloo, refurbished by Eric Parry Architects, 2022 (photo by the author).

6 Kate Jordan, "Victorian values: past and present in the refurbishment of London's historic churches," *Journal of Architectural Conservation 29*, no. 1 (2023): 20-39.

The painting over of St John-at-Hackney's original design scheme and removal of its 1950s fittings to ostensibly evoke the original spirit of the church, has much in common with my final example, St John's Waterloo. Here the alterations to the interior did prove to be more controversial and, although the scheme is overwhelmingly white, it is certainly not as austere as either the architect or the Rector had wished. The compromises that were finally reached were the result of a campaign to save the 1950s interior design scheme. The original Greek Revival building, designed by Francis Octavius Bedford in 1824, was one of four churches in Southwark built to celebrate the end of the Napoleonic Wars [Fig. 5]. St John's underwent a series of subsequent renovations: first by Reginald Blomfeld in 1885 then by John Ninian Comper in 1924 and, finally, following significant bomb damage during the blitz, by the Southwark Diocesan architect, Thomas Ford in 1950. The 1950 refurbishment saw a new Greek-inspired decorative scheme; the creation of two chapels; a lectern, altar and 'double-decker' pulpit; and the installation of a mural by the artist Hans Feibusch, whose work appears in many of Ford's churches. St John's was designated the official Festival of Britain church in 1951, a move that formally endorsed the interior design scheme and established its historical significance [Fig. 6]. Indeed, the current listing description focuses equally on the original building and 1950s interior.

In 2015, the diocese decided that the church required updating to meet its burgeoning needs as both a place of worship and concert venue. The practice Eric Parry Architects, noted for their award-winning refurbishment of St Martin-in-the-Fields, was engaged to undertake the refurbishment. The architects drew up plans for a major overhaul that would see most of the 1950s interior stripped out: the two chapels would be removed and new galleries constructed either side of the nave, reinstating those that had been lost in Thomas Ford's remodelling. In addition to this, the 1950s fittings and artwork were to be removed, with only the Feibusch mural being retained. The Twentieth Century Society challenged the plans on the basis that Thomas Ford's decorative interior was central to the historic value of the church. However, despite the Twentieth Century Society's criticism, both the architect and vicar of St John's, Canon Giles Goddard, continued to defend the new scheme. The dispute led to a Consistory Court Hearing in 2016 which resulted in the Chancellor of the Diocese of Southwark upholding the Twentieth Century Society's objection. The reworked plans were finally granted a faculty in 2018. However, though the new scheme (completed in 2022) was more sensitive to the Thomas Ford refurbishment, much of the original decor was lost, including the murals either side of the reredos. The Festival of Britain colour scheme was largely repainted white, with some details picked out in pale grey and gold [Fig. 7].

What all three of these examples have in common, as this paper emphasizes, is that white is used thematically in the interior design, in all cases replacing a colourful design scheme and in some cases the removal of artwork and fittings. One could reasonably argue that, in the case of St John-at-Hackney and St John's Waterloo, the minimal white schemes restored the Georgian spirit of the

Fig. X

original 18th century Protestant churches. But the same cannot be said of the Roman Catholic Neo-Romanesque St Augustine's. And it cannot be said of other examples of historic churches in the UK that have been similarly refurbished with a coat of white paint replacing polychromatic colour schemes.

At St Matthews, Bishopbrigg in Scotland, an early example of the work of Gillespie, Kidd and Coia, the practice Page\Park Architects were engaged to extend and refurbish the church. The completed interior features white walls, a white altar and pale timber seating. The whiteness is punctuated only by a blood red stripe behind the altar, in a similar fashion to the deep red ceramic altar at St Augustine's.[7] Similarly, the refurbishment of St Mary's Church in Andover, constructed between 1840 and 1846, focused on the 'decluttering' of the interior, which comprised the removal of the pews and their replacement with pale timber seating to compliment the newly painted white walls.[8] Comparable schemes are also seen across Europe. Examples include the refurbished interior of the Hernádkak Reformed church, near Miscolc in Hungary. Here the practice Studio Bunyik repainted the yellow walls, woodwork, timber pulpit and altar white, and replaced the dark timber pews to create an "all-white puritan interior"[9].

The case studies that I have examined raise some serious questions around changes in conservation practices, but they also say something about the visual culture of worship and how this has shifted in late modernity. Peter Newby sheds some interesting light on this in his reflections on St Augustine's Hammersmith:

The interior of the church has been painted white and the roof beams have been bleached. The visual effect of so much white has been to re-emphasise the Romanesque architectural antecedents of the church, something that had been hidden behind the coloured interior. The simplicity of forms and the coolness of the interior reaffirms the modern architectural desire for spiritual space, but the lack of visual imagery raises the question whether such interiors may be described as Christian space.[10]

Much has been written on the historical significance of whiteness in churches but as an architectural theorist and a Catholic priest, Newby's perspectives offer valuable insights into its theological basis. For Newby, a truly Christian space needs to immerse the worshipper in the act of prayer. He suggests that:

The Catholic Church has always placed an emphasis on visual imagery found in painting but also on the enclosed spaces that allow for the celebration of sacra-

7 "St Matthew's Parish Church: Page\Park Architects has sensitively refurbished and extended a post-war church designed by Gillespie Kidd & Coia near Glasgow," *Architecture Today* (May 2022).

8 "St Mary's Church Andover," Malcolm Fryer Architects website https://www.mfryer-architects.com/st-marys-andover (last accessed August 2024).

9 Noémi Viski, "Puritan, yet elegant church interior designed by Studio Bunyik," *Hype & Hyper*, August 26, 2021, https://hypeandhyper.com/puritan-yet-elegant-church-interior-designed-by-studio-bunyik/ (last accessed November 2024).

10 Newby, "Immanence and immersion: Peter Newby visits two Catholic Churches where recent reorderings pay close attention to symbolic detail in pursuit of an immersive experience".

Fig. X

ments. These two along with music and words create a full immersive experience that has narrative content. It is this 'something to say' that becomes lost in imageless and cool spaces of so much contemporary religious architecture. Every revealed religion does not simply illuminate the human condition, it also answers its questions, quells its fears and points towards its consummation.[11]

Of course, it is important to emphasize here that Newby is a Catholic priest discussing a Catholic church. But two of the examples that I have highlighted above (St John-at-Hackney and St John's Waterloo) are Anglican. In both cases, they have undertaken similar refurbishments that literally whitewash elements of the church's history (in both, the significant changes to the decor made during the Festival of Britain in the 1950s). This perhaps suggests that the trend for white interiors crosses denominations and speaks to a wider shift in Anglican, Catholic and indeed other mainstream churches across the UK. Of course, it is necessary to make a distinction between removing images and repainting original colour schemes – Peter Newby doesn't dwell on whiteness itself. But none of these examples have selected different colours. The act of bringing them into the twenty-first century has not simply involved a new colour scheme or the removal of visual imagery, it has specifically introduced whiteness.

We might speculate a number of reasons for this, but I suggest that key among them is the distinction that Newby makes between the religious and spiritual. The shift in late modernity towards the spiritual is something that has been documented by sociologists and historians of religion, who argue that 'spirituality' is increasingly understood as a related but separate category from religion and may be experienced by people of all faiths and, importantly, of none. A natural extension of this shift is that many parishes have reinterpreted the church as both a building and concept that should embrace all visitors (worshipping or otherwise) and celebrate the universal rather than cultural face of spirituality. For sociologists and theologians charting the growth of personal spirituality against the decline of formal Christian worship in the West, the shift from religious to spiritual can be mapped onto the dominance of the consumer economy and rise of individualism; a phenomenon that has been described by the philosopher Grace Davie as "believing without belonging"[12]. Here, the interests of faith and secular communities have coincided to produce a religious marketplace in which churches now vie for worshippers who are accustomed to choice and who curate their own devotional practices. These independent worshippers move between churches and are likely to share the view that spirituality is universal. For such worshippers, the white church is a space that allows them to project their individual version of spirituality on the blank walls and operates as a lingua franca that enables congregants, across denominations and continents, to understand one another.

11 Newby, "Immanence and immersion: Peter Newby visits two Catholic Churches where recent reorderings pay close attention to symbolic detail in pursuit of an immersive experience".

12 Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain: A Persistent Paradox* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

Perhaps this is a good thing. If the notion of a universal spirituality now characterises late modern religion, then it might seem obvious to aim for a spatial and aesthetic neutrality that can be understood by diverse worshipers. Perhaps in the twenty-first century whiteness has come to be accepted as the most appropriate metaphor for 'honesty', as Roz Barr's decorative scheme at St Augustine's implies. Or perhaps, as Newby suggests, whiteness constitutes a cleansing of distinctive, denominational visual cultures and the decline of immersive, collective Christian worship: the loss, in Newby's words, of 'something to say'. On this last point, however, I take a slightly different view. For me, this new chapter in the long history of whiteness in church architecture does have a great deal to say about tastes, practices and beliefs in the twenty-first century. It's just a question of whether we like what it's saying.

## Bibliography


Davie, Grace. *Religion in Britain: A Persistent Paradox*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015.

Jordan, Kate. "Truth and Light," *The RIBA Journal*, August 16, 2018.

Jordan, Kate. "Victorian values: past and present in the refurbishment of London's historic churches," *Journal of Architectural Conservation 29*, no. 1 (2023): 20-39.

McDonagh, Marese. "Restoration in Longford: raising St Mel's Cathedral from the ashes," *The Irish Times*, September 26, 2013.

Newby, Peter. "Immanence and immersion: Peter Newby visits two Catholic Churches where recent reorderings pay close attention to symbolic detail in pursuit of an immersive experience",*The Free Library*, 2018. https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Immanence+and+immersion%3A+Peter+Newby+visits+two+Catholic+Churches...-a0547989319 (last access March 2025).

"St Matthew's Parish Church: Page\Park Architects has sensitively refurbished and extended a post-war church designed by Gillespie Kidd & Coia near Glasgow," *Architecture Today,* May 2022.

Viski, Noémi. "Puritan, yet elegant church interior designed by Studio Bunyik," *Hype & Hyper*, August 26, 2021.

**Chiara Kuijpers, Femke Van der Meulen, Sven Sterken, Stephanie Van de Voorde**

# Constructing a Modern Image. The Representation of Post-War Churches in Belgian and French Periodicals (1955-1970)

ARTICLE

*Post-War Churches, Periodicals, Building Actors, Innovative Building Materials, Construction History*

**/Abstract**

**This article examines the representation of post-war churches in 6 Belgian and French periodicals during the 1950s and 1960s, namely Art d'Eglise: *Art d'Eglise, Art Chrétien, La Maison, L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, La Technique des Travaux* and *Techniques et Architecture*. By unravelling how the architectural, liturgical, and material dimension of post-war churches tied together in the discourse on religious architecture, this article article investigates the dual the dual meaning of the 'constructed image' throughout these publications. We both look at the construction of the modern church made visible through the lens of these issues, as well as at the actors that played a vital role in the actual construction of the church. Hence, this article deconstructs the the portrayal of the modern church by looking into the complexity of this large building campaign to comprehend how the material dimension of post-war churches contributed to shaping this image of religious modernity.**

**/Author**

Chiara Kuijpers
Vrije Universiteit Brussel - Department of Architectural Engineering
Chiara.Valentina.Kuijpers@vub.be
https://orcid.org/0009-0006-7913-8089

Femke Van der Meulen
KU Leuven - Faculty of Architecture
femke.vandermeulen@kuleuven.be
https://orcid.org/0009-0004-0407-0978

Sven Sterken
KU Leuven - Faculty of Architecture
sven.sterken@kuleuven.be
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0760-1530

Stephanie Van de Voorde
Vrije Universiteit Brussel - Department of Architectural Engineering
Stephanie.Van.de.Voorde@vub.be
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8302-7265

Chiara Kuijpers joined the Architectural Engineering Lab of the VUB in 2023, where she examines the construction history and heritage value of roof structures of post-war churches. This PhD research, called "Meaning and Material", is funded by FWO, in collaboration with Femke Van der Meulen (KU Leuven) and under supervision of Prof. Stephanie Van de Voorde (VUB) & Prof. Sven Sterken (KU Leuven).

Femke Van der Meulen is a PhD researcher at the Faculty of Architecture at the KU Leuven since 2023, where she joined the research project "Meaning and Material" supervised by Prof. Sven Sterken (KU Leuven) and Prof. Stephanie Van de Voorde (VUB), funded by the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO). Together with fellow PhD researcher Chiara Kuijpers (VUB), she explores the possible defects, remediations, and spatial potential of roof structures of post-war churches.

Sven Sterken is a Professor at the Faculty of Architecture at KU Leuven. His research focuses on the architectural agency of institutional actors (such as the Catholic Church) and international organizations (EU, NATO, etc.). Recent publications include Territories of Faith. Religion, Urban Planning and Demographic Change in Europe, 1945-1975 (with Eva Weyns, Leuven University Press, 2021), and A History of Urbanism in Europe (with Sergio M. Figueiredo and Kees Doevendans, ACCO Leuven, 2022).

Stephanie Van de Voorde is a Professor in Architectural and Construction History and Heritage at the Department of Architectural Engineering of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Departing from traditional perspectives in architectural history and heritage studies, her main research topics are related to 20th-century building materials and building culture, as well as young heritage. Stephanie co-organized the Sixth International Congress on Construction History (6ICCH, Brussels, 2018) and is the author of 'Post-war building materials in housing in Brussels 1945-1975' (VUB, 2015).

https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/19654
Copyright © 2024 Chiara Kuijpers, Femke Van der Meulen, Sven Sterken, Stephanie Van de Voorde

## Introduction

In the aftermath of the Second World War, thousands of churches were built in sprawling suburban areas across Western Europe. In Flanders alone, for example, more than 400 churches were built between 1945 and 1975.[1] This massive church building campaign aimed not only to serve the faithful, but also to project the image of the modern church: one that stood closer to its community and adapted to the rapid changes in modern society. This vision was reflected in the architecture of post-war churches: an open floorplan was introduced, physically manifesting the liturgical renewal that was confirmed by the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s.[2] To realise these open interiors, novel construction techniques and building materials like reinforced concrete, laminated timber, or steel space frames were utilized. These structures were often left explicitly visible in the interior as symbols of modernity.

The growing focus of periodicals on construction materials and techniques almost coincided with the advent of modern church architecture in Belgium, marked by two influential events in the late 1950s: Expo 58 in Brussels[3] in 1958 and the Pro Arte Christiana competition for a church in Mortsel (Antwerp)[4] in 1959. These events initiated a wave of liturgical and architectural renewal in Belgium, supported by ingenious construction methods. This phenomenon, in turn, encouraged further experimentation and innovation with new building materials in post-war churches. While the liturgical and architectural dimension of this endeavour already received ample attention, it is striking that the material aspect has not been profoundly acknowledged in existing literature on post-war architecture.

This article explores the dual narrative of the "construction of the modern church" in post-war Western Europe, particularly examining how the image of the Belgian church was shaped by and reflected in liturgical, architectural, and technical periodicals from 1955 until 1970, both national and international. Firstly, the article examines how these periodicals portrayed the innovative

1 During the post-war period, Belgium was divided in two main regions: Flanders and Wallonia. Although new churches were built all over the country, the large increase in church buildings is particularly striking in Flanders, partly due to the suburbanisation and population growth at the time. Due to the strong presence of the Catholic faith in this area, almost exclusively Catholic churches were built. This church building campaign was especially encouraged by the archdiocese Mechlin-Brussels, in line with the religious, architectural, social and political trends of the time. For more info, see Sven Sterken, "A House for God or a Home for His People? The Domus Dei Church Building Action in the Belgian Archbishopric", *Architectural History*, no. 56 (January 2013): 401-402; Sven Sterken, and Eva Weyns, eds., *Territories of Faith. Religion, Urban Planning and Demographic Change in Post-War Europe* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022), https://lirias.kuleuven.be/3678849?limo=0; Anne-Françoise Morel and Stephanie Van de Voorde, "Rethinking the Twentieth-Century Catholic Church in Belgium: The Inter-Relationship between Liturgy and Architecture", *Architectural History*, no. 55 (2012): 269-297; Marc Dubois, "Primal Image of all Architecture. Churches in Belgium and the Netherlands after 1950", in *Europäischer Kirchenbau 1950-2000*, ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock (München: Pretsel Verlag, 2002), 112-127.

2 Morel and Van de Voorde, "Rethinking the Twentieth-Century Catholic Church in Belgium", 292.

3 Rika Devos, Mil De Kooning and Geert Bekaert. *Moderne Architectuur Op Expo 58: Voor Een Humaner Wereld* (Brussel: Mercatorfonds, 2006).

4 The Pro Arte Christiana competition was the first competition ever organised in Belgium on the topic of religious architecture, initiated by Franciscan monk and painter Geroen De Bruycker and in collaboration with the financial diocesan organization *Domus Dei*. Several architects were invited to design a parish church for 500 people in a suburban district near Antwerp. (See The editorial board of *Art d'Eglise*, "Le concours d'architecture 'Pro Arte Christiana'", *Art d'Eglise,* no. 111 (April 1960): 315-322; Sterken, "A House for God or a Home for His People?", 407.

construction techniques integral to architectural and liturgical renewals, questioning whether these depictions accurately reflected the main contributors or if they were contextualised for broader narratives. Secondly, the article analyses the portrayal of these innovations in periodicals and their impact on both public and professional discourses. The discussion aims to unravel the complex interplay between the constructed image of modern churches in print and their physical manifestation, shaped by a vast network of stakeholders and professional building actors. In doing so, the article highlights not only the material, technical and structural dimension of church renewal in Belgium after the Second World War, but also the role of media in shaping and disseminating architectural and cultural narratives.

To (de)construct this two-fold narrative, the article employs a selected framework of six periodicals for quantitative and qualitative analyses. The findings from these analyses are interpreted across the three domains central to this research: the liturgical, architectural, and technical discourse. This approach not only elucidates the relationship between each type of periodical and the architectural practices, but also illuminates how printed media served as a critical interface between theoretical architectural concepts and their practical applications, ultimately shaping the modern church's role as a central community space in a fast-modernizing society.

## Methodological Framework: a Study of Periodicals

Periodicals played an essential part in spreading the image of a modern church. As easily accessible and widespread mediums of information, periodicals were written and read by many stakeholders involved in church building, such as architects, ecclesiastical authorities, and also engineers. Consequently, periodical literature significantly contributed to the broad dissemination of knowledge on the typology of the modern church. By publishing and reflecting the debate surrounding modern church architecture, periodicals provided a continuous stream of inspiration for all concerned actors. Stakeholders learned about recent projects through the texts and images that circulated in the publications, even if these provided only a limited narrative or perspective compared to the insights gained from a real-life visit to the actual building.

Despite most of these periodicals ceasing publication since the 1970s, they remain a crucial resource in understanding the post-war church-building campaign. Due to their fast-paced publishing, these periodicals serve as valuable witnesses that closely followed developments in religious architecture and the post-war building culture around it.[5]

Not only did they present numerous modern church buildings in a very brief period, they also offered various reflections on the liturgical and architectural innovation within post-war church architecture. These reflections were

5 Marc Dubois, "Architectuurtijdschriften – een fragmentair beeld", in *De beschikbare ruimte: reflecties over bouwen* , ed. Pieter Uyttenhove (Tielt: Drukkerij-Uitgeverij Lannoo, 1990), 131-141.

obviously shaped by the background and viewpoint of each periodical.

Since both Belgian and French periodicals were frequently read across Belgium, the analysis includes six periodicals: three Belgian (*Art d'Eglise*, *La Maison*, and *La Technique des Travaux*) and three French (*Art Chrétien*, *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, and *Techniques et Architecture*), each with a liturgical, architectural, or technical focus. Although the Belgian publications were all written in French,[6] they originated from different regions: *Art d'Eglise* was Flemish, *La Maison* was based in Brussels, and *La Technique des Travaux* was established in Wallonia. Despite their regional backgrounds, their content and focus were driven more by discourse than location. Typically, these Belgian publications were limited in scope, primarily covering national projects, with the exception of *Art d'Eglise*, which frequently expanded its focus.

Including French journals in the analysis allows to better situate Belgian architectural projects within the wider international debate on church architecture, a topic only sparsely covered in Belgian publications. French journals like *Art Chrétien*, *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, and *Techniques et Architecture* provided a broader perspective on both national and international trends in religious construction. These French periodicals, easily accessible to a Belgian audience due to France's proximity and the shared language, enriched the Belgian discourse with diverse images and reflections on modern religious architecture, offering context and inspiration for Belgian projects. Belgian periodicals indeed often made brief textual references to French examples to position Belgian church buildings within the broader contemporary discourse on religious architecture. Occasionally, French examples were also explicitly featured in Belgian periodicals, serving as significant inspiration for the Belgian audience.[7]

## Three Complementary Discourses

Naturally, churches were regularly featured in liturgical periodicals such as *Art d'Eglise* and *Art Chrétien*. *Art d'Eglise* was well-known in ecclesiastical circles for its numerous publications on developments in religious art and architecture. As the first Belgian liturgical periodical, emerging in 1926 and published by the Benedictine monks of the Sint-Andries abbey in Bruges (Flanders),[8] it served as an important reference point when modern church building became a topic in architectural circles. From 1958 onwards, the writings of Dom. Frédéric Debuyst,[9] the editor-in-chief, attracted much international attention as he frequently reported on international and national developments in church architecture and liturgy.

6 Until the post-World War II era, French was the dominant language in government, education, and business in Belgium, which by the end of the sixties started to create tensions with the growing sense of Flemish identity and the use of the Dutch language in Flanders.

7 Examples: Joseph Pichard, "Les églises-témoins", *La Maison*, no. 9 (September 1958): 323-325; Pierre Blanchard, "La Basilique du Sacré-Cœur à Alger", *La Technique des Travaux*, no. 7-8 (July 1962): 218-232.

8 Dubois, "Primal Image of all Architecture," 113.

9 Frédéric Debuyst (1922-2017) was the editor-in-chief of *Art d'Eglise* and a Benedictine monk of the Sint-Andries Abbey where the periodical was published. A collection of his writings for *Art d'Eglise* can be found in Frédéric Debuyst, *Architecture moderne et célébration chrétienne* (Bruges: Biblica, 1966).

Other international figures, like Dom. Hans Van Der Laan[10] and Joseph Pichard,[11] also occasionally contributed to the periodical. Pichard was also the director of the French periodical *Art Chrétien:* he used the periodical intensively as a platform for his own theoretical reflections and to document and represent the numerous church constructions across various French dioceses.[12]

Widespread architectural periodicals, such as the Belgian *La Maison* and the French *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, began covering trends in modern church architecture somewhat later than their liturgical counterparts. Within the architectural discourse, *La Maison* was an important reference for recent architectural developments in Belgium. Founded in Brussels in 1945 by a large interdisciplinary committee that was largely associated with the modernist school for architecture and applied arts La Cambre,[13] articles on church architecture were mainly authored by André Lanotte,[14] a central figure in the reconstruction period in Wallonia. Dom. Frédéric Debuyst and Dom. Grégoire Watelet[15] also occasionally wrote for the periodical. In 1968, *La Maison* reached a peak in its coverage of modern churches by launching two special issues on modern religious architecture, including lists of church projects, articles on church architects, and theoretical reflections by the Belgian art and architectural critic Geert Bekaert.[16] Despite these efforts, the representation of modern religious architecture remained relatively low compared to *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, the French architectural periodical established in 1930 by sculptor, architect and engineer André Bloc in

---

10 Dom. Hans Van Der Laan (1940-1991) was a Dutch monk and leading figure in religious architecture during the post-war period. (See Lambertus Moonen, "Biography. Dom Hans van Der Laan, Life and Works." *Dom Hans van Der Laan* (blog), 2001-2018, https://domhansvanderlaan.nl/nl/biografie/.) His article in *Art d'Eglise* can be found in Dom. Hans Van der Laan, "Déterminations naturelle sou surnaturelles pour LA FORME DE L'ÉGLISE", *Art d'Eglise*, no. 1 (January 1955): 1-4.

11 Joseph Pichard (1892-1973) was a theologist, philosopher, and the director of the liturgical periodical *Art Chrétien*. His articles for *Art d'Eglise* are Joseph Pichard, "Les nouvelles églises en France," *Art d'Eglise*, no. 2 (1957): 145-149; Joseph Pichard, "Les nouvelles églises de la région Parisienne," *Art d'Eglise*, no. 115 (April 1961): 46-57.

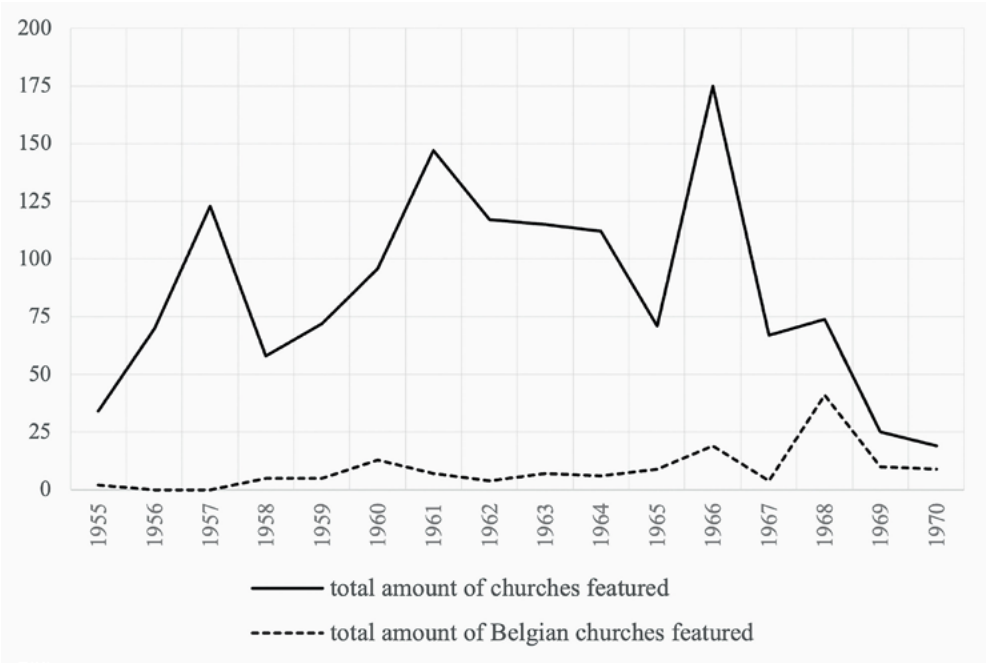
12 *Art Chrétien* took over the periodical *Le Christ dans la Banlieue*, which documented the constructions of the diocese of Paris, in 1959. This influenced the content greatly as they portrayed many practical reflections on building so many churches on such a large scale. See the short entry in *Art Chretien*, no. 16 (October 1959): 9.

13 *L'École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Visuels de La Cambre* is a renowned art and design school in Brussels, founded in 1927 by the architect Henry van de Velde. It offers interdisciplinary programs in visual arts, design, and architecture, emphasizing creativity, innovation, and critical thinking. The architecture program is particularly esteemed for integrating artistic and technical education. See Jacques Aron, *La Cambre et L'architecture: Un Regard Sur Le Bauhaus Belge* (Brussels: Mardaga, 1982).

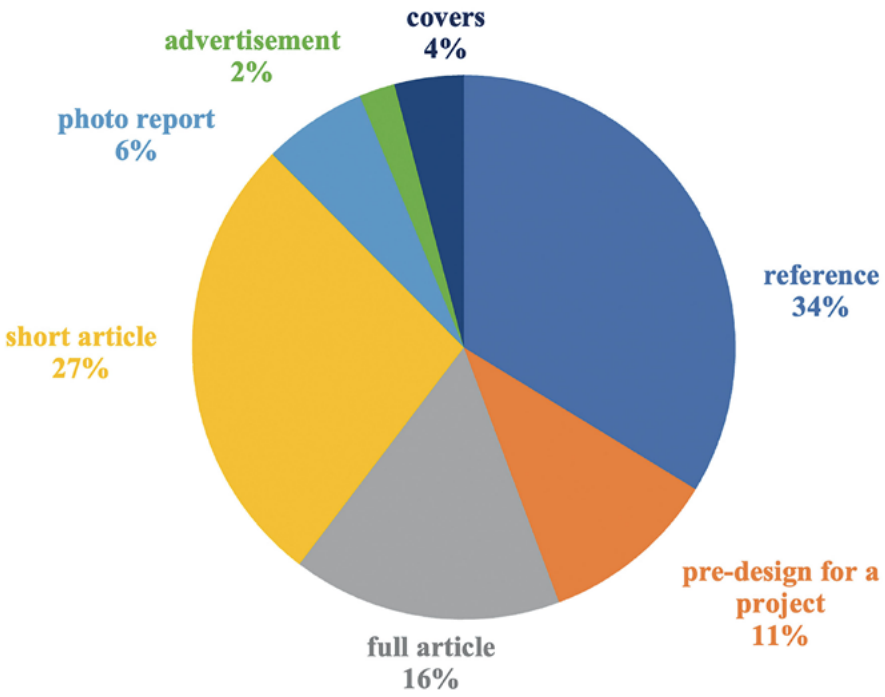
14 Canon André Lanotte (1914-2010) was the secretary of the *Commission Royale des Monuments et des Sites* (Royal Commission of Monuments and Sites) and *Commission de Surveillance pour la Restauration des Edifices Religieux* (Supervisory Commission for the Restoration of Religious Buildings). The fact that he was present in several church commissions gave him the possibility to develop his vision on church architecture completely. He often gave advice on the reconstruction of churches and could choose the architect for this project. More than 750 churches were restored with his help. See Zsuzsanna Böröcz, "A Remarkable Continuity between 1930s Ideas and Reconstruction after the Second World War", *Living with History, 1914-1964: Rebuilding Europe After the First and Second World Wars and the Role of Heritage Preservation*, ed. Nicholas Bullock and Luc Verpoest (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2021), 175-187.

15 Dom. Grégoire Watelet (1918-2007) was an architect and writer for both *La Maison* and *Art d'Eglise*. His articles for *Art d'Eglise* are Grégoire Watelet, "Transformations à l'église abbatiale", *Art d'Eglise*, no. 108 (July 1959): 209-213; Grégoire Watelet, "Concours d'architecture pour le monastère de Wavreumont", *Art d'Eglise*, no. 121 (October 1962): 230-241.

16 Geert Bekaert (1928-2016) was a well-known architecture critic and a former Jesuit who intensely reflected on the role of the church in modern society. He had written several books and often appeared in Belgian and international periodicals. He often discussed the sacrality in daily life, the role of religion in modern society and the 'dwelling church', a notion he shared with Marc Dessauvage. See: Geert Bekaert, *In een of ander huis. Kerkenbouw op een keerpunt* (Tielt: Lannoo, 1967); Geert Bekaert, "Het sakrale is het alledaagse", *La Maison*, no. 11 (November 1968): 444-449; Geert Bekaert, "Eglises de Marc Dessauvage", *La Maison*, no. 12 (December 1968): 474-479.




1




2

collaboration with architect Pierre Vago. With prominent figures like Le Corbusier and Auguste Perret on its editorial board, the periodical gained international recognition from early on.[17] Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* published four special issues on religious architecture, together with numerous short articles on various French and international projects.[18]

Fig. 1
Quantitative representation of each church that is discussed through all six periodicals (made by the authors).

Fig. 2
Ratio of types of articles on post-war churches through the six periodical (made by the authors).

17 André Bloc (1896-1966) was an architect, sculptor and engineer. As he had developed several interests, he founded several periodicals, such as *Revue de l'ingenieur* in 1922 and *Art d'Aujourd'hui* in 1940. See: "La Revue: l'Histoire d'AA", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui,* March 17, 2017. https://www.larchitecturedaujourdhui.fr/aas-history/?lang=en.

18 The four special editions of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* are no. 71 (April 1957); no. 96 (June 1961); no. 108 (June 1963); no. 125 (April 1966).

As post-war churches often used modern building materials, they were also sporadically featured in technical periodicals such as *La Technique des Travaux* (Wallonia) and *Techniques et Architecture* (France). *La Technique des Travaux*, established by the Liège-based foundation firm *Pieux Franki*[19] in 1925, focused on public buildings in reinforced concrete that were typically constructed using the firm's patented foundation system *pieux Franki*. Although they did not specifically concentrate on modern church buildings, engineers authored articles that paid close attention to the material aspects of church construction, including the dimensioning of reinforced concrete elements, on-site assembly, and force distribution within the structure. In contrast, *Techniques et Architecture,* despite its limited publications of modern religious architecture, focused on general construction and the discourse around larger (French) projects. WIth renowned architects and church builders like Le Corbusier and Auguste Perret on its editorial board, the periodical emphasizedd the international discourse around church architecture, while briefly mentioning the implemented construction methods and the enterprises involved.

While each periodical maintained a specific focus – be it liturgical, architectural, or technical – at times there was an underlying interplay between these domains, leading to overlaps and exchanges in their discourses. Furthermore, the discourse – be it one-sided or more interdisciplinary – was not only a result of the journal's specific angle but also closely tied to the composition of its editorial board. For instance, Pichard and Debuyst, both experts in their fields, were the sole editors of *Art Chrétien* and *Art d'Eglise*, respectively, using their specialized church knowledge to shape the periodicals' content. In contrast, *La Technique des Travaux* also relied on specialized knowledge, but from a more technical point of view, giving space to architects and engineers to write extensive articles on church projects, with only brief references to architectural and liturgical aspects. This interplay of architectural, technical and liturgical discourses was more pronounced in periodicals like *La Maison, Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, and *Technique et Architecture*, which benefited from interdisciplinary editorial boards that included architects, urban planners and engineers. Furthermore, articles by critics and clergy, such as Grégoire Watelet, Frédéric Debuyst, Geert Bekaert and André Lanotte in *La Maison*, added further depth to the discussions.

The flourishing of architectural periodicals in the post-war era closely aligned with the revival of church construction. Yet, despite the new energy in the publishing landscape during the 1950s and 1960s, most of these periodicals (had) ceased publication in the 1970s, leading to a decline in publications on religious architecture.[20] [Fig. 1] *Art Chrétien* already stopped publishing in 1966, despite

19 *La Compagnie Internationale des Pieux Armés Frankignoul* or shortly, *Pieux Franki*, was established in 1911 in Liège by Edgard Frankignoul, two years after his system for foundation poles was patented. See "History. More than 100 years of international experience in foundation solutions", Franki Foundations, s.d. https://www.ffgb.be/en/about/history/.

20 Publications began to decline at the end of the 1960s, partly due to a general economic crisis that put pressure on the profession of the architect and, indirectly, on the operation of these magazines. In addition, there was a growing demand for Flemish autonomy, demanding more publications written in Dutch. Therefore, as the

its ambitious and prominent position. Three years later, in November 1969, *Art d'Eglise* appealed to its readers to pay their subscriptions, already facing financial struggles until its eventual demise in 1980. *La Maison* also ceased publication in 1970, marking marking the end of both the church building campaign itself as well as the prominent periodicals that presented this endeavour..

Hence, this research focuses on the period from 1955 (as a lead-up to Expo 58 and the 1959 competition Pro Arte Christiana) to 1970. Every publication on a church building in these six periodicals between 1955 and 1970 was collected, resulting in 900 projects.

Before the sharp decline in publications on post-war churches in 1966, several peeks are detectable within the analysed period. These often coincide with special issues featuring the broader debate on religious architecture. However, not every project was generously featured. Most churches were only published in brief formats, such as short articles or references within larger theoretical articles [Fig. 2]. This research thus focuses on the projects portrayed more extensively and larger articles reflecting on recent developments within religious architecture.

The examined periodicals also revealed several key figures who played crucial roles in shaping the modern church's image. As the building sector evolved throughout the 1950s and 1960s, a complex network of stakeholders was involved in this grand church-building campaign: architects, ecclesiastical authorities, engineers, general contractors, the community, manufacturers, labourers, etc. Not every actor of this network was equally visible: while some actors were broadly acknowledged in these periodicals, the importance of others was often marginalized. This research will further examine the publication of post-war churches through the perspective of three types of actors, parallel to the three domains: the ecclesiastical authorities, the architect, and the actors responsible for the actual construction of the building. By retracing how different actors are presented in each periodical, this article tries to identify how the three thematic domains influence one another.

## Ecclesiastical Drivers of Post-war Church Building: from Local Church Fabrics to High-ranking Authorities

The large-scale church building campaign of the post-war period gradually initiated new liturgical tendencies, consolidated by the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s.[21] This renewal drastically changed the layout of post-war churches, thereby influencing their architecture and construction. Ecclesiastical authorities reflected extensively on the liturgy, prompting a widespread church building

number of periodicals decreased, fewer churches were published. There was also a declining interest, that was further encouraged by a wave of secularization that was taking place throughout Western Europe. See: Anne Van Loo, ed., *Repertorium van de architectuur in België van 1830 tot heden,* (Antwerpen: Mercatorfonds, 2003), 208; Jannière Hélène, Sornin Alexis, Vanlaethem France, eds., *Revues d'architecture dans les années 1960 et 1970: Fragments d'histoire événementielle, intellectuelle, matérielle / Architectural Periodicals in the 1960s and 1970s*: *Towards a Factual, Intellectual and Material History*. Montréal: CCA, IRHA. 2009.

21 Morel and Van de Voorde, "Rethinking the Twentieth-Century Catholic Church in Belgium", 292.





campaign. This campaign was driven both locally by the church fabrics (Dutch: *kerkfabrieken*) and nationally, by figures such as the archbishop and cardinals, who spearheaded modernizations in the regional church building efforts.[22] By encouraging these liturgical changes during the construction of individual churches or entire regions, these figures ensured that church architecture remained aligned with recent societal changes, facilitated by modern construction methods.

Church fabrics are the smallest organisational units responsible for managing individual churches in Belgium.[23] Usually established by a handful of volunteers, they manage and maintain church property, finance, and administration. Church fabrics play an essential role in ensuring the continuity and functioning of the church community. In some projects by renowned church architect Marc Dessauvage, they were presented in the periodicals indirectly as the client.[24] In other articles, they were given an active role, as part of the community using the church space, seen in several projects of the architect Roger Bastin like his church of Beauraing.[25] **[Fig. 3]** In the case of the Clarissenklooster in Ostend, by the professor and architect Paul Felix, the active role of the abbess of the monastery was explicitly recognized as essential. Her involvement in the organisation and materialisation of the project resulted in a building that aligned with the liturgical views of their order, creating a modest but remarkable monastery.[26] The contribution of religious orders was often acknowledged in periodicals, for instance in the article on the monastery of La Tourette by Le Corbusier in *Techniques et Architecture*.[27] The recognition of the church fabric and/or the larger religious community as active decision-makers in the construction of post-war church buildings varied however depending on the periodical and the project.

22 Sterken, "A House for God or a Home for His People?", 393-400.

23 "Kerkfabrieken" are specific for the maintenance of churches in Belgium because of a combination of historical, political, and legal factors. The concept was established during the Napoleonic period and was adapted by the Belgian state after independence in 1830. The Belgian Constitution of 1831, which guarantees freedom of religion and state support of worship, plays a crucial role. In addition, Belgium has a strong Catholic tradition and a complex administrative structure with strong local governments cooperating with church fabrics. This unique combination of circumstances has led to the survival and specific functioning of church fabrics in Belgium.

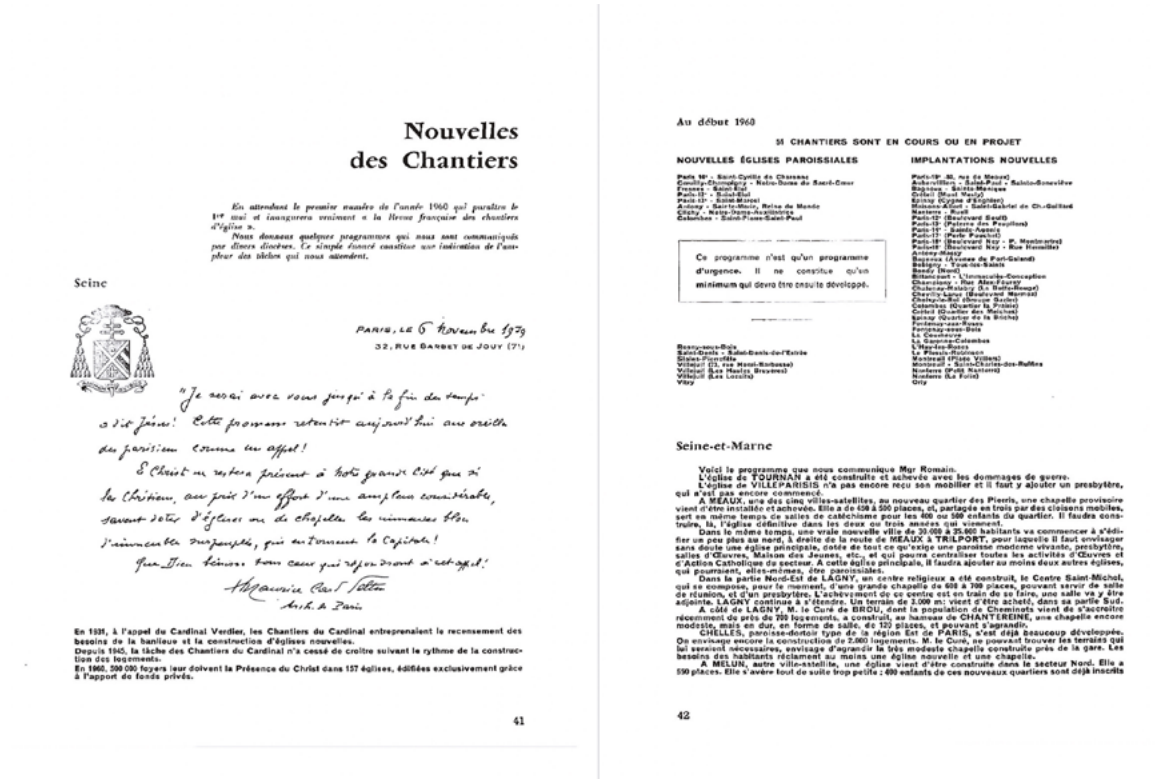
24 "Eglise Saint-Joseph à Vosselaar (Dessauvage)", *La Maison*, no. 12 (December 1968): 477; "Eglise Saint-Croix à Willebroek (Dessauvage)", *La Maison*, no. 12 (December 1968): 478.

25 André Lanotte, "Eglises de Roger Bastin", *La Maison*, no. 11 (November 1968): 458-465.

26 Frédéric Debuyst, "Le monastère des Clarisses d'Ostende", *Art d'Eglise*, no. 107 (April 1959): 177-195.

27 Dominique Izoard and Jean Claude Arati, "La lumière au couvent de la Tourette", *Technique et Architecture 29*, no. 4 (August 1968): 92-95.

Fig. 3
Église de Beauraing (source: *La Maison*, no. 11, November 1968, 461-462).



Nouvelles des Chantiers

En attendant le premier numéro de l'année 1960 qui paraîtra le 1er mai et inaugurera vraiment « la Revue française des chantiers d'église », Nous donnons quelques programmes qui nous sont communiqués par divers diocèses. Ce simple énoncé constitue une indication de l'ampleur des tâches qui nous attendent.

Seine

PARIS, LE 6 Novembre 1959
32, RUE BARBET DE JOUY (7e)

"Je serai avec vous jusqu'à la fin des temps" a dit Jésus! Cette promesse retentit aujourd'hui aux oreilles du parisien comme un appel!
Le Christ ne restera présent à notre grande Cité que si les Chrétiens, au prix d'un effort d'une ampleur considérable, savent bâtir d'églises où de chapelles les immenses îlots d'immeubles surpeuplés, qui entourent le Capitole!
Que Dieu bénisse tous ceux qui répondront à cet appel!

+ Maurice Card. Feltin
Archev. de Paris

En 1935, à l'appel du Cardinal Verdier, les Chantiers du Cardinal entreprenaient le recensement des besoins de la banlieue et la construction d'églises nouvelles.
Depuis 1945, la tâche des Chantiers du Cardinal n'a cessé de croître suivant le rythme de la construction des logements.
En 1960, 200 000 foyers leur doivent la Présence du Christ dans 157 églises, édifiées exclusivement grâce à l'apport de fonds privés.

41

Au début 1960

51 CHANTIERS SONT EN COURS OU EN PROJET

NOUVELLES ÉGLISES PAROISSIALES

IMPLANTATIONS NOUVELLES

Ce programme n'est qu'un programme d'urgence. Il ne constitue qu'un minimum qui devra être ensuite développé.

Seine-et-Marne

Voici le programme que nous communique Mgr Romain.
L'église de TOURNAN a été construite et achevée avec les dommages de guerre.
L'église de VILLEPARISIS n'a pas encore reçu son mobilier et il faut y ajouter un presbytère, qui n'est pas encore commencé.
A MEAUX, une des cinq villes-satellites, au nouveau quartier des Pleeris, une chapelle provisoire vient d'être installée et achevée. Elle a de 6 à 800 places, et, partagée en trois par des cloisons mobiles, sert en même temps de salles de catéchisme pour les 400 ou 500 enfants du quartier. Il faudra construire, là, l'église définitive dans les deux ou trois années qui viennent.
Dans le même temps, une vraie nouvelle ville de 30 000 à 35 000 habitants va commencer à s'édifier un peu plus au nord, à droite de la route de MEAUX à TRILPORT, pour laquelle il faut envisager sans doute une église principale, dotée de tout ce qu'exige une paroisse moderne vivante, presbytère, salles d'Œuvres, Maison des Jeunes, etc., et qui pourra centraliser toutes les activités d'Œuvres et d'Action Catholique du secteur. A cette église principale, il faudra ajouter au moins deux autres églises, qui pourraient, elles-mêmes, être paroissiales.
Dans la partie Nord-Est de LAGNY, un centre religieux a été construit, le Centre Saint-Michel, qui se compose, pour le moment, d'une grande chapelle de 600 à 700 places, pouvant servir de salle de réunion, et d'un presbytère. L'achèvement de ce centre est en train de se faire, une salle va y être adjointe. LAGNY continue à s'étendre. Un terrain de 2.000 m² vient d'être acheté, dans sa partie Sud.
A côté de LAGNY, M. le Curé de BROU, dont la population de Chemiants vient de s'accroître récemment du près de 700 logements, a construit, en hameau de CHANTEREINE, une chapelle encore modeste, mais en dur, en forme de salle, de 120 places, et pouvant s'agrandir.
CHELLES, paroisse-dortoir type de la région Est de PARIS, s'est déjà beaucoup développée. On envisage encore la construction de 2.000 logements. M. le Curé, ne pouvant trouver les terrains qui lui seraient nécessaires, envisage d'agrandir la très modeste chapelle construite près de la gare. Les besoins des habitants réclament au moins une église nouvelle et une chapelle.
A MELUN, autre ville-satellite, une église vient d'être construite dans le secteur Nord. Elle a 550 places. Elle s'avère tout de suite trop petite : 490 enfants de ces nouveaux quartiers sont déjà inscrits

42

In this respect, it is interesting to take a closer look at Domus Dei. Established in 1953 in the archbishopric of Mechlin, Domus Dei was a crucial diocesan organisation responsible for financing, planning and promoting the construction of many churches in the post-war period, for instance by holding public fundraising campaigns and door-to-door money collections.[28] It is however remarkable that its numerous advertisements and folders never appeared in any of the Belgian periodicals, not even in *Art d'Eglise.* Domus Dei was only sporadically mentioned as financial contributor to projects or, for instance, as co-organiser of the 1959 competition Pro Arte Christiana competition.[29] In some instances, its involvement was even perceived negatively, as it imposed its choice of architect on the projects it funded, according to André Lanotte in *La Maison*.[30] Yet generally, it remained out of sight in these periodicals, which paid little attention to financial aspects. This contrasts with publications like *Art Chrétien* and *Technique et Architecture*, which gave considerable thought to how the construction of post-war churches was financially supported.[31]

Ecclesiastical authorities with a prominent position played an important role in managing and directing the church building campaign within their designated

28 Sterken, "A House for God or a Home for His People?", 398-400.

29 "Le concours d'architecture 'Pro Arte Christiana'", 315.

30 In this article, Lanotte portrays the projects funded by Domus Dei as the negative opposite of those of Bastin. With Roger Bastin, the client always chose the architect deliberately. This is in contrast to the churches of Domus Dei, where the organisation themselves strongly advised for the choice of certain architects. See: Lanotte, "Eglises de Roger Bastin", 459.

31 Examples: "Orsay (Seine-et-Oise) le monastère la Clarté-Dieu", *Technique et Architecture 16*, no. 3 (September 1956): 106-111; Joseph Pichard, "Actualités", *Art Chretien*, no. 14-15 (1959): 17-21.

Fig. 4
List of the 51 ongoing church constructions and state of affairs in the parish of Seine-et-Marne (source: *Art Chrétien*, no. 16, 1959, 41-42.

areas.[32] These figures are, however, hardly acknowledged in Belgian periodicals. A prime example is the relation between church architect Marc Dessauvage and the archbishop of Mechlin-Brussels: while academic research extensively highlights the appointment of Dessauvage as the (unofficial) church architect for the archdiocese, this relationship was only once referred to in the periodicals.[33] Internationally, this involvement was more evident. Periodicals like *Art Chrétien* provided insights into the decision-making processes that fuelled the church building campaign **[Fig. 4]**, especially highlighting the strong involvement of ecclesiastical authorities and giving them a voice through introductory articles. Notable high-ranked figures included Cardinal Feltin, the archbishop of Paris, Paul Winniger, the abbot of Strasbourg, and S.E. Mgr. Dupuy, the auxiliary bishop of Lyon.[34] In other French periodicals, ecclesiastical authorities were consistently featured in articles on larger projects. For instance, in articles about the Cathedral of Lourdes in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, Pope Jean XXIII, Cardinal Roncalli, and Msg. Théas were all mentioned or portrayed in photographs.[35] Their presence indicated the prestige of these grand projects and underscored the progressive stance and modernization of the Catholic Church.

While ecclesiastical authorities took great pride in their endeavours to construct more church buildings during the post-war era, this sentiment is reflected in all six analysed periodicals, albeit in a different way. Internationally, periodicals paid significant attention to these important figures through broader articles on liturgical changes, large building campaigns or iconic projects. These grand endeavours were thus acknowledged on an international level, particularly showcasing the influence of high-ranking ecclesiastical figures, while the contribution and influence of local clergy in small-scale initiatives was hardly ever visible. In contrast, in Belgium, the involvement of ecclesiastical authorities was mostly visible on a local scale, with projects by more prominent church architects like Dessauvage, Bastin, and Felix. Reflections on liturgical renewal by higher-raking authorities were limited in the Belgian context, apart from the writing of Debuyst and Bekaert.[36] This contrasts with the international periodicals, that paid more attention to these important figures in broader articles or introductions about changes in liturgy.[37] This was often in broad publications about these larger campaigns or projects. While these grand endeavours were

---

32 See Sterken, "A House for God or a Home for His People?", 387-425; Sterken and Weyns. *Territories of Faith. Religion, Urban Planning and Demographic Change in Post-War Europe*.

33 Frédéric Debuyst, "L'art religieux moderne en Belgique. À propos de quelques expositions recentes", *Art d'Eglise,* no. 120 (July 1962): 195.

34 Examples: Paul Winniger, "La construction d'églises bon marché dans les nouveaux quartiers et banlieues. Un appel aux cures, architectes et entrepreneurs", *Art Chrétien*, no. 8 (1957): 5-6; Paul Winninger, "Comment se pose le problème des églises à construire", *Art Chrétien*, no. 9 (1958): 9-15; Cardinal Feltin, "Les Chantiers du Cardinal du Paris,» *Art Chrétien*, no. 17 (1960): 38; S.E. Mgr. Dupuy, "Les Chantiers de Lyon", *Art Chrétien*, no. 17 (1960): 44-46.

35 Pierre Pinsard, "Naissance et évolution d'un projet", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 81 (December 1958 – Janruary 1959): 48-52.

36 Bekaert, "Het sakrale is het alledaagse", 444-449; Debuyst, "L'art religieux moderne en Belgique. À propos de quelques expositions recentes", 195; Frédéric Debuyst, "Églises nouvelles après la concile-I", *Art d'Eglise*, no. 134 (January 1966): 273-274.

37 Examples: Mgr. Giovanni Fallani, "Art et liturgie dans l'église", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 71 (April 1957): 30-31; Mgr. Charles Alexander Renard, "Des églises pour le règne de dieu", *Art Chrétien*, no. 33-34 (1964): 14-15.

thus acknowledged on an international level, the influence of local initiatives was hardly ever visible.

## The Prominent Role of Architects in the Discourse on Modern Churches

In response to new liturgical developments, modern church architecture continued to evolve rapidly in the post-war period. In the first issue of *Art Chrétien* in 1955, Joseph Pichard referred to these buildings as "the churches [that] don't have a name yet".[38] This early period was marked by numerous discussions on the form of 'modern' churches and experiments in their design, facilitated by modern building materials. Eventually, these developments solidified, resulting in buildings that responded to contemporary changes in society and liturgy. New typologies emerged, which led to more led to more reflective comments on the development of style. For instance, in a 1968 article on a new church in Stockel (Brussels), it was stated: "In religious style, it is difficult to innovate suddenly because a church is above all the outcome of a long tradition. This is how the desire to express, in contemporary forms, the spirit of an old tradition has determined the architectural part of the new church".[39] In *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* engineer René Sarger reflected on the notion of style, noting that it takes time to develop a style out of new techniques.[40] In these periodicals, this process was largely attributed to architects, whose success and reputation seemed to play a decisive role in the debate on religious architecture **[Fig. 5]**.

In *Art d'Eglise* and *La Maison,* famous Belgian church architects like Marc Dessauvage, Roger Bastin, Lucien Kroll, and Paul Felix received ample attention, with their work being featured in several articles throughout the years as well as in theoretical discussions by the editors.[41] Dessauvage became renowned for his 'dwelling churches', characterised by their small scale, a subtle division of sacred and profane zones, impressive interplay of light, and use of simple materials.[42] Although Dessauvage had been developing this concept since the late 1950s, it was only explicitly mentioned in the periodicals after the Second Vatican Council.[43] His close relationships with Geert Bekaert and Dom. Frédéric Debuyst were essential in promoting this idea. The impact of those personal relationships is evident through articles from both *Art d'Eglise* and *La Maison*. In *La Maison*, Bekaert highlighted Dessauvage's work as humble and modest yet progressive – emphasizing their shared vision on the church building as a

38 Joseph Pichard, "Les églises d'aujourd'hui", *Art Chrétien,* no. 1 (January 1955): 7-12.

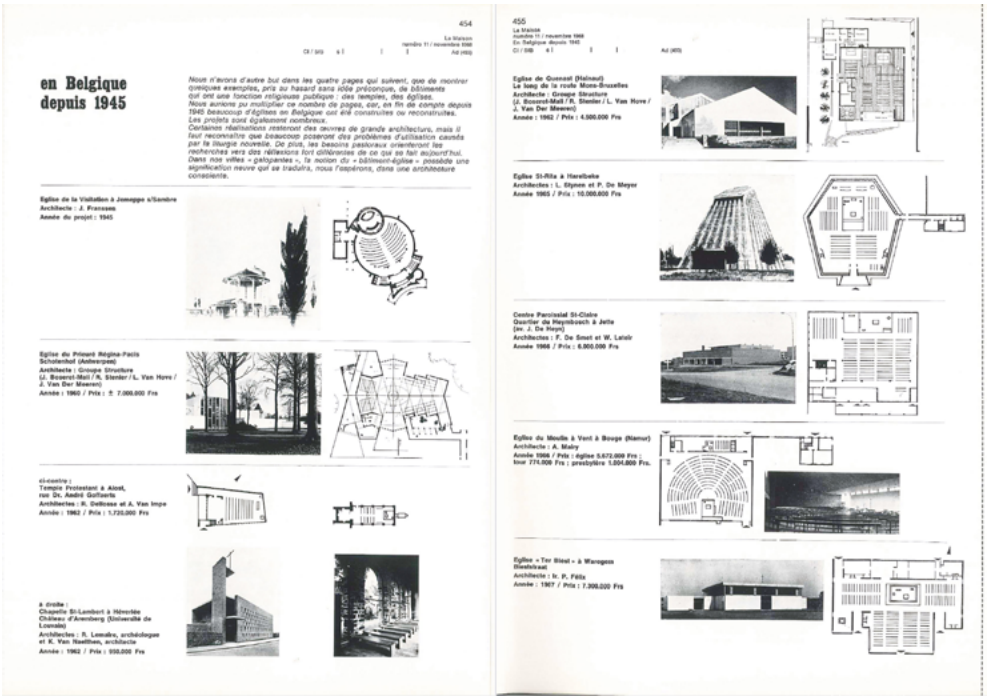
39 Léonide Novgorodsky, "L'église Notre-Dame de Stockel", *La Technique des Travaux*, no. 7-8 (July 1968): 203-209.

40 René Sarger, "Cathédrale d'Alger", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 108 (June 1963): 64-65.

41 Piere-Louis Flouquet, "Roger Bastin. Architecture et Poésie", *La Maison*, no. 8 (August 1966): 232; Bekaert, "Eglises de Marc Dessauvage", 474-479; (See *Art d'Eglise,* no. 107 (April 1958); no. 108 (July 1959); no. 112 (July 1960); no.120 (July 1962); no. 124 (July 1963); no. 130 (January 1965); no. 131 (April 1965); no. 134 (January 1966); no. 135 (April 1966); no. 137 (October 1966); no. 143 (1968); no. 148 (July 1969); no. 152 (July 1970); *Art Chrétien,* no. 26 (1962); *La Maison*, no. 5 (May 1960); no. 8 (August 1963); no. 8 (August 1966); no. 9 (September 1966); no. 11(November 1968); no. 12 (December 1968); *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 96 (1961)

42 Sterken, "A House for God or a Home for His People?", 413.

43 Bekaert, "Eglises de Marc Dessauvage", 474-479; Debuyst, "Églises nouvelles après la concile-I", 273-274.




home.[44] Dessauvage also actively promoted his projects in *Art d'Eglise,*[45] where Debuyst portrayed his architecture as honest and raw, further emphasizing the concept of the dwelling church. He even went as far as to describe the work of Dessauvage as a new dimension to modern church architecture on an broader level, comparing him with examples in France and Germany **[Fig. 6]**.[46]

Modesty is also a key feature in the work of Roger Bastin. Active since the late 1940s in the diocese of Namur, Bastin frequently reconstructed old churches through his partnership with André Lanotte.[47] Bastin blended modern building techniques with the historical and geographical context by using local materials.[48] Known for this regional and modest approach, Bastin's 'sensitive constructions' were often featured in *Art d'Eglise* from 1959 onwards.[49] Instead of inventing a new style or typology of churches, Bastin focused on addressing the specific needs of each project, earning high praise from Lanotte for his thoughtful approach. Lanotte even compared Bastin's church in Beauraing to the many cathedrals built during this period, highlighting the international relevance of Bastin's work.[50]

---

44 Bekaert, "Eglises de Marc Dessauvage", 474-479. More about their collaboration can be read in Dirk Van der Perre, "Positie tegenover Bekaert", *Op de grens van twee werelden. Beeld van het architectuuronderwijs aan het Sint-Lucasinstituut te Gent in de periode 1919-1965/1974*, ed. Dirk Van der Perre (Wetteren: drukkerij Eramus nv, 2003): 155-163

45 Marc Dessauvage, "Cinq réalisations de Marc Dessauvage", *Art d'Eglise*, no. 134 (January 1966): 275-297.

46 Debuyst, "L'art religieux moderne en Belgique. À propos de quelques expositions recentes", 195-197; Debuyst, "Églises nouvelles après la concile-I", 273-274.

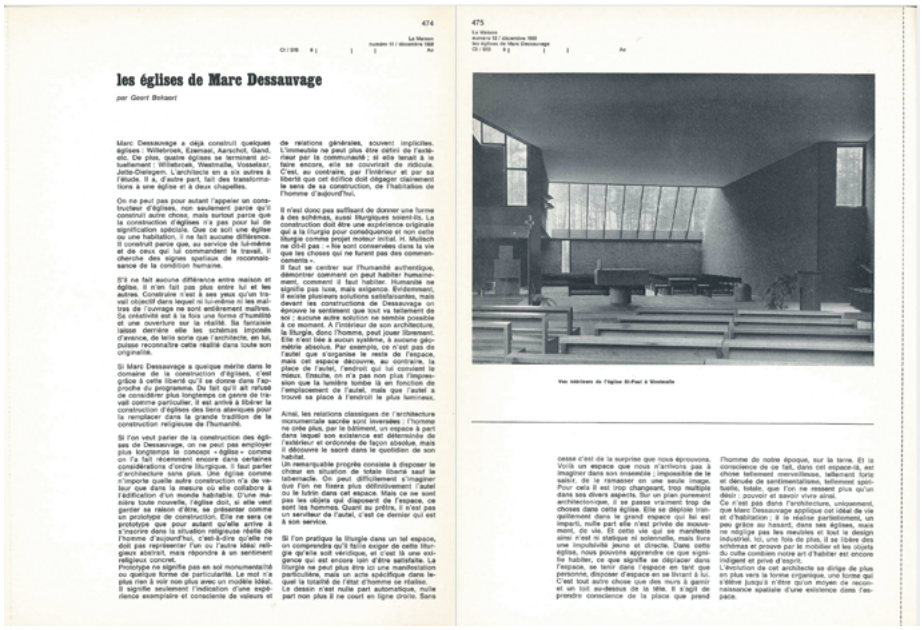
47 Later on, Lanotte wrote an entire book on Bastin's œuvre: André Lanotte, *Roger Bastin Architecte 1913-1986* (Sprimont: Mardaga, 2001).

48 Bastin's notion of being embedded in the historical and geographical structure is beautifully documented by the photographs of his daughter, Christine Bastin, for example for the church of Sart-en-Fagne, under the title 'The church in the Village'. See "Église Notre-Dame de Sart-en Fagne", *Art d'Eglise,* no. 148 (July 1968): 346-352.

49 André Lanotte, "Contribution à la recherche d'un plan d'église", *Art d'Eglise*, no. 131 (April 1965): 189-191. (See also *Art d'Eglise*, no. 108 (July 1959); no. 112 (July 1960); no. 131 (April 1965); no. 148 (July 1969).)

50 Lanotte, "Eglises de Roger Bastin", 461.

Fig. 5
Overview of most prominent examples of post-war churches built in Belgium (source: *La Maison*, no. 11, November 1968, 454-455).



les églises de Marc Dessauvage

par Geert Bekaert

Fig. 6
A spread of an article on Dessauvage, written by Geert Bekaert (source: *La Maison*, no. 12, December 1968, 474-475).

Similarly, the use of modest materials is also characteristic for the work of Paul Felix. He combined the notion of an honest and sober architecture with an exploration of the relationship between form and function. For his religious projects, he often collaborated with Jan Tanghe, an architect, urbanist and editor of *La Maison* since 1968.[51] However, this collaboration was not visible in the sparse publications of his work in this journal, nor was his close friendship with Geert Bekaert.[52] Felix's projects were mostly discussed in *Art d'Eglise*, although his Clarissenklooster in Ostend gained international acclaim as the only post-war religious Belgian project featured in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*.[53]

Finally, the fourth architect that featured regularly in articles on modern church architecture is the architect and urbanist Lucien Kroll.[54] During the late 1960s, several of Kroll's projects were featured in both *Art d'Eglise* and *La Maison*. Kroll's presence in these periodicals was largely due to his prominent position within the architectural press, as a member of the editorial board of *La Maison*. In the two special issues on modern religious architecture published by *La Maison* in 1968, nearly half of the content was devoted to reflections and projects by Kroll. He often wrote these articles himself and did the same for *Art d'Eglise*. In a note about the temporary chapel for Linkebeek, Kroll explicitly promoted his significant role as the architect: "he was asked to "embellish" this solution!".[55] He also showcased some of his projects in Rwanda, underscoring his international connections.[56]

51 Jan Tanghe was an urbanist, architect, and part of the editorial board of *La Maison* from 1968 on. He was also a professor at the Univeristé de Mons, and part of the then famous Group Planning (Dutch: *Groep Planning*). See "Tanghe, Jan", April 30, 2019. https://inventaris.onroerenderfgobe/personen/4712.

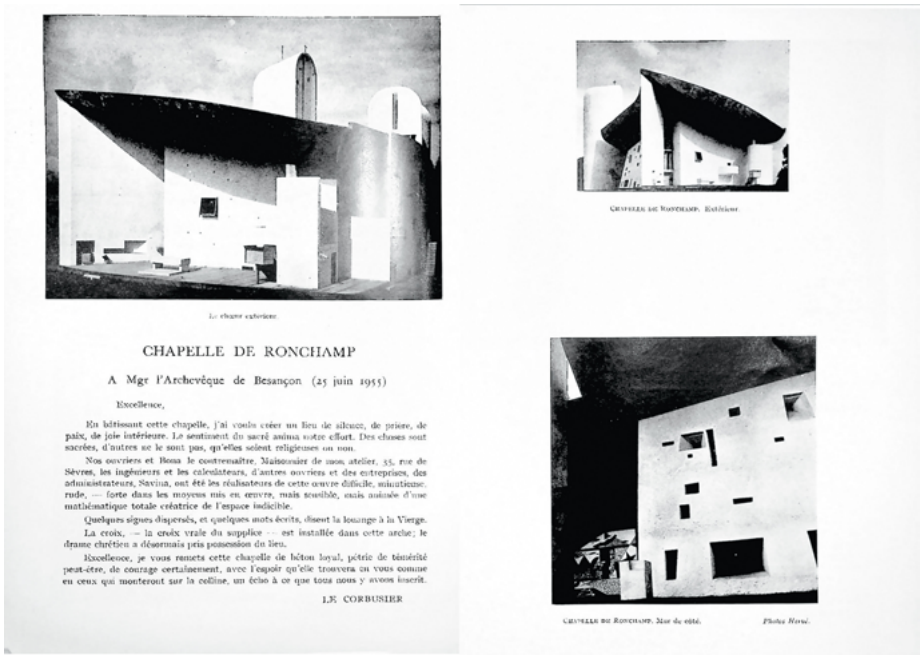
52 Geert Bekaert was the co-author of the monography of Paul Felix following his passing in the eighties. See: Geert Bekaert, Ronny De Meyer and Paul Felix. *Paul Felix: architectuur, 1913-1981* (Tielt: Lannoo, 1981).

53 "Monastère des Clarisses d'Ostende, Belgique", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 96 (June 1961): 62-65.

54 Lucas Brusco and Martial Résibois, "Lucien Kroll", *CLARA*, no. 5 (2018): 188-217, https://doi.org/10.3917/clara.hs5.0188.

55 Lucien Kroll, "Chapelle à Linkebeek (1963)", *Art d'Eglise*, no. 152 (July 1970): 78-79.

56 Lucien Kroll, "Proposition pour organiser une église rwandaise", *La Maison*, no. 12 (December 1968): 494-495;



CHAPELLE DE RONCHAMP

A Mgr l'Archevêque de Besançon (25 juin 1955)

Excellence,

En édifiant cette chapelle, j'ai voulu créer un lieu de silence, de prière, de paix, de joie intérieure. Le sentiment du sacré anima notre effort. Des choses sont sacrées, d'autres ne le sont pas, qu'elles soient religieuses ou non.

Nos ouvriers et Boua le contremaître, Maisonnier de mon atelier, 35, rue de Sèvres, les ingénieurs et les calculateurs, d'autres ouvriers et des entreprises, des administrateurs, Savina, ont été les réalisateurs de cette œuvre difficile, minutieuse, rude, — forte dans les moyens mis en œuvre, mais sensible, mais animée d'une mathématique totale créatrice de l'espace indicible.

Quelques signes dispersés, et quelques mots écrits, disent la louange à la Vierge.

La croix, — la croix vraie du supplice — est installée dans cette arche; le drame chrétien a désormais pris possession du lieu.

Excellence, je vous remets cette chapelle de béton loyal, pétrie de ténérité peut-être, de courage certainement, avec l'espoir qu'elle trouvera en vous comme en ceux qui monteront sur la colline, un écho à ce que tous nous y avons inscrit.

LE CORBUSIER

While other Belgian architects were involved in church architecture as well, it is remarkable that the (architectural) press often depicted the work of the same four architects.[57] However, the repeated highlighting of a limited number of specific architects was not unique to Belgium. In international periodicals like *Art Chrétien*, *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* and *Techniques et Architecture*, renowned church architects like Pierre Pinsard, Pierre Vago, Guillaume Gillet, and Le Corbusier were also prominently and repeatedly featured.[58] These architects were portrayed as key figures in the debate on contemporary religious architecture, each with a clear and defined vision of what a modern church should be. *Art Chrétien*, in particular, provided a platform for several prominent French architects to debate the essence of a modern church, publishing these discussions in full.[59]

Most of these Belgian projects were always placed in an international framework regarding religious architecture. The international discourse on modern church architecture, which was also reflected in Belgian periodicals to contextualize the work of local architects, is marked by the focus on Le Corbusier's work, particularly the Notre Dame du Haut de Ronchamp in 1955. His influence resonated through *Art Chrétien, La Maison, Art d'Eglise* and *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*. Due to his close relationship with André Bloc, Le Corbusier was

Lucien Kroll, "Monastère de Gihindamuyaga (Rwanda) salle de réunion-chapelle", *La Maison*, no. 12 (December 1968): 496-497.

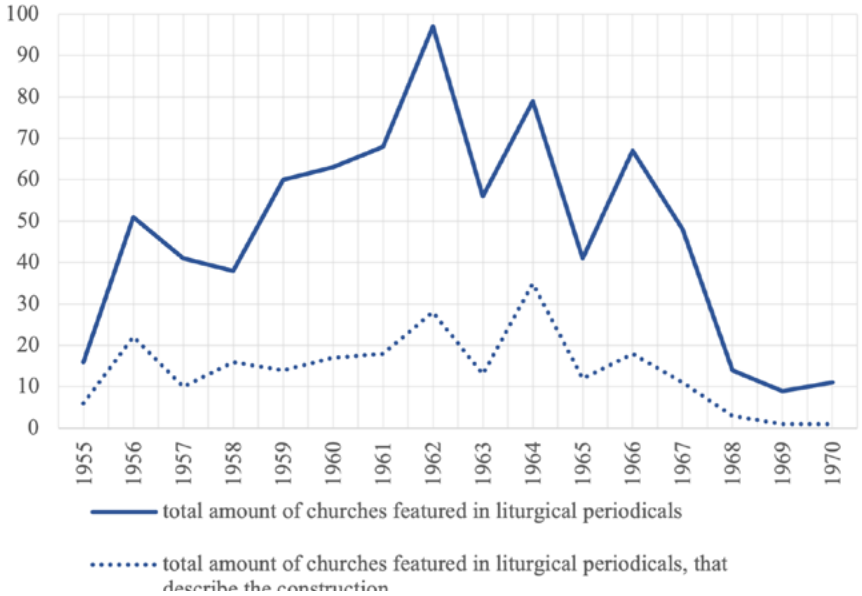
57 Stephanie Van de Voorde and Ronny De Meyer, "Naoorlogse Kerkbouw in België. Architecturale en constructieve analyse van het werk van Adolf Nivelle", In *Kerken Bouwen Langs Maas En Rijn Na 1945*, ed. Antoine Jacobs (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2019), 245-263.

58 See *Art Chrétien*, no. 1 (1955); no. 4 (1956); no. 8 (1957); no. 10 (1958); no. 11 (1958); no. 14-15 (1959); no. 10 (1960); no. 20 (1960); no. 21-22 (1961); no. 23 (1961); no. 27-28 (1962); no. 30 (1963); no. 33-34 (1964); no. 38 (1965); *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 60 (June 1955); no. 61 (August 1955); no. 64 (February 1956); no. 71 (April 1957); no. 81 (December 1958-1959); no. 87 (December 1959-1960); no. 91-92 (September 1960); no. 96 (June 1961); no. 108 (June 1963); no. 113-114 (April 1964); *Techniques et Architecture 15*, no. 2 (September 1955); vol. 18, no. 4 (August 1958); vol. 22, no. 6 ( September 1962).

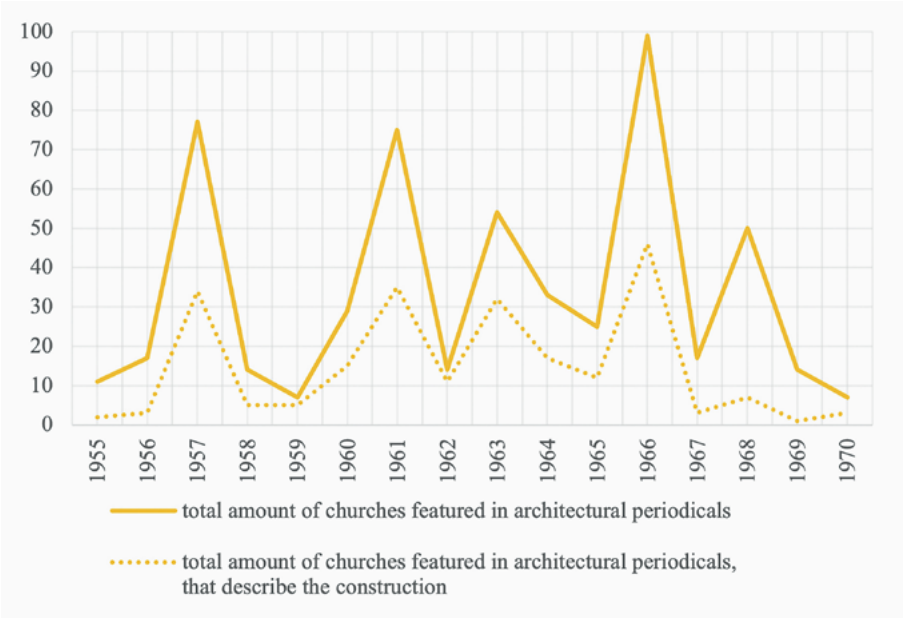
59 Examples: "Débat sur les Eglises dans les cites Nouvelles", *Art Chrétien*, no. 16 (1959): 31-32; Pichard, "Enquête sur le caractère à donner aux nouvelles églises", 24-26.

Fig. 7
Letter by Le Corbusier to the bishop of Besançon. This is the first time the chapel appeared in the six examined periodicals (source: *Art Chrétien*, no. 1, 1955, 14-15).

8




9




10

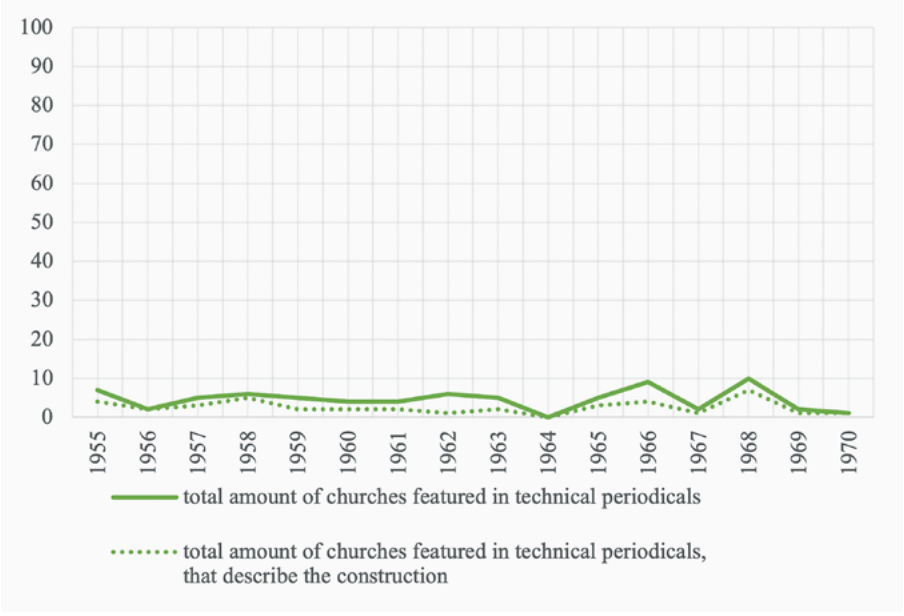



Fig. 8, 9, 10
Quantitative representation of each church that is discussed in each type of periodical, compared to how often the construction of the church was discussed (made by the authors).

part of the editorial board of both *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* and *Techniques et Architecture*. However, given his international renown, one may assume that the wide coverage was not solely due to his editorial positions. It is remarkable that, despite his status as star architect, Le Corbusier acknowledged other actors involved in the construction of the chapel in Ronchamp [Fig. 7]. Nevertheless, *Art Chrétien* still placed him, the architect, at the forefront of this project.[60] Similarly, French periodicals paid much attention to prominent large-scale projects, such as the Saint Pie X in Lourdes by the renowned architect Pierre Vago or the Notre-Dame de Royan by Guillaume Gillet.[61] Yet, these projects were frequently featured not only because of the involvement of prominent architects, but also due to the debates questioning the necessity of such large places of worship.

While the field of architectural history mostly focuses on the work of (renowned) architects, the contributions of other actors are often overshadowed. This representation is evident in both international and national articles on post-war church buildings, despite the fact that the construction of these religious projects required a complex network of many different actors. Church architects were prominently featured, not only because of their unique voice within this discourse, but also due to their position and close relationships. Many architects were either close to several writers and editors or were part of the editorial board of a periodical themselves. This research thus confirms the prominent role of these figures in defining the architectural discourse on church architecture, while the influence of these other actors and connections is seldom made explicit.

## Material Matters: Acknowledging the Role of Manufacturers, Contractors and Engineers

To achieve the open plans and new architectural layouts that corresponded to the liturgical developments, large spans were necessary. This required the use of modern building materials, such as reinforced or prestressed concrete, laminated timber, and steel space frames. In the post-war period, these novel materials enabled the cost-efficient construction of churches, aligning with Pichard's belief that "churches should be simple and economic, not modest".[62] Despite a growing awareness of these materials, articles on churches did not frequently mention the materiality or construction methods used [Fig. 8-10].

Though Bastin's and Dessauvage's architecture received significant attention within the liturgical and architectural periodicals in Belgium, the specifics of their construction methods did not. While *La Maison* and *Art d'Eglise* described

60 In general, the emphasis is still too often on architects within architectural historiography, and much less on other actors. However, it is well-known now that architectural projects develop through collaborative practices between architect, engineer, general contractor, client, labourers, etc.

61 "Lourdes 1959", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 81 (December 1958-1959): 46-57; "Royan – reconstruction de l'église Notre-Dame", *Techniques et Architecture*, vol. 15, no. 2 (September 1955): 100-102.
See: *Art Chrétien*, no. 4 (1956); no. 2 (1957); no. 10 (1958); no. 27-28 (1962); *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 60 (June 1955); no. 61 (August 1955); no. 87 (December 1959-1960); no. 91-92 (September 1960); no. 113-114 (April 1964); *Techniques et Architecture 18*, no. 4 (August 1958).

62 Pichard, "Actualités", 17-19.




11

Dessauvage's work as radically modern, they did not elaborate on the use of concrete.[63] *La Maison* mentioned Bastin's use of traditional materials, including bricks, concrete and steel. Bastin avoided using overly 'radical' materials, as he aimed to stay true to the historical context of his projects rather than reinvent the vocabulary of religious buildings.[64]

On the other hand, *La Technique des Travaux* focused on church buildings from the perspective of the construction and materiality, rather than the architect. In consequence, this technical periodical documented entirely different examples compared to *La Maison* and *Art d'Eglise*. For instance, it was the only periodical to praise la Notre Dame de Stockel, in particular for its use of in situ and prefabricated reinforced concrete, achieving a symbiosis of past and present.[65] The building was even used as a reference in advertisements by CBR, the company responsible for the cement for the in-situ concrete of the church [Fig. 11-12].[66] However, nicknamed *la Notre Dame du Béton*, the overwhelming presence of concrete was not appreciated by everyone in the local community.[67]

The example of CBR demonstrates that manufacturers and suppliers of building materials and components – who were not mentioned in the factual articles on the churches – promoted their work through advertisements. Explicitly referring to the churches described elsewhere in the journal, which often showed only the completed building, they included a picture of the raw material to portray themselves as key actors in the entire process, contributing significantly to the success and identity of the finished building. A similar strategy can be seen in the advertisements by De Coene, a manufacturer of timber building prod-

63 Debuyst, "Églises nouvelles après la concile-I", 273-274; Dessauvage, "Cinq réalisations de Marc Dessauvage", 275-297; Bekaert, "Eglises de Marc Dessauvage", 474-479. See also *Art d'Eglise*, no. 120 (July 1962) ; no. 124 (July 1963) ; no. 130 (January 1965) ; no. 135 (April 1966); *La Maison*, no. 9 (September 1966).

64 Lanotte, "Eglises de Roger Bastin", 458-465.

65 Novgorodsky, "L'église Notre-Dame de Stockel", 203-209.

66 See: *Architecture,* no. 80 (November 1967): 830. *Architecture*: *revue bimestrielle d'architecture et d'urbanisme* is another Belgian architectural periodical that circulated in the 1950s and 1960s. This periodical isn't included in our quantitative research, as *La Maison* was more widespread among the general public.

67 Luc Deveen, clerk of the Dutch-speaking part of the parish of Stockel, in a conversation with Julie Kimpe, KU Leuven student, Stockel, Brussels, March 8, 2024.

Fig. 11, 12
Two fragments of advertisement of CBR (source: *Architecture*, no. 80, November 1967, 830).





ucts and furniture. Although a household name with a longstanding history, it was not until 1955 that the company first advertised in *La Maison,* featuring a temporary church in Lokeren, near Ghent, alongside their glulam arches used to construct it [Fig. 13].

Over the next two years, De Coene's advertisements for this church and a similar one in Brussels appeared in both *Architecture* and *Art d'Eglise* as well [Fig. 14-15].[68] In these advertisements, De Coene explicitly portrayed the glulam arches. Although still a relatively new technology in Belgium at the time, it quickly found its way into various building types, including churches.[69] Despite being a temporary structure, the visibility of the church in Lokeren in periodicals provided the momentum for De Coene to build another fifteen churches in Belgium, Germany, and France over the next 10 years.[70] The technology and professional expertise by De Coene not only guaranteed a quick execution and low costs but also played a crucial role in shaping the overall architectural effect, atmosphere and image of the church. In *La Maison*, the church was also explicitly celebrated for its use of wood. Nevertheless, De Coene was only briefly mentioned as manufacturer of the glulam construction at the end of the article.[71]

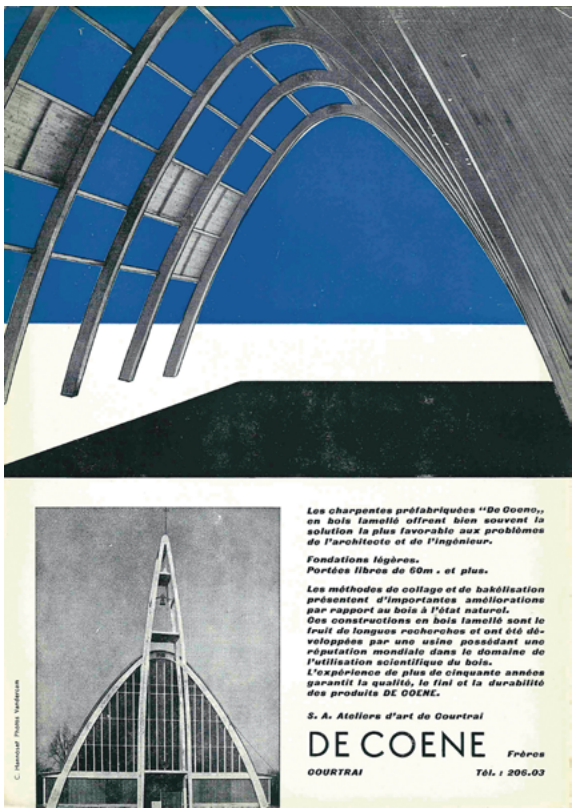
Although consistent with the general trend in architectural history, it is nevertheless remarkable how little credit is given to building companies, be they manufacturers, suppliers or contractors, despite their crucial contribution to the successful realization of these projects. Some Belgian periodicals, such as

68 Shown in the advertisement sections at the beginning or end of the periodical, the church in Lokeren is featured in *Art d'Eglise*, no. 4 (October 1955); *Architecture*, no. 19 (September 1956); *La Maison*, no. 6 (June 1955). The church in Brussels is shown in *Art d'Eglise* no. 3 (July 1957).

69 "Renaissance Du Bois: interview de l'architecture Victor Bourgeois", *La Maison* no. 7 (July 1955): 190; "Le Bois, La Nature et l'Homme: extrait de l'Allucation de l'Architecte Renaat Braem", *La Maison* no. 7 (July 1955): 190-220. The development of laminated timber with a synthetic glue in the 1930s reversed this story. See Maryia. Rusak, "Wooden churches, managers, and Fulbright scholars: Glued laminated timber in the 1950s in Norway", *History of Construction Cultures*, vol. 2, Proceedings of the 7th International Congress On Construction History (7ICCH 2021), July 12-16, 2021 (Lisbon, Portugal), 735-742.

70 Frank Herman, Terenja Van Dijk, *Kortrijkse Kunstwerkstede Gebroeders De Coene: 80 Jaar Ambacht En Industrie: Meubelen, Interieurs, Architectuur* (Kortrijk: Groeninghe, 2006); Kaj-Wolf Depuydt, "Assessing glulam roof structures. A historical and typological analysis of post-war church roofs" (Master Thesis, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 2023).

71 "Le Concours National d'Architecture: organisé par le Bureau National de Documentation sur le Bois", *La Maison*, no. 6 (June 1955): 183; "Eglise a Lokeren", *La Maison*, no. 7 (July 1955): 195-196.




13




14




15

*La Maison* and *La Technique des Travaux*, listed key contributors at the beginning of an article, functioning as a sort of ID-card. Unsurprisingly, the architect was always mentioned, while the engineer and general contractor were only sporadically noted. This was the case, for instance, for projects such as the Eglise de Beauraing by Roger Bastin **[Fig. 16],** as well as projects by Dessauvage, Felix and Kroll, among others. Despite this acknowledgement, the contributions of contractors were not further elaborated upon in the articles, prompting them to pay for additional space in the advertisement section to highlight their association with famous church architects. Besonhé, the general contractor for the church of Beauraing by Bastin, even strategically mentioned being located in the same village as the church **[Fig. 17]**. Although the choice for a local contractor was never specified in the articles, it likely offered many advantages: in addition to reducing transportation and logistical costs, by relying on a solid network of local companies, they were able to manage budget constraints while maintaining high constructing quality. Even if operating mostly locally, such advertisements, and the explicit link with a 'church architect' who was active more widely, could nevertheless pave the way for future assignments in the religious sphere.

Fig. 13
Advertisements of De Coene (source: *La Maison*, no. 6, June 1955).

Fig. 14
Advertisements of De Coene (source: *Art d'Eglise,* no. 3, July 1957).

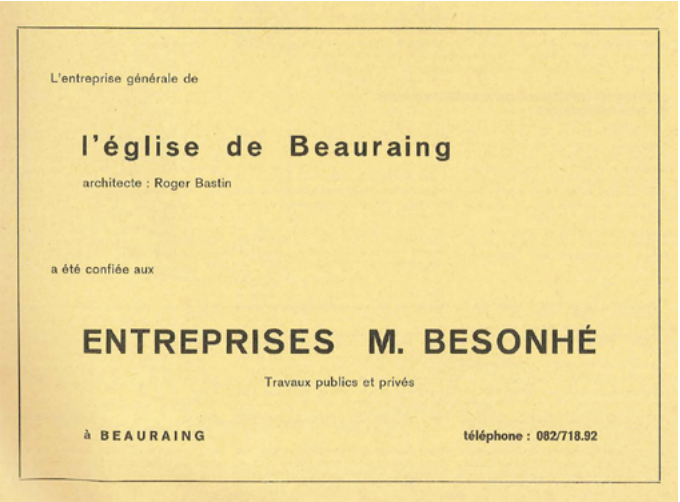
Fig. 15
Advertisements of De Coene (source: *Art d'Eglise*, no. 4, October 1955).

**Beauraing.**
**Eglise du**
**pèlerinage / 1964**

**Architecte : R. Bastin. G. Van Oost, architecte collaborateur. C. Charlier, ing.-conseil.**
**Entreprise générale : Besonhé à Beauraing.**
**Esquisse de la Vierge à l'Enfant : Maurice Rocher, 1968.**
**6.000 places. Coût 20 millions maximum, y compris hall d'accueil (40 m x 12 m), rampes et abords.**

16

Likewise, engineers seldom received appropriate acknowledgements for their work in these periodicals. Engineer C. Charlier[72], who assisted Bastin through several of his projects, was only credited by means of a simple mention [Fig. 16]. Even in the case of the Notre Dame de Stockel, despite the project undergoing a turbulent process with multiple changes in engineers and design adjustments, the engineers were not mentioned.[73] Furthermore, in contrast to contractors, engineers only rarely promoted their work through advertisements, as they often functioned as small-scale businesses relying on individual connections with clients and architects.




17

In contrast to the Belgian periodicals, construction aspects featured more prominently in international publications. Protagonists, such as Joseph Pichard and André Le Donné, voiced a technical discourse parallel to the architectural renewal of that period.[74] In these articles, the roles of the engineer and contractor in the design and execution of the building were central. SInce the end of the 19th century, the contractor and engineer increasingly differentiated themselves from the architect and had been an integral key figures in the building sector, providing technical and practical expertise that complemented the architect's role. Engineers provided the necessary calculations and insights on materials, while contractors ensured the quick and efficient execution of the building. Their collaboration assured a fast completion of a building, which was very needed in the post-war period to compensate the huge destructions and the huge demographic boom. See Stephanie Van de Voorde, "Ingenieurs, architecten en aannemers op de drempel van een nieuwe tijd (1850-1890)", (course hand-out for *Architectuur- en 19de en 20ste eeuw*, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussel, received October 15, 2023). Remarkably, this focus was mainly highlighted in discussions on the role of cathedrals and basilica in the changing society of the 1950s and 1960s.

72 Charlier was mentioned in articles of following projects: André Lanotte, "Eglise de Villers/Lesse", *La Maison,* no. 8 (August 1966): 255; André Lanotte, "Chapelle du Pensionnat des Soeurs de Marie a Jambes", *La Maison,* no. 8 (August 1966): 259; André Lanotte, "Beauraing. Eglise de pèlerinage", *La Maison,* no. 11 (November 1968): 461-462; André Lanotte, "Gênes (Hodister). Chapelle St-Isidore", *La Maison,* no. 11 (November 1968): 462-463.

73 Mediha Lökçe, "Divine Shelters, Temporal Sorrows. Exploring a Post-War Concrete Construction Project through Its Different Phases and Collaborations" (Master Thesis, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 2023).

74 Pichard, "Actualités", 17-19; André Le Donné, "Le role de la technique dans l'oeuvre de l'architecture", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 81 (December1958-January 1959): 53-55.

Fig. 16
General information on the church of Beauraing (source: *La Maison*, no. 11, November 1968, 461-462).

Fig. 17
Advertisement for the contractor of the church of Beauraing (source: *La Maison*, no. 11, November 1968).

Following the examples of Royan and Lourdes, La Basilique du Sacre Coeur in Algeria proved to be an excellent example of successful collaboration between architect and engineer. *Art Chrétien* called the cathedral one of the best examples of reinforced concrete, due to the strong partnership between architects Paul Herbé and Jean Le Couteur and engineer René Sarger.[75] The latter was even invited to write an entire article in *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* about this project, in which he reflected upon the synergetic development between technical innovations and architectural style.[76] One of the requirements set by the diocesan committee was for the cathedral to be sufficiently cooled,[77] a problem Sarger solved by developing a 'refrigerating tower', inspired by coal mines and previous industrial projects he had worked on.[78] Besides Sarger, Enterprise Perret played an essential role in this endeavour.[79] Perret relied on its extensive network of companies and collaborators, both in Algeria and across Europa, supplying him with the required labour force, cranes and formwork for this large-scale project. However, and although being a household name, Perret only received a brief mention for his contributions.

## The Medium of the Periodical: a Critical Analysis

The analysis of how modern churches and the contributions of various key stakeholders are depicted in the journals, reveals a diverse presentation on both content and format. Graphical representations ranged from preliminary sketches and models to detailed drawings and pictures of the final result. The selection and combination of these 'images' varied depending on the article's focus. Periodicals like *Art Chrétien*, which covered the broader scope of the church building campaign, often dedicated only one or two pages per project, never showing the churches in depth in both words and images. Here, the photograph was the sole representation of the project. In contrast, articles that emphasized the design process featured a richer scope of visual elements. Sketches, architectural plans, and photographs of the finalised buildings were presented side-by-side, offering readers a more comprehensive understanding of the project's evolution. To convey the architectural splendour of the completed church, multiple images of the interior of church were arranged to recreate the sacral atmosphere of the building for the reader. These arrangements were not arbitrary; they were deliberate choices that shaped the viewer's perception of modern religious architecture.

In more extensive articles that covered multiple pages per project, the construction process was brought to life through descriptions, technical drawings

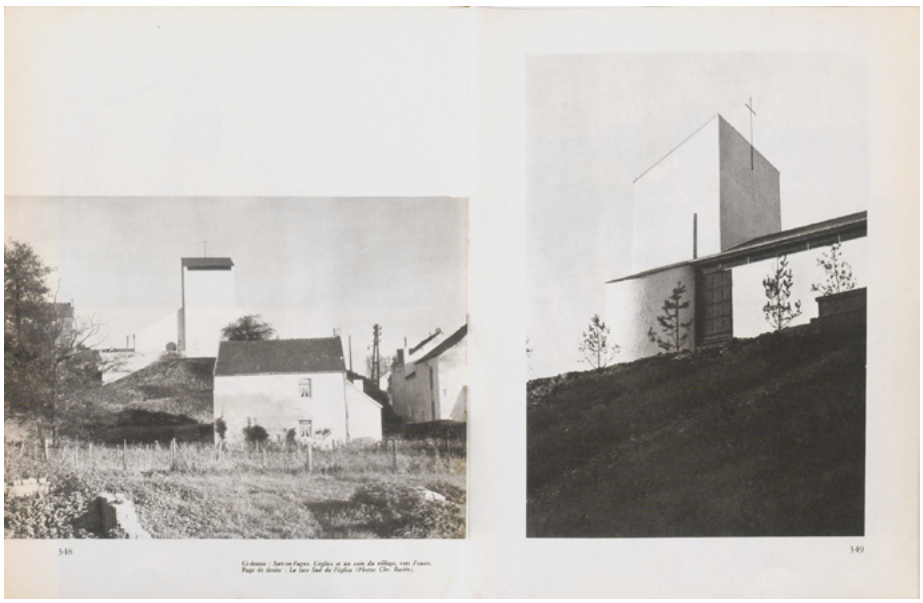
75 Pichard, "La Basilique Sacré Cœur à Alger", 30-40.

76 Sarger, "Cathédrale d'Alger", 64-65.

77 "Concours pour l'Edification d'une Basilique à Alger", L'*Architecture d'Aujourd'hui,* no. 64 (February 1956): 11-17.

78 Pichard, "La Basilique Sacré Cœur à Alger", 30-40.

79 Blancard, "La Basilique du Sacré Cœur à Alger", 219-232. This contractor firm was established by the brothers Perret, one of which was Auguste Perret.



and construction photographs.[80] The human scale was often emphasized in these images, highlighting the 'grandeur' of these projects both literally and figuratively. The role of the photographers in these instances was crucial; they needed to capture not only the physical characteristics, but also the texture, spatiality and experience of the buildings. Occasionally, the photographer's familiarity with the architect or project influenced the framing and focus of these images **[Fig. 18]**.[81] Despite this variety, the visual narrative often remained incomplete: contributions of all key actors were not fully attributed, nor was the entire construction process depicted in its entirety.

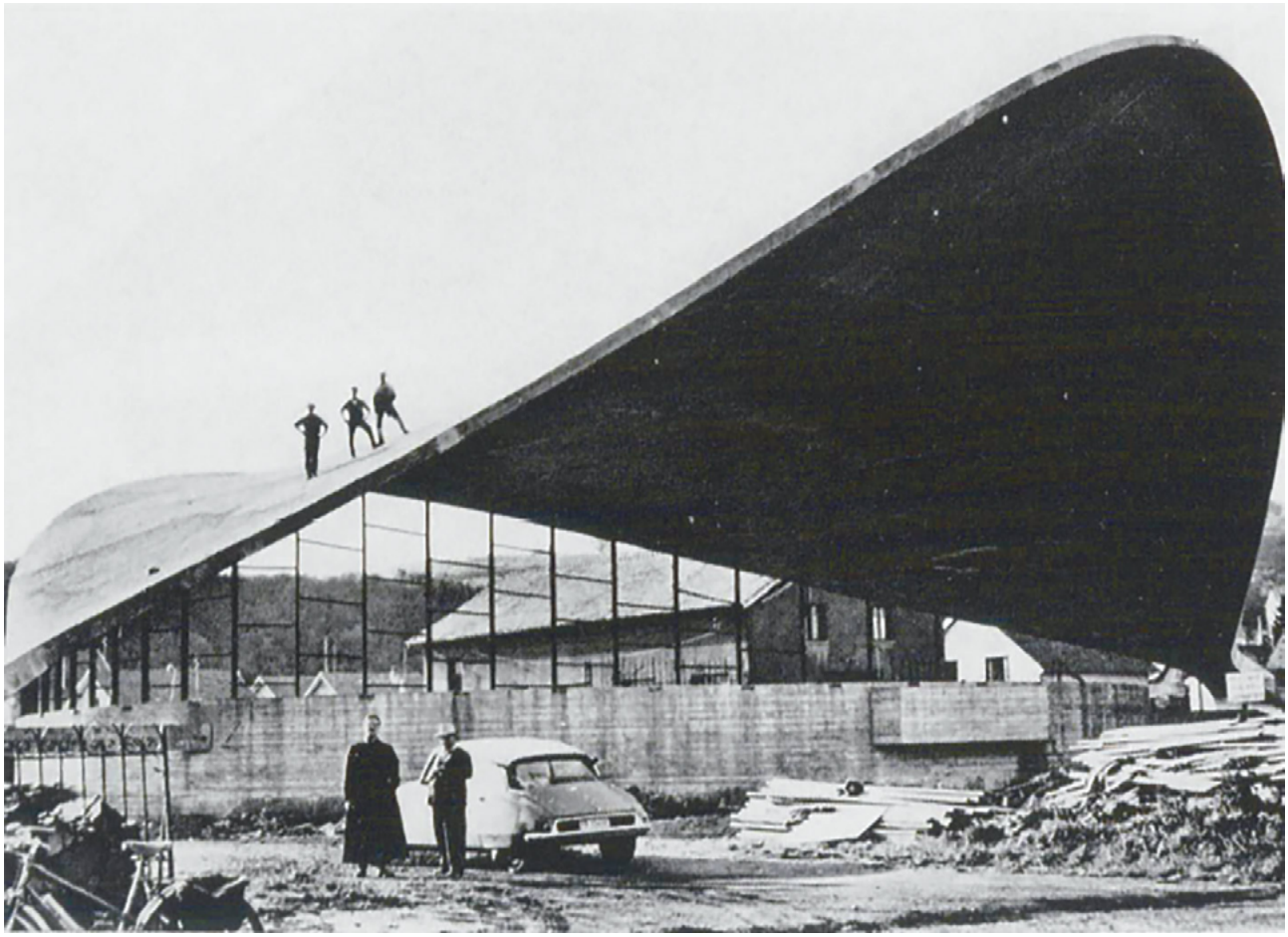
Throughout the visual and written narrative, architects unsurprisingly took central stage. Contractors and manufacturers were only marginally included, often portraying themselves in the advertisement pages of the periodicals,[82] by using their church project as a reference, while engineers barely got a voice, except for large-scale projects or when they authored an article in *La Technique des Travaux*. Perhaps most surprisingly is the relative absence of ecclesiastical authorities. Both high-ranking official such as the archbishop or the cardinals, who initiated post-war church building campaigns in Belgium, and local church fabrics as immediate clients played essential roles – not least in relation

80 Roland May, "Some introductory remarks on Architects, Engineers, Modes of Cooperation between them, and the Importance of the Interwar Period for All This", in *Architects and Engineers: Modes of Cooperation in the Interwar Period, 1919-1939* (Birkhäuser Verlag GmbH, 2022), 14-15.

81 However, the study on on-site and construction photographs and the collaboration with photographers deserves a more in-depth research. See: Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, *Photographs Objects Histories. On the Materiality of Images* (London: Routledge, 2004); Anthony Presland, "Picturing Construction, Constructing Identities: The Photographic Archive of John Laing & Son Ltd. London" (PhD. Diss., The Bartlett School of Architecture, 2023).

82 Examples: *Art d'Eglise*, no. 4 (October 1955); no. 3 (July 1957); *Art Chrétien* no. 21-22 (1961); no. 30 (1963); no. 33-34 (1964); no. 43-44 (1966); no. 6 (June 1966); no. 8 (August 1966); no. 4 (April 1967); no. 11 (November 1968); no. 7-8 (July-August 1969); *La Maison* no. 6 (June 1955); no. 7 (July 1961); no. 9 (September 1962); *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* no. 80 (October-November 1958); no. 88 (February 1960); no. 104 (October 1962); no. 108 (June 1963); no. 115 (June 1964); no. 134 (October 1967); *La Technique des Travaux*, no. 1-2 (January-February 1961); no. 7-8 (July-August 1968); *Techniques et Architecture*, vol. 18, no. 4 (August 1958); vol. 22, no. 2 (April 1962); vol. 24, no. 3 (April 1964); vol.29, no. 2 (June 1968). Sporadically they would elaborately be mentioned in an article. An example of this is: Le Donné, "Trois Prototypes", 19-34.

Fig. 18
A spread of the article of the Notre-Dame de Sart-en-Fange from Roger Bastin, with pictures taken by his daughter Christine Bastin (source: *Art d'Eglise,* no. 148, July 1968, 348-349).







to financial aspects, but also in the construction of these buildings and in the management of the overall process.

Many other stakeholders besides the architect, or even the less documented actors discussed above, played crucial roles, such as the community of churchgoers and the municipal authorities. A particularly overlooked group was the labourers who physically built these churches, crafting the appearance and therefore the image of the church. Only occasionally were they shown, typically in staged construction site photographs. Even in these instances, the focus often shifted to the scale of the building, with labourers appearing as mere background elements, inadvertently minimizing their contribution while highlighting the project's grandeur **[Fig. 19]**.

Construction photographs primarily emphasized innovative, daring techniques and modern materials, particularly concrete. Although concrete was initially distrusted in early 20th-century religious architecture, its use increased during the interwar period and actually became a hallmark of post-war church architecture.[83] The flexibility of reinforced concrete allowed for experimentation with form and spatiality, making it a favoured material for modernist architects.

In most periodicals, concrete was celebrated not just for its technical properties but also -or rather- for its aesthetic and symbolic qualities. It was depicted

Fig. 19
A photograph of the construction site of Sainte-Thérèse-du-Mont in Belfort, France (source: *La Technique des Travaux*, no. 5-6, May-June 1966, 142).

83 Romain Wibaut, "Hidden Innovation: Roof Frame Design and Construction in Parish Churches of Brussels and Charleroi 1830-1940" (PhD. Diss., KU Leuven – VUB, 2021), https://kuleuven.limo.libis.be/discovery/fulldisplay/lirias3442008/32KUL_KUL:Lirias.

and described in terms of its 'poetic' nature, imparting a sense of sacrality and serenity when exposed in the church interiors. Periodicals often framed concrete as a representation of modernity, honesty of materials, and the poetics of forms, thus granting it a symbolic role in the architectural discourse. *La Technique des Travaux*, more than the other periodicals, highlighted not only the visual aesthetic but also the engineering aspects. It published several technical articles on church buildings, paying particular attention to the materials. Technical explanations were 'reinforced' through detailed drawings and construction photographs **[Fig. 20],** emphasizing its versatility and innovative potential in shaping a new religious architecture. In an article on the basilica of Algiers Pierre Blanchard wrote: "Exceptional in its forms, which initially surprised before seducing or simply being admitted: exceptional in its structure, its material one could say, simple and raw concrete, nothing but concrete".[84] This portrayal illustrates how the material was both functional and symbolical, acquiring a form of agency within the church building campaign, embodying the values of modernism and progress.

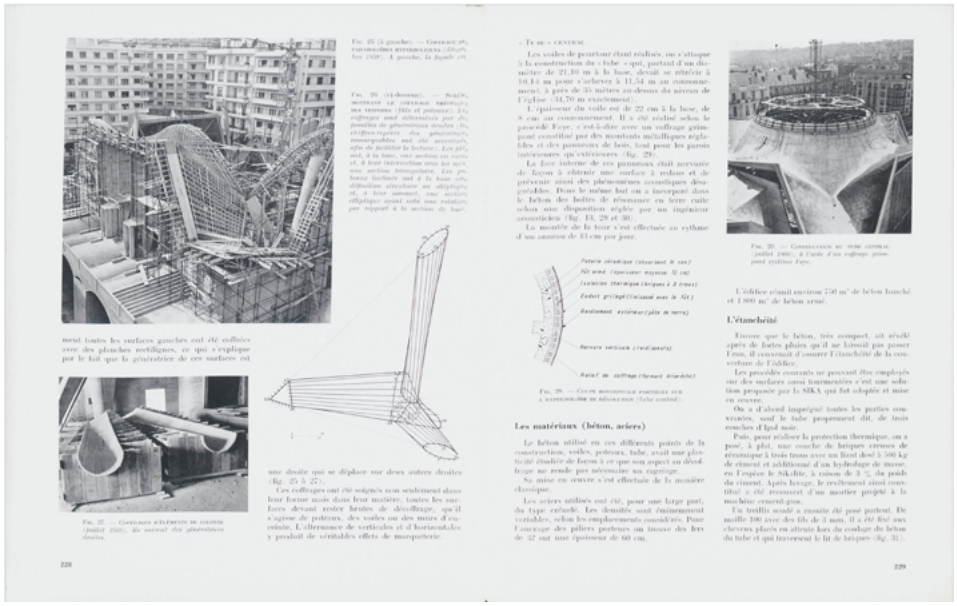
Remarkably, different associations with concrete – and by extension, other new building materials – were often depicted or voiced in *La Technique des Travaux,* particularly in the context of relatively small-scale or lesser-known projects. This raises questions about the hundreds of smaller parish churches erected during the same time period in Flanders that were not featured in the periodicals and whether they also contributed to the different meanings that concrete embodied. Exploratory field research revealed that these small-scale projects utilized a variety of innovative building materials and construction techniques, yet these developments remain underexposed in the broader discourse on post-war church architecture. The contributions of these lesser-known buildings – and the many people who helped to build them – deserve to be further investigated in current research.

Apart from *La Technique des Travaux*, which clearly stands as an exception, most periodicals presented similar discourses, despite their varied backgrounds. This shared narrative, and consequently the image of modern church architecture they portrayed, was largely influenced by the way these periodicals operated and interacted. They frequently drew inspiration from one another, featuring projects from their competitors, occasionally promoting each other's publications, and even reusing the same photographs. For example, in the article on Felix's Clarissenklooster in Ostend, both *La Maison* and *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* simply reused photographs taken by the team of *Art d'Eglise* **[Fig. 21-22]**.[85] Editors and writers in fact strongly relied on the circulation of articles and images to shape their content, due to constraints of time and budget. Beyond the reputation of the architect and the popularity of a particular project, these exchanges, although often intended to boost their own publications, were

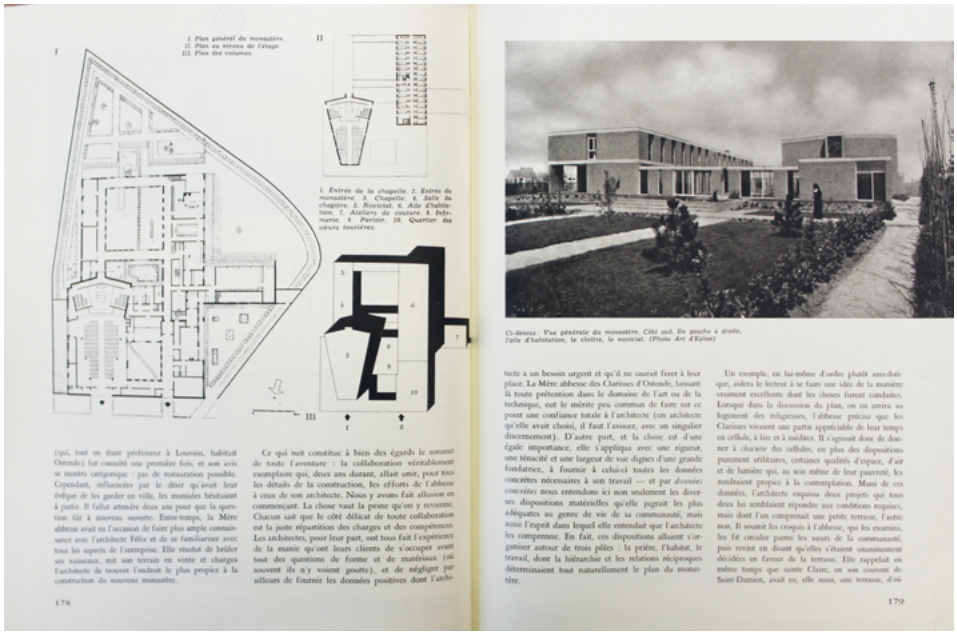
84 Blancard, "La Basilique du Sacré Cœur à Alger", 219-232.

85 Debuyst, "Le monastère des Clarisses d'Ostende", 177-195; "Le monastère des Clarisses d'Ostende", *La Maison*, no. 5 (May 1960) : 137-142; "Monastère des Clarisses d'Ostende, Belgique", 62-65.

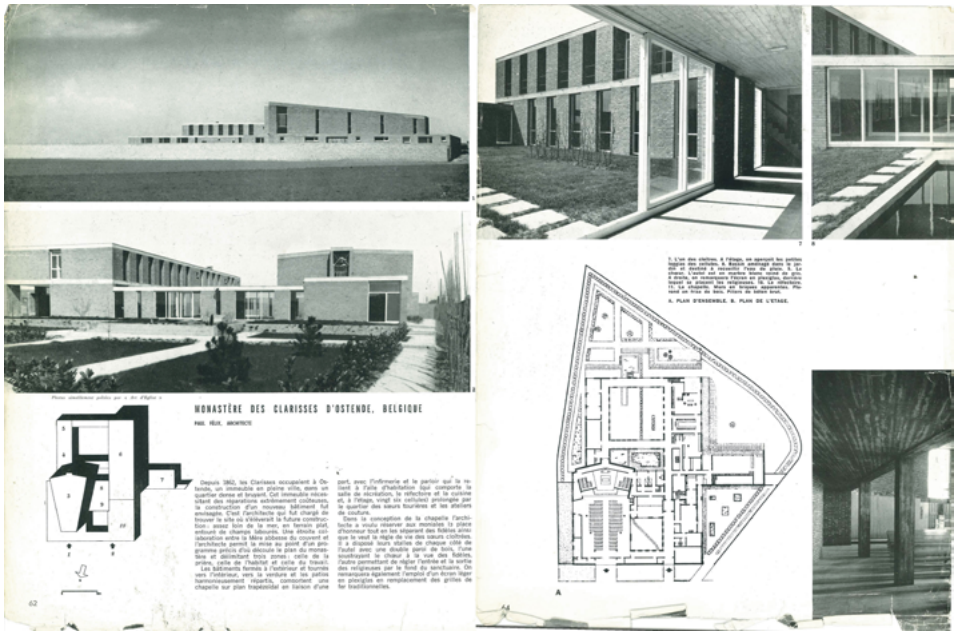
Fig. 23
Cover of the Notre-Dame de Stockel (source: *La Technique des Travaux*, no. 7-8, July-August 1968, cover).



20



21



22

Fig. 20
A spread of the article on the basilica of Algiers (source: *La Technique des Travaux*, no. 7-8, July-August 1962, 228-229).

Fig. 21
ARticle on the Clarrisenklooster (source: *Art d'Eglise*, no. 107, April 1959, 178-179).

Fig. 22
Article on the Clarrisenklooster (source: *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 96, June 1961, 62-63.

crucial in shaping the image of modern church architecture. This was not just a national phenomenon, but also an international tendency, evident in the writings of protagonists like Pichard and Debuyst.




23

## Conclusion

The deconstruction of the image of post-war churches through these periodicals reveals that their modern identity was built by a large network of contributors, as well as the interrelationships and operations of the publications themselves. Although not all contributors involved are fully acknowledged, a close-reading of what is published, rather than what is omitted, provides insights into the motives of both the contributors and the periodicals.

Firstly, church buildings were often used by key actors involved to build their portfolios. This was primarily the case for architects but also, to a lesser extent, for journal editors, ecclesiastical authorities, engineers, contractors, and manufacturers who leveraged these buildings to boost their business or building campaign. Secondly, churches were featured to fuel the ongoing discourse around religious architecture, providing a broader, often international backdrop against which local developments and endeavours were situated. Only rarely did the publications focus solely on the individual buildings themselves [Fig. 23]. Details on how these churches were designed and constructed were seldomly GIVEN. While some articles in *La Technique des Travaux* dissected the construction process, other periodicals barely touched on these aspects. Additionally, the content across various periodicals was often similar. In some cases, particularly for larger churches designed by well-known architects, slightly different perspectives were provided. By piecing together information from various types of publications in different periodicals, one can at least gain a glimpse – or, in the best cases, a more in-depth understanding – of the various actors, materials, and the construction processes involved. As such, the periodicals documented the image of the modern church rather than the churches themselves.

Acknowledgements: This paper stems from the joint PhD project 'Meaning and Material', conducted by Chiara Kuijpers and Femke Van der Meulen, supervised by Sven Sterken and Stephanie Van de Voorde. This PhD is set up between the KU Leuven and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and is funded by the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO).

## Bibliography


Aron, Jacques. *La Cambre et L'architecture: Un Regard Sur Le Bauhaus Belge.* Bruxelles: Mardaga, 1982.

Bekaert, Geert. *In een of ander huis. Kerkenbouw op een keerpunt.* Tielt: Lannoo, 1967.

Bekaert, Geert. "Het sakrale is het alledaagse", *La Maison*, no. 11 (November 1968): 444-449.

Bekaert, Geert. "Eglises de Marc Dessauvage", *La Maison*, no. 12 (December 1968): 474-479.

Bekaert, Geert, Ronny De Meyer, and Paul Felix. *Paul Felix: architectuur, 1913-1981.* Tielt: Lannoo, 1981.

Blanchard, Pierre. "La Basilique du Sacré-Cœur à Alger", *La Technique des Travaux*, no. 7-8 (July 1962): 218-232.

Böröcz, Zsuzsanna. "A Remarkable Continuity between 1930s Ideas and Reconstruction after the Second World War." In *Living with History, 1914-1964: Rebuilding Europe After the First and Second World Wars and the Role of Heritage Preservation*, edited by Nicholas Bullock, and Luc Verpoest, 175-187. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2021.

Brusco Lucas, and Martial Résibois. "Lucien Kroll", *CLARA*, no. 5 (2018): 188-217.

"Concours pour l'Edification d'une Basilique à Alger", L'*Architecture d'Aujourd'hui,* no. 64 (February 1956): 11-17.

"Débat sur les Eglises dans les cites Nouvelles", *Art Chrétien*, no. 16 (1959): 31-32.

Debuyst, Frédéric. "Le monastère des Clarisses d'Ostende", *Art d'Eglise*, no. 107 (April 1959): 177-195.

Debuyst, Frédéric. "L'architecte Alexandre von Branca", *Art d'Eglise*, no. 114 (January 1961): 1-20.

Debuyst, Frédéric. "L'art religieux moderne en Belgique. À propos de quelques expositions recentes", *Art d'Eglise,* no. 120 (July 1962): 195-197.

Debuyst, Fréderic. *Architecture moderne et célébration chrétienne.* Bruges: Biblica, 1966.

Debuyst, Frédéric. "Églises nouvelles après la concile-I", *Art d'Eglise*, no. 134 (January 1966): 273-274.

Depuydt, Kaj-Wolf. "Assessing glulam roof structures. A historical and typological analysis of post-war church roofs", Master thesis. Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 2023.

Dessauvage, Marc. "Cinq réalisations de Marc Dessauvage", *Art d'Eglise*, no. 134 (January 1966): 275-297.

Devos, Rika, Mil De Kooning, and Geert Bekaert. *Moderne Architectuur Op Expo 58: Voor Een Humaner Wereld.* Brussel: Mercatorfonds, 2006.

"Débat sur les Eglises dans les cites Nouvelles", *Art Chrétien*, no. 16 (1959): 31-32.

Dubois, Marc. "Architectuurtijdschriften – een fragmentair beeld." In *De beschikbare ruimte: reflecties over bouwen*, edited by Pieter Uyttenhove. Tielt: Drukkerij-Uitgeverij Lannoo, 1990, 131-141.

Dubois, Marc. "Primal Image of all Architecture. Churches in Belgium and the Netherlands after 1950." In *Europäischer Kirchenbau 1950-2000*, edited by Wolfgang Jean Stock. München: Pretsel Verlag, 2002, 112-127.

Edwards, Elizabeth and Janice Hart. *Photographs Objects Histories. On the Materiality of Images*. London: Routledge, 2004.

"Eglise a Lokeren", *La Maison*, no. 7 (July 1955): 195-196.

"Église Notre-Dame de Sart-en Fagne", *Art d'Eglise,* no. 148 (July 1968): 346-352. "Eglise Saint-Croix à Willebroek (Dessauvage)", *La Maison*, no. 12 (December 1968): 478.

"Eglise Saint-Joseph à Vosselaar (Dessauvage)", *La Maison*, no. 12 (December 1968): 477.

Fallani, Giovanni. "Art et liturgie dans l'église", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 71 (April 1957): 30-31.

Feltin, Cardinal. "Les Chantiers du Cardinal du Paris,» *Art Chrétien*, no. 17 (1960): 38.

Flouquet, Piere-Louis. "Roger Bastin. Architecture et Poésie", *La Maison*, no. 8 (August 1966): 232.

Gillet, Guillaume. "Royan - reconstruction de l'église Notre-Dame", *Technique et Architecture 15*, no. 2 (September 1955): 100-102.

Herman, Frank, and Terenja Van Dijk, eds. *Kortrijkse Kunstwerkstede Gebroeders De Coene: 80 Jaar Ambacht En Industrie: Meubelen, Interieurs, Architectuur.* Kortrijk: Groeninghe, 2006.

Izoard, Dominique, and Jean Claude Arati, "La lumière au couvent de la Tourette", *Technique et Architecture 29*, no. 4 (August 1968): 92-95.

Jannière, Hélène, Alexis Sornin, and France Vanlaethem, *Revues d'architecture dans les années 1960 et 1970: Fragments d'histoire événementielle, intellectuelle, matérielle / Architectural Periodicals in the 1960s and 1970s*: *Towards a Factual, Intellectual and Material History*. Montréal: CCA, IRHA. 2009.

Kroll, Lucien. "Monastère de Gihindamuyaga (Rwanda) salle de réunion-chapelle", *La Maison*, no. 12 (December 1968): 496-497.

Kroll, Lucien. "Proposition pour organiser une église rwandaise", *La Maison*, no. 12 (December 1968): 494-495.

Kroll, Lucien. "Chapelle à Linkebeek (1963)", *Art d'Eglise*, no. 152 (July 1970): 78-79.

"La Revue: l'Histoire d'AA", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui,* 17 March 2017.

Lanotte, André. "Contribution à la recherche d'un plan d'église", *Art d'Eglise*, no. 131 (April 1965) : 189-191.

Lanotte, André. "Eglise de Villers/Lesse", *La Maison,* no. 8 (August 1966) : 255.

Lanotte, André. "Chapelle du Pensionnat des Soeurs de Marie a Jambes", *La Maison,* no. 8 (August 1966) : 259.

Lanotte, André. "Eglises de Roger Bastin", *La Maison*, no. 11 (November 1968) : 458-465.

Lanotte, André. "Beauraing. Eglise de pèlerinage", *La Maison,* no. 11 (November 1968): 461-462.

Lanotte, André. "Gênes (Hodister). Chapelle St-Isidore", *La Maison,* no. 11 (November 1968): 462-463.

Lanotte, André, and Marthe Blanpain, eds. *Roger Bastin Architecte 1913-1986.* Sprimont: Mardaga, 2001.

"Le Bois, La Nature et l'Homme: extrait de l'Allucation de l'Architecte Renaat Braem", *La Maison* no. 7 (July 1955): 190-220.

"Le concours d'architecture 'Pro Arte Christiana'", *Art d'Eglise,* no. 111 (April 1960): 315-322.

"Le Concours National d'Architecture: organisé par le Bureau National de Documentation sur le Bois", *La Maison*, no. 6 (June 1955): 183.

Le Donné, André. "Le role de la technique dans l'oeuvre de l'architecture", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 81 (December1958-January 1959): 53-55.

Le Donné, André. "Trois Prototypes", *Art Chrétien,* no. 12 (1958): 19-34.

"Le monastère des Clarisses d'Ostende", *La Maison*, no. 5 (May 1960): 137-142.

"Les Chantiers de Lyon", *Art Chrétien*, no. 17 (1960): 44-46.

"Lourdes 1959", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 81 (December 1958-1959): 46-57.

Lökçe, Mediha. "Divine Shelters, Temporal Sorrows. Exploring a Post-War Concrete Construction Project through Its Different Phases and Collaborations." Master thesis. Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 2023.

May, Roland. "Some introductory remarks on Architects, Engineers, Modes of Cooperation between Them, and the Importance of the Interwar Period for All This." In *Architects and Engineers: Modes of Cooperation in the Interwar Period, 1919-1939,* edited by Roland May. Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag GmbH, 2022, 14-15.

"Monastère des Clarisses d'Ostende, Belgique", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 96 (June 1961): 62-65.

Morel, Anne-Françoise, and Stephanie Van de Voorde. "Rethinking the Twentieth-Century Catholic Church in Belgium: The Inter-Relationship between Liturgy and Architecture." *Architectural History*, no. 55 (2012): 269-297.

Novgorodsky, Léonide. "L'église Notre-Dame de Stockel", *La Technique des Travaux*, no. 7-8 (July 1968): 203-209.

"Orsay (Seine-et-Oise) le monastère la Clarté-Dieu,» *Technique et Architecture*, vol. 16, no. 3 (September 1956): 106-111.

Pichard, Joseph. "Actualités", *Art Chretien*, no. 14-15 (1959): 17-21.

Pichard, Joseph. "Enquête sur le caractère à donner aux nouvelles églises", *Art Chrétien*, no. 17 (1960): 24-26.

Pichard, Joseph. "La Basilique Sacré Cœur à Alger", *Art Chrétien*, no. 18 (1960): 30-40.

Pichard, Joseph. "Les églises d'aujourd'hui", *Art Chrétien,* no. 1 (January 1955): 7-12.

Pichard, Joseph. "Les églises-témoins", *La Maison*, no. 9 (September 1958): 323-325.

Pichard, Joseph. "Les nouvelles églises de la région Parisienne,» *Art d'Eglise*, no. 115 (April 1961): 46-57.

Pichard, Joseph. "Les nouvelles églises en France", *Art d'Eglise*, no. 2 (1957): 145-149.

Pinsard, Pierre. "Naissance et évolution d'un projet", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 81 (December 1958 – January 1959): 48-52.

Presland, Anthony. "Picturing Construction, Constructing Identities: The Photographic Archive of John Laing & Son Ltd. London." PhD. Diss., The Bartlett School of Architecture, 2023.

"Renaissance Du Bois: interview de l'architecture Victor Bourgeois", *La Maison*, no. 7 (July 1955): 190.

Renard, Charles Alexander. "Des églises pour le règne de dieu", *Art Chrétien*, no. 33-34 (1964): 14-15.

Rusak, Maryia. "Wooden churches, managers, and Fulbright scholars: Glued laminated timber in the 1950s in Norway." In *History of Construction Cultures*, vol. 2, Proceedings of the 7th International Congress On Construction History (7ICCH 2021), July 12-16, 2021, edited by João Mascarenhas-Mateus and Ana Paula Pires, Lisbon: CRC Press, 2021, 735-742.

Sarger, René. "Cathédrale d'ed", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 108 (June 1963): 64-65.

Sterken, Sven. "A House for God or a Home for His People? The Domus Dei Church Building Action in the Belgian Archbishopric." *Architectural History*, no. 56 (January 2013): 401-402.

Sterken, Sven, and Eva Weyns, eds. *Territories of Faith. Religion, Urban Planning and Demographic Change in Post-War Europe*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022.

Van de Voorde, Stephanie, and Ronny De Meyer. "Naoorlogse Kerkbouw in België. Architecturale En Constructieve Analyse van Het Werk van Adolf Nivelle." In *Kerken Bouwen Langs Maas En Rijn Na 1945*, edited by Antoine Jacobs, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2019, 245-263.

Van de Voorde, Stephanie. "Ingenieurs, architecten en aannemers op de drempel van een nieuwe tijd (1850-1890)." Course handout for Architectuur – en Constructiegeschiedenis 19de en 20ste eeuw, received at Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussel, October 15, 2023.

Van der Laan, Hans. "Déterminations naturelle sou surnaturelles pour LA FORME DE L'ÉGLISE", *Art d'Eglise*, no. 1 (January 1955): 1-4.

Van der Perre, Dirk, ed. *Op de grens van twee werelden. Beeld van het architectuuronderwijs aan het Sint-Lucasinstituut te Gent in de periode 1919-1965/1974*. Wetteren: drukkerij Eramus nv, 2003.

Van Loo, Anne, ed. *Repertorium van de architectuur in België van 1830 tot heden.* Antwerpen: Mercatorfonds, 2003.

Watelet, Grégoire. "Transformations à l'église abbatiale", *Art d'Eglise*, no. 108 (July 1959): 209-213.

Watelet, Grégoire. "Concours d'architecture pour le monastère de Wavreumont", *Art d'Eglise*, no. 121 (October 1962): 230-241.

Wibaut, Romain. "Hidden Innovation: Roof Frame Design and Construction in Parish Churches of Brussels and Charleroi 1830 – 1940." PhD Diss., KU Leuven – VUB, 2021.

Winniger, Paul. "La construction d'églises bon marché dans les nouveaux quartiers et banlieues. Un appel aux cures, architectes et entrepreneurs", *Art Chrétien*, no. 8 (1957): 5-6.

Winninger, Paul. "Comment se pose le problème des églises à construire", *Art Chrétien*, no. 9 (1958): 9-15.

## Periodicals

*Architecture: revue bimestrielle d'architecture et d'urbanisme*. Brussels: Thirion, 1952 (Consultation: Université libre de Bruxelles).

*Art Chrétien: Revue Française des Chantiers d'église.* Paris, 1955 (Consultation: Bibliothèque Diocésiane de Metz, via https://www.calameo.com/bibliotheque-diocesaine-metz/books/00655283305c87313ebd8).

*Art d'Eglise.* Bruges: Monastère de Saint André, 1950 (Consultation: Royal Library of Belgium).

*L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui.* Paris, 1930 (Consultation: KU Leuven Libraries 2Bergen, campus Sint-Lucas Brussel).

*La Maison: revue mensuelle d'architecture, de décoration et d'art ménager.* Brussels: Art et Technique, 1945 (Consultation: [C3-595 c], Collectie Stad Antwerpen, Erfgoedbibliotheek Hendrik Conscience).

*La Technique des Travaux.* Liège: Technique des Travaux, 1925 (Consultation: [C4-301 g], Collectie Stad Antwerpen, Erfgoedbibliotheek Hendrik Conscience).

*Techniques et Architecture.* Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 1941 (Consultation: Royal Library of Belgium).

**Laura Lazzaroni**

# Sacred Architecture in Italian Magazines, 1950-1970

ARTICLE

*Italian Magazines, Modern Churches, Domus, Arte Cristiana, Fede e Arte*

**/Abstract**

**The period between 1950 and 1970 in Italy was marked by a strong debate around the church building and its spatial arrangement; the renewed need for celebration, strongly felt in those years and flowing into the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, was reflected in the design research of architects spanning between more conservative realisations and modern forms. The existing literature on the period is wide, but it consists mostly of a posteriori studies. This work, on the other hand, tackles the subject in medias res, analysing what was published in the magazines in that precise moment in history, looking at the events first hand. Five art and architecture magazines were analysed, the most significant and authoritative ones on these topics: Domus and Arte Cristiana – which still – cover the entire historical period; overlapping on them for more limited periods are Fede e Arte (magazine of the Pontifical Central Commission for Sacred Art in Italy, 1953-1967), Chiesa e Quartiere (Diocese of Bologna, 1955-1968), Nuove chiese (Diocese of Milan, 1964-1968).**

**A specific focus is devoted to the Diocese of Milan, which under Montini's leadership became the strategic point and driving force behind an unparalleled growth in the construction of new churches in Italy, to the point of being described as 'the Archbishop's workshop'.**

**The number of churches presented in the journals of this twenty-years span is remarkable, roughly 200 buildings. The picture that emerges is as varied as ever because each magazine chooses what to publish and how to present it; from the whole, the differences, the stances and the editorial lines emerge strongly; it's a mosaic that reflects the liveliness of theoretical and practical thought in the society of the time.**

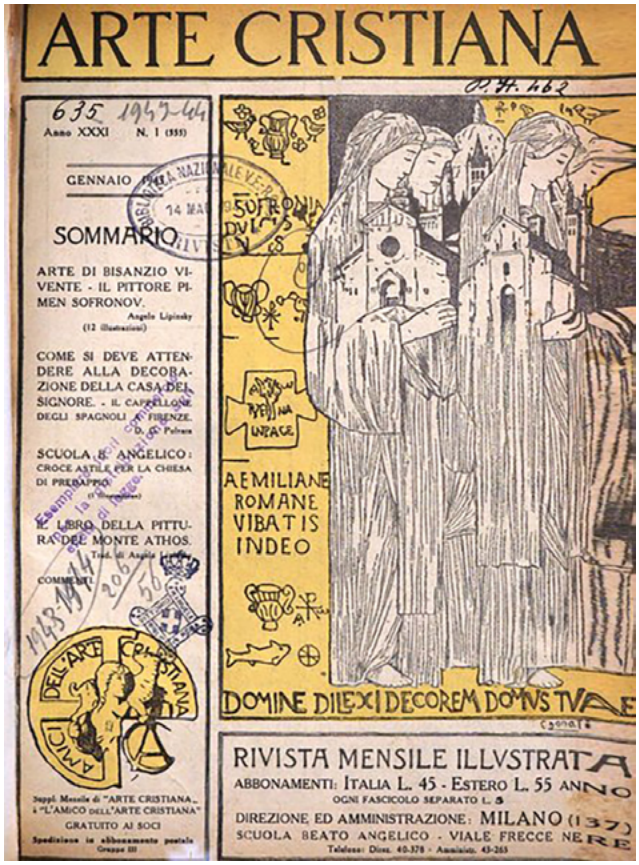
**/Author**

**Laura Lazzaroni**
**Office for Cultural Heritage and Sacred Art of the Diocese of Milan**
**llazzaroni@diocesi.milano.it**

Architect and specialist in Monument Restoration, she began collaborating in 2008 with the Office for Cultural Heritage and Sacred Art of the Diocese of Milan, becoming its employee in 2017. In 2021 she obtained the diploma of the advanced training course in "Architecture, Arts and Liturgy" at the Pontifical Institute of Sant' Anselmo in Rome. Since October 2021 she has been the Delegate of the diocesan Ordinary for relations with the Superintendence and the Diocesan Delegate for Church Buildings for the CEI. Since October 2022 she has been a member of the Diocesan Commission on Sacred Art and Cultural Heritage. As part of diocesan activities, she participates in the scientific secretariat of conferences and exhibitions and holds lectures in the field of ecclesiastical cultural heritage at the invitation of colleagues and university professors.

https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/20331
Copyright © 2024 Laura Lazzaroni




1 2

The period between the end of the Second World War and the end of the Sixties in Italy was characterised by an unparalleled constructive effort aimed at building new churches throughout the peninsula. This happened for several reasons, such as the need to rebuild the cities after the war and to give churches to the inhabitants of the new neighborhoods that were being built.

From an economic point of view, favourable elements are the state funding allocated by the Law of 1952 (Law 18.XII.1952, n. 2522) for the construction of new places of worship and the massive fundraising put in place by the individual dioceses, Milan in the first place, where the contribution of the community guarantees significant resources.

On the theoretical level, too, there is a new sensitivity and renewed attention to the sacred building; the experiences of the Liturgical Movement become the patrimony of the entire ecclesial community with the acts of the Council. The debate around the church building and its spatial layout was very strong in those years; the renewed needs of the celebration, dictated by the reform of the Second Vatican Council, are reflected in the design research, with more conservative realizations and openness of forms to modern complexity.

The debate takes place and can be analysed on different levels; the highest level, the guide, is that of the numerous official texts of the Holy See of those years. It is accompanied by the copious activity of the Pontifical Commission for Sacred Art in Italy and that of the dioceses that organise weeks of study on sacred art, congresses, exhibitions or participate through their representatives in conferences organised by civil society. The architects contribute their theoret-

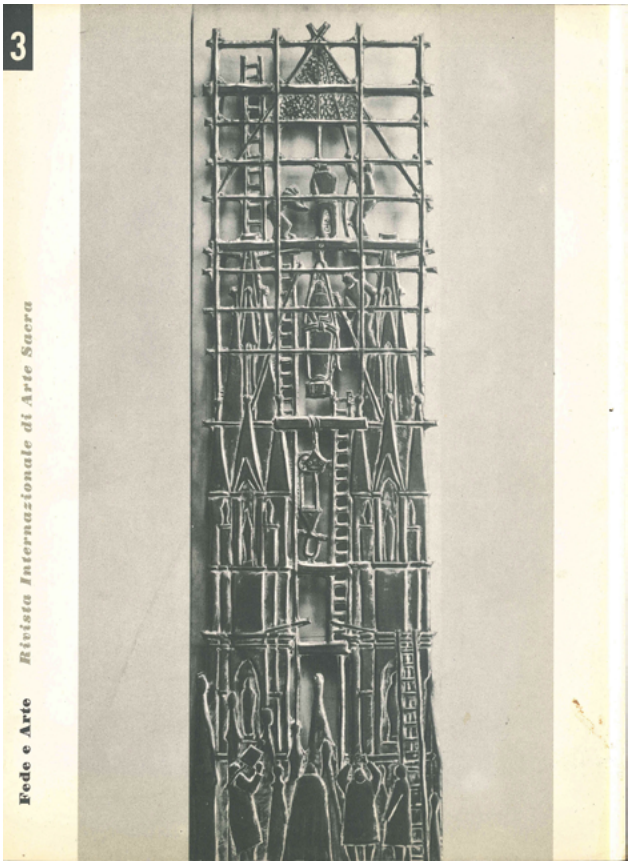
Fig. 1
*Domus*, n. 413, 1964, cover (*Courtesy of Archivio Domus – Editoriale Domus S.p.A.*).

Fig. 2
Cover of *Arte Cristiana*, 1943.

ical thinking with extensive lectures and a large participation in the events organised by the structure of the Church. The theoretical level is flanked by design practice, as well documented by the numerous realizations throughout Italy in those years.

The existing literature on the period is vast and varied, with studies and general theoretical frameworks, specific surveys on a territorial scale, monographs on some buildings or on individual designers, reviews of realizations with descriptive and quantitative data.

However, it is possible to address the theme of sacred architecture and the theoretical/liturgical thought that guides it by analysing a specific type of material, namely the sector magazines of the time[1]; they are a direct and authoritative historical sources to analyse the ferments of those years. They are a precious material, little explored and rich in information because they deal with all the themes of the research of those years, live the events live and narrate them with a dynamism that is typical of periodical publications.




3

The choice of magazines to work on is almost "obligatory" by their authoritativeness and proximity to the issues in question. Remaining in the field of architecture and art, there are two publications that cover the entire period and that still stand out today for the research they carry out: *Domus* (Fig. 1) and *Arte Cristiana* (Fig. 2).

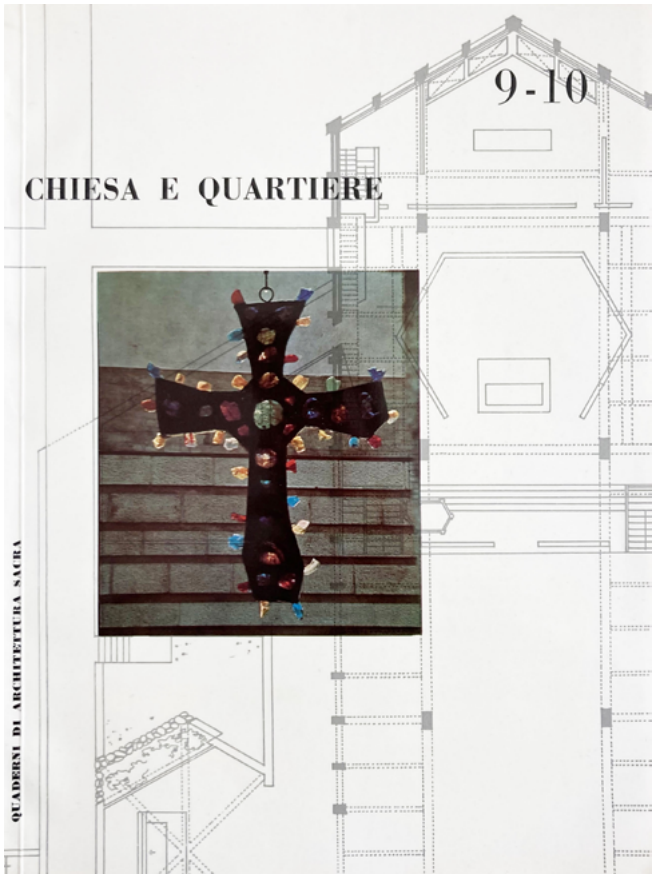
*Domus*, founded by Father Giovanni Semeria (1876-1931) in 1928 and then acquired in 1929 by publisher Giovanni Mazzocchi, became a prestigious and authoritative magazine of architecture, art and design thanks to the curious and attentive gaze of the architect Gio Ponti (1891-1979), for years its director; the second, founded by Monsignor Celso Costantini (1876-1958), was later acquired by Monsignor Giuseppe Polvara (1884-1950), founder of the Beato Angelico School, precisely as a tool for storytelling and debate on art for the liturgy.

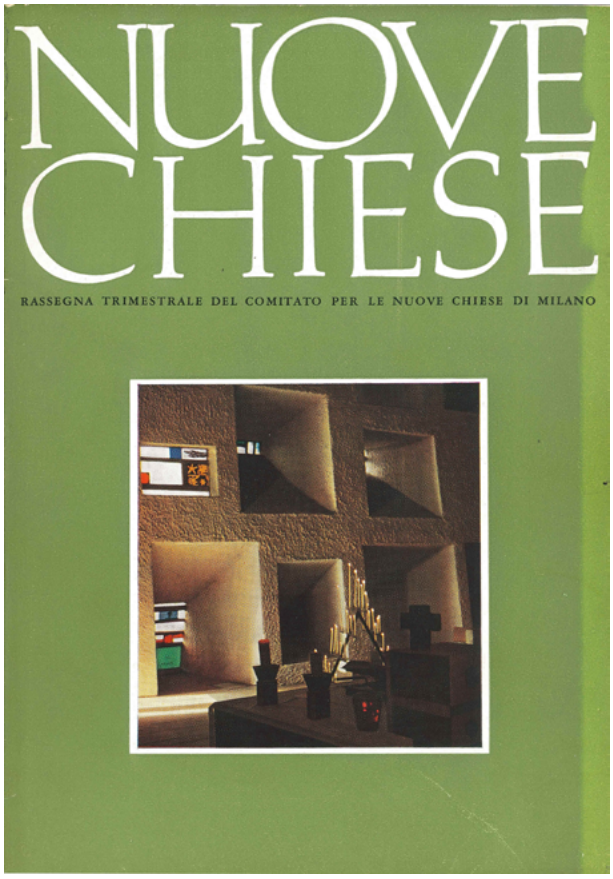
This temporally continuous documentation is superimposed by equally interesting and very specific publications on architecture and sacred art, whose publication is, however, limited to more restricted periods. They are *Fede e Arte* (Fig. 3), the journal of the Pontifical Central Commission for Sacred Art in Italy, published between 1953 and 1967; *Chiesa e Quartiere* (Fig. 4), closely linked to the experience of Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro in Bologna and published between 1955 and 1968; *Nuove chiese* (Fig. 5), published by the Diocese of Milan between 1964 and 1969, with a more marked territorial slant.

These five journals record all the different levels of the debate: they pay atten-

1 This article is the result of a study I carried out for the thesis of the advanced training course in "Architecture, Arts and Liturgy", which I defended in June 2021 at the Pontifical Institute Sant'Anselmo in Rome.
The quotations or text excerpts originally in Italian have been translated into English by the author of the article.

Fig. 3
Cover of *Fede e Arte* no. 3, 1962.




4 5

tion to the official documents and their implications from a liturgical and theoretical point of view with in-depth studies that become real essays and investigate the architectures created, presenting and explaining them to their respective readers. Each publication has its own peculiarities and editorial line, and reading them in sync allows you to immerse yourself in the debate and restore the complexity of that historical moment fifty years later.

The path of research of those years is a parable, it grows until the Council, stabilises and then ideally decreases, until it is exhausted; this took place substantially at the end of the Sixties, both from a historical and editorial point of view, with the closure of three of the five magazines considered.

In this study, the more theoretical and documentary articles of the conferences and exhibitions will be omitted, focusing instead on the projects presented.

Finally, a special look will be given to what the magazines write about the debate and the initiatives that were carried out in the Diocese of Milan under the impetus of Cardinal Montini, a charismatic figure who was very active on these issues, to the point of being referred to as the "Archbishop's construction site" by *Fede e Arte*.

## Arte Cristiana (1950-1970)

*Arte Cristiana* was founded in 1913 by Monsignor Celso Costantini as part of the Association of Friends of Arte Cristiana. In 1919 Don Giuseppe Polvara,

Fig. 4
Cover of *Chiesa e Quartiere* no. 9-10, 1959.

Fig. 5
Cover of *Nuove Chiese* no. 1 special issue, 1967.

architect and artist, began his collaboration in the editorial office[2], who became director in 1921 and later also a financier; in the same year he also founded the Beato Angelico School of Sacred Art.

Monsignor Polvara combines critical reflections on art and architecture with design and painting practice, exercised in the first person. His thought also emerges from the works of his students at the School and from those of the members of the Beato Angelico Religious Family, established a few years after the School to pursue an even more complete ideal of common life based on service to the liturgy through art. The abundance of works produced by the Beato Angelico Family and the students of the School finds ample echo in the pages of *Arte Cristiana*, which promotes their achievements. In general, *Arte Cristiana* publishes sacred architectures built on the Italian territory.

The first churches published immediately after the war focus on paintings, read in relation to the architecture and the perception of the faithful. Usually there is a critical analysis of the whole, in which the strengths and weaknesses of the project are emphasised. This way of narrating becomes the stylistic code of *Arte Cristiana*, characterised by a strong polarization and assertiveness of the comments. *Arte Cristiana* is interested in the new churches designed with the funding of the[3] 1952 Law; it does so, however, starting from very harsh considerations on a general crisis of contemporary art and architecture. In this context, don Valerio Vigorelli[4] sees the State Law, which will lead to the construction of about three hundred churches, as a unique possibility to give a precise direction to contemporary sacred art; at the same time, he sees as a major limitation the necessary approval by the Pontifical Commission for Sacred Art of the projects: he thinks that this risks "provoking a fictitious art made up of compromises, a commanded art" that will lead to a general flattening, to a renunciation of creation. These initial positions are followed by some reviews on specific territories, such as churches built by the Civil Engineers in the Diocese of Bologna[5] or those in the Diocese of Alba[6] **(Fig. 6)**. The other articles from the 1950s are only about fifteen, mostly on buildings near Milan[7], some of which were directly made by Beato Angelico School.

From a general point of view, it can certainly be said that the presentations of the projects on *Arte Cristiana* are quite similar to each other in terms of narrative structure, with technical-descriptive texts by the designers (or by the author of

---

2 For a general profile of Monsignor Polvara, please refer to: "Mons. Giuseppe Polvara." *Arte Cristiana,* no. 391 (1950), out of text; "Alla memoria di monsignor architetto Giuseppe Polvara." Arte Cristiana*,* no. 392, (1950); Redazione, "Architetto Mons. Giuseppe Polvara", *Arte Cristiana,* no. 572 (1970): 33-34; Valerio Vigorelli, "Un maestro dell'architettura sacra. Mons. Giuseppe Polvara", *Arte Cristiana,* no. 554 (1968): 47-79.

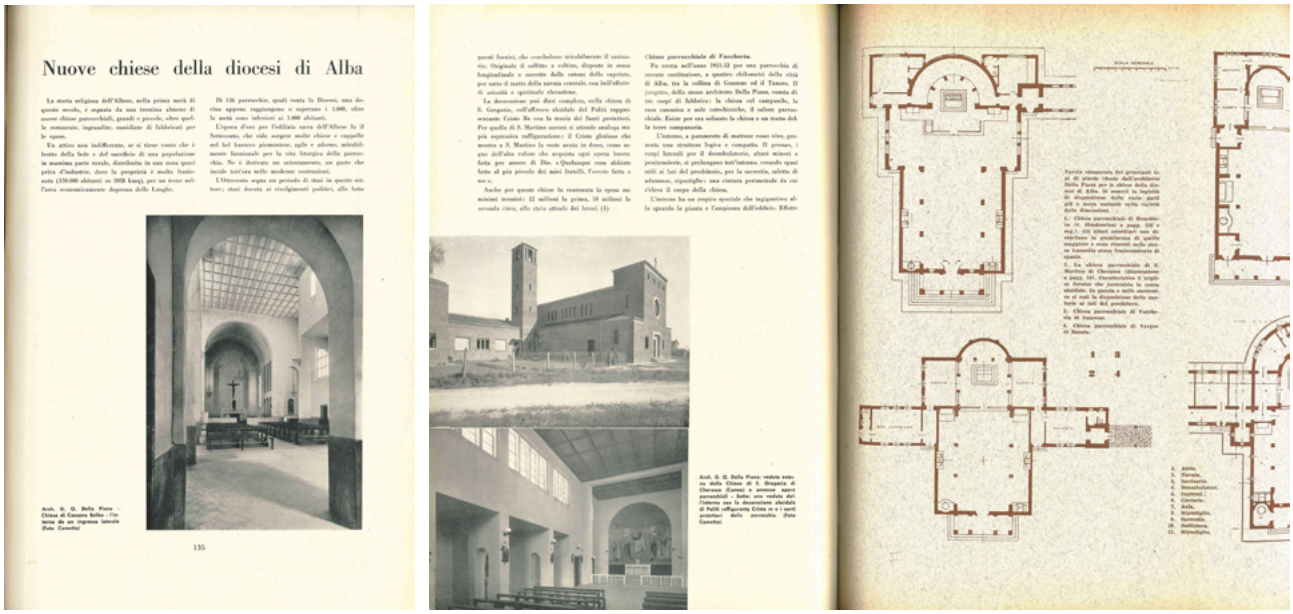
3 Law no. 2522 of 18 December 1952. State participation in the construction of new churches. (OJ General Series No. 5 of 08-01-1953).

4 Valerio Vigorelli, "Trecento chiese in otto anni (immane compito d'una Commissione)", *Arte Cristiana,* no. 413 (1953): 12-18.

5 Venturino Alce, "Le nuove chiese della diocesi di Bologna", *Arte Cristiana,* no. 417 (1953): 121-129.

6 Angelo Stella, "Nuove chiese della Diocesi di Alba." *Arte Cristiana,* no. 427 (1954): 135-143; Giovanni O. Della Piana, "Un decennio di esperienze nell'architettura sacra moderna." *Arte Cristiana,* no. 427 (1954): 144-146.

7 Two churches in Ferrara, then Bergamo, Milan, San Felice Circeo (LT), Cuggiono (MI), Milan, Solarolo (RA), two Milanese chapels, Lissone (MB), Padua, Pero (MI), Cinisello Balsamo (MI), Calolziocorte (BG), Turin and Alba (CN).




6a 6b

the article) which are flanked by captions with comments by the editorial staff; in them the judgment on the building is highlighted in a few lines, not always aligned with what the author wrote.

There are sporadic articles on foreign works; in some cases these are works in line with the School's thinking, such as the Italian projects for the new Basilica of the Incarnation in Nazareth[8]; or disruptive works on the international scene, on which *Arte Cristiana* cannot fail to express its clear position: the Chapel of the Dominican nuns of Vence painted by Henri Matisse and the church of Ronchamp by Le Corbusier. Matisse's Chapel was presented both in 1952, in a much more extensive article[9] on sacred art and the iconography of the saints, and in 1954 in a monographic text by Don Valerio Vigorelli[10], sent to Vence to observe the work. In 1952 the anonymous editor of *Arte Cristiana* wrote a very harsh comment on the abstract painting in the chapel; Vigorelli's comment is much more articulate and complete: he recognises in the place a sense of religious suggestion that is not found in all spaces, destroyed by the tourism that invades the chapel. His criticism, however, is related to the fact that "the chapel of Vence is not a Christian church"[11]; Vigorelli uses this strong expression, and the motivation is not "because of that confused Way of the Cross, for that Madonna without a face, things that are reprehensible, but perhaps understandable although not justifiable," but because the interior space should be "subordinated to the altar of sacrifice" and here, instead, the altar seems "a knick-knack, temporary, placed there simply to enhance, to emphasise the subordinating lines of the architectural space."[12]

8 Valerio Vigorelli, "Una basilica per il luogo più sacro del mondo"m *Arte Cristiana,* no. 442 (1956): 9-18.

9 Redactor, "Arte sacra e culto dei Santi", *Arte Cristiana*, no. 411 (1952): 149-155.

10 Valerio Vigorelli, "La lezione di Vence", *Arte Cristiana*, no. 424 (1954): 33-38.

11 Vigorelli, "La lezione di Vence", 35.

12 Vigorelli, "La lezione di Vence", 35.

Fig. 6a and Fig. 6b
Pages from Angelo Stella, "Nuove chiese della Diocesi di Alba" (source: *Arte Cristiana,* no. 427, 1954).

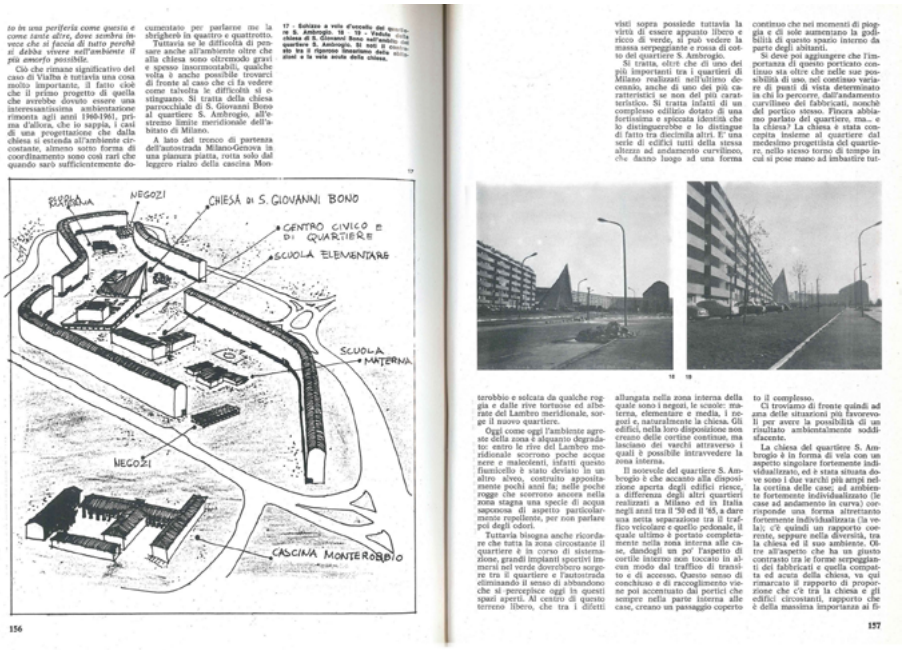



Fig. 7
Pages from Sergio P. Caligaris, "Ambientamenti e no. La Risurrezione al quartiere Vialba. San Giovanni Bono al quartiere S. Ambrogio" (source: *Arte Cristiana*, no. 574, 1970 ).

On Ronchamp, on the other hand, the editorial staff of *Arte Cristiana* does not express itself directly, but publishes an excerpt from *L'Art Sacré*[13].

Another project on which *Arte Cristiana* publishes more articles is the international competition for the new Sanctuary of Nostra Signora delle Lacrime in Syracuse[14]. The tone is quite polemical towards the choices of the foreign jury, which rewards foreign projects, and also towards the design choices proposed.

Even the spatial form chosen, the circular plan, was stigmatised, following the positions already expressed by Monsignor Polvara[15.] many years earlier, for whom the plan had to follow the symmetry of the human body, favoring a basilica-type layout tag.

Another text against the round structure with the altar in the center was written by Vigorelli[16] in 1955, commenting on some projects presented at the Exhibition of Sacred Architecture[17] in Bologna held that year, the first real opportunity for clergy, architects and communities to meet.

Interesting is the review of magazines that began in 1953 and offers insights into European architecture. The list of periodicals that are reviewed is not constant over the years, but there are *Das Münster* and *L'Art d'Eglise*, with which there are evident collaborative relationships (*Arte Cristiana* also publishes texts by their editors); until 1958 *L'Art Sacré* is also reviewed.

Another recurring column that is interesting for the themes studied here is

13 "Si parla di Ronchamp (Cherubini da *L'Art Sacrè*)", *Arte Cristiana,* no. 443 (1956): 34.

14 "Un concorso internazionale per il Santuario della Madonna delle Lacrime", *Arte Cristiana,* no. 440 (1955): 206; Giuseppe Agnello, "Il concorso per il tempio alla Madonnina delle Lacrime", *Arte Cristiana,* no. 454 (1957): 79-86; "Ancora sul santuario di Siracusa." *Arte Cristiana,* no. 456 (1957): 130.

15 Giuseppe Polvara, *Domus Dei* (Milan: Società Amici dell'Arte Cristiana, 1929), 190.

16 Valerio Vigorelli, "Osservazioni contro la Chiesa rotonda in margine al congresso bolognese", *Arte Cristiana,* no. 439 (1955): 173-179.

17 The material presented at the exhibition and many of the texts of the opening conference were published in magazines and in Luciano Gherardi, Centro di studio e informazione per l'architettura sacra, *Dieci anni di architettura sacra in Italia 1945-1955* (Bologna: Edizione dell'ufficio tecnico organizzazione arcivescovile, 1956).



IL CARMELO DI BONMOSCHETTO

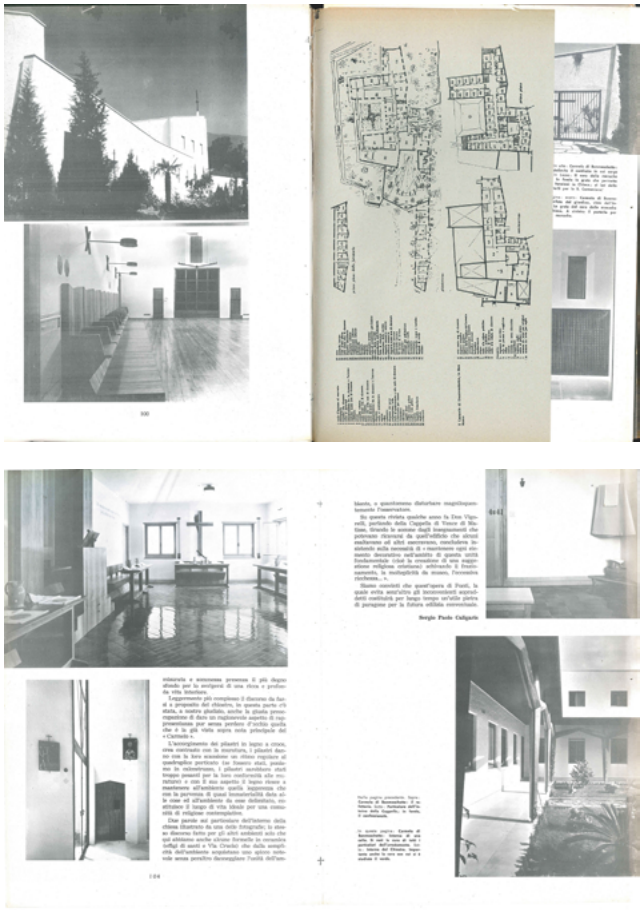
Siamo contenti di presentare ai nostri lettori questo moderno edificio conventuale di Bonmoschetto poiché ci sembra doveroso dare la meritata evidenza a quegli edifici della vita comune religiosa che con giusto ed opportuno criterio si sanno agganciare e dal falso tradizionalismo e dall'anonimato dell'edificio collegiale adibito a scopi conventuali.

Inoltre questo Carmelo è uno dei pochissimi, per non dire l'unico, degli edifici moderni sorti in Italia per la vita conventuale. Questo carattere di quasi unicità però, non costituisce un particolare impedimento a giudicarlo, inquantoché invece di essere, date le peculiarità del tema, troppo distante dalla comune degli edifici religiosi contemporanei più conosciuti, è invece organicamente inserito nel forse troppo vario contesto della architettura religiosa italiana contemporanea; si aggiunga poi che pur caratteristico com'è questo convento di carmelitane è ben visibilmente opera di Gio Ponti, con caratteristiche comuni ad altre sue opere.

Se consideriamo il Carmelo di Bonmoschetto così come ci appare dalla pianta dobbiamo subito rilevare il modo naturale e sciolto con cui i vari elementi dell'organismo si legano insieme. La chiesa, il chiostro, il corpo di fabbrica della foresteria, non ancora realizzato, ed i muri di cinta dell'orto, si susseguono l'uno all'altro creando sulla fronte del pendio a mezzogiorno, un insieme vario e nello stesso tempo unitario, da non dare in alcun modo l'impres-

99

8a



8b

8c

"Surroundings of religious buildings"[18], begun in 1960 by the architect Caligaris. The buildings, mostly Milanese, are observed in their context and among them there are also contemporary buildings; these texts investigate, for example, the spatial relationship between an old church and the new one (as is the case for S. Martino in Villapizzone, S. Francesco al Fopponino, S. Cecilia), or the ways of overlooking public space (enclosure in Baranzate, alignment or not on the public street as in the church of the Resurrection, San Gabriele Arcangelo in Mater Dei, S. Giovanni Bono). Typically, the article presents a schematic plan of the surroundings, several photographs, and an analysis text **(Fig. 7)**.

In the early 1960s there were two long texts on works that can be found in almost every magazine considered: the Carmelo del Bonmoschetto in Sanremo, made by Ponti, published in 1960, and Michelucci's Church in Campi Bisenzio on the Autostrada del Sole, in 1964.

The architect Caligaris[19] presents the Carmelo **(Fig. 8)** of Ponti as a convent complex, describing its modernity and appreciating the whole. At the end of the article, Caligaris mentions Vence, a touchstone on the use of images, stigmatised a few years earlier by Vigorelli; Caligaris recognises in Carmelo a work that avoids these problems, and "will be for a long time a useful touchstone for future convent construction."[20]

18 Sergio P. Caligaris, heading of *Intorni di edilizia religiosa*, *Arte Cristiana,* (1963-1970).

19 Sergio P. Caligaris, "Il Carmelo di Bonmoschetto", *Arte Cristiana,* no. 482 (1960): 99-105.

20 Caligaris, "Il Carmelo di Bonmoschetto", 105.

Fig. 8a, Fig. 8b, Fig. 8c
Pages from Sergio P. Caligaris, "Il Carmelo di Bonmoschetto" (source: *Arte Cristiana*, no. 482, 1960).

Alessandro Foresti[21], professor of the School, narrates the church of San Giovanni Battista on the outskirts of Florence, the Church on the highway. The long text is flanked by numerous photographs of the exterior and interior, as well as a floor plan that shows its complexity. Foresti approaches the work with a critical/analytical slant, first on the figure of Michelucci, on the choral nature of the construction process, and then on looking at his architecture. The Tent is built as an architecture of paths, with a plan extremely rich in angles, sculpture to be experienced, a space that can be explored and stands as a place for prayer and contemplation. What emerges from the story is the difficulty of construction, the effort and trust, the sincerity, "passionate work, the fruit of modern 'cathedral builders', the way to the One who is light"[22].

The years immediately following the Council were the richest in theoretical reflections on the spaces and founding elements for the celebration, looking at the magisterial documents and norms that were gradually published by the national episcopal conferences; the practical cases, however, decreased still further. It is only at the end of the analysed period that contemporary churches are published again, within a new column entitled "Panorama of today's sacred architecture"[23] inaugurated in 1969.

### Domus (1950-1970)

*Domus* is one of the first Italian architecture magazines and still one of the most authoritative today. The first issue was published in January 1928, directed by the architect Gio Ponti; in 1929 ownership passed to Giovanni Mazzocchi and the leadership of the magazine remained in Ponti's hands. Ponti will be the director for almost fifty years and the period on which this research focuses is totally marked by his choices. Some editorials are true manifestos of his thought, but I do not intend to dwell on them in this study, preferring to deepen the choice of published projects and how they are presented.

In general, sacred architecture projects are published steadily over the years, with an extreme variety of authors, geographical location, and level of in-depth study.

The first text that analyses a sacred building was written by the painter Bruno Cassinari on the Chapel of Vence[24], after a visit to Matisse's studio, while he was still working on the chapel **(Fig. 9)**. It is a long text, accompanied by large photos of overall models and sketches for the paintings, describing an environment of clear brightness, with

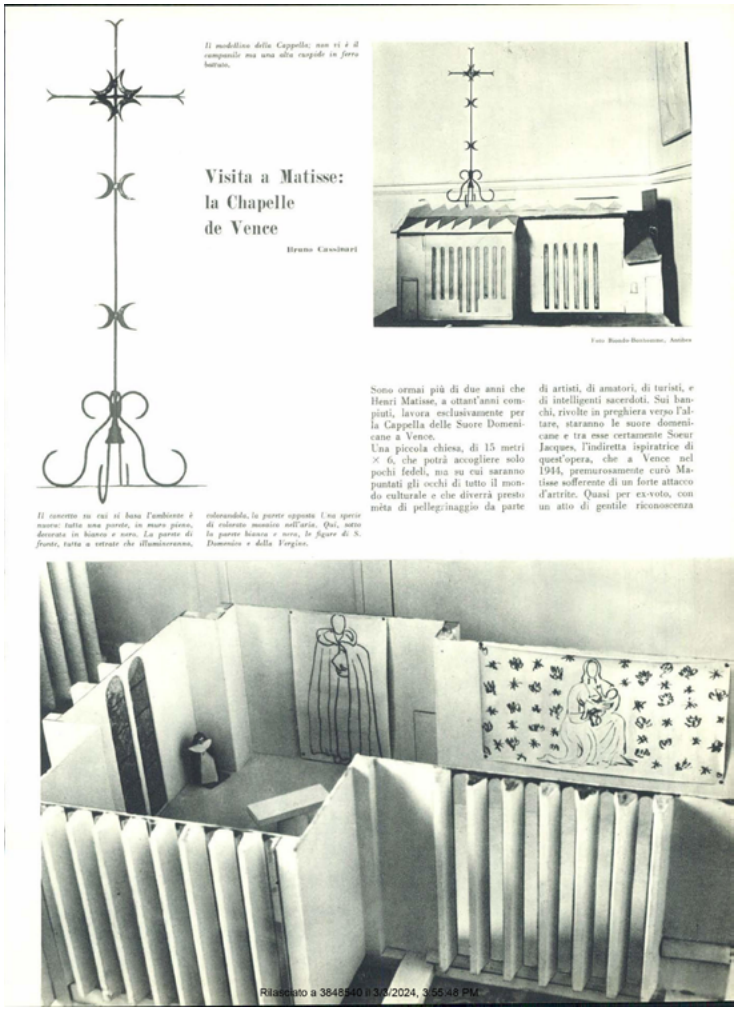
> an atmosphere that knows how to remove that sense of guilt, of excessive and exhausting suggestion that too often inspires us in the en-

21 Alessandro Foresti, "La tenda del Battista lungo l'autostrada", *Arte Cristiana,* no. 519 (1964): 201-210.

22 Foresti, "La tenda del Battista lungo l'autostrada", 210.

23 Heading pf *Panorama dell'architettura sacra di oggi*, *Arte Cristiana* (1969-1970).

24 Bruno Cassinari, "Visita a Matisse: la Chapelle de Vence", *Domus,* no. 250 (1950): 53-56.



Visita a Matisse:
la Chapelle
de Vence

Bruno Cassinari

Sono ormai più di due anni che Henri Matisse, a ottant'anni compiuti, lavora esclusivamente per la Cappella delle Suore Domenicane a Vence.
Una piccola chiesa, di 15 metri × 6, che potrà accogliere solo pochi fedeli, ma su cui saranno puntati gli occhi di tutto il mondo culturale e che diverrà presto méta di pellegrinaggio da parte di artisti, di amatori, di turisti, e di intelligenti sacerdoti. Sui banchi, rivolte in preghiera verso l'altare, staranno le suore domenicane e tra esse certamente Soeur Jacques, l'indiretta ispiratrice di quest'opera, che a Vence nel 1944, premurosamente curò Matisse sofferente di un forte attacco d'artrite. Quasi per ex-voto, con un atto di gentile riconoscenza

Rilasciato a 3848540 il 3/3/2024, 3:55:48 PM

9a



Rilasciato a 3848540 il 3/3/2024, 3:55:48 PM

9b

9c

vironment where we go to pray"[25], a purified space in which there will be no matter "except that of a beautiful dream made in the light of the sun.[26]

The first text signed by Ponti on a church is the one relating to the chapel for the Saint Gobain kindergarten in Pisa[27] by the architect Roberto Menghi. The chapel becomes an instrument to narrate what the construction of a church can be for an architect: "The architect, like *his* church, prays with those who pray, and the church is no longer a common activity of an architect applied to a cult, but a gesture of participation, that is, of prayer, and then, only then, is the building of true religious architecture."[28] The text expresses Ponti's thoughts on what a church should be, a building dedicated "to man alone, to each one of us in the solitude of his human existence; dedicated to the individual, and desperately intimate, conversation of each one of us with God." This intimate view of the relationship with God often emerges from his writings.

25 Cassinari, "Visita a Matisse: la Chapelle de Vence", 54.

26 Cassinari, "Visita a Matisse: la Chapelle de Vence", 54.

27 Gio Ponti, "Una nuova chiesa. Roberto Menghi, arch", *Domus,* no. 273 (1952): 1-5.

28 Ponti, "Una nuova chiesa. Roberto Menghi, arch", 1.

Fig. 9a, Fig. 9b, Fig. 9c
Full article: Bruno Cassinari, "Visita a Matisse: la Chapelle de Vence" (source: *Domus*, n. 250, 1950 – *Courtesy of Archivio Domus – Editoriale Domus S.p.A*).


Invito ad andare a Ronchamp

In November 1953 Le Corbusier's project for Ronchamp was published, not yet realised, [29]presented with a plan and numerous photographs of the models, in paper and wire, "a place of prayer" **(Fig. 10)**. When the work was completed, in 1956, Ponti wrote an "Invitation to go to Ronchamp",[30] after visiting it with a group of Milanese architects. Ponti's account is absolutely personal and autobiographical, as he thinks of religious architecture as a problem of religion and not of architecture:

> I was personally prejudiced against Le Corbusier as the architect of a church. I must with gladness of honesty testify that especially the interior, though so new and different, is church, eternal church, is excitingly religious, has a direct and powerful charm, an inspired, moving spell that acts with severe persuasions.[31]

During the 1960s, *Domus* presents three iconic Finnish churches: the Otaniemi Forest Church and the Orivesi Forest Church, both by Kaija and Heikki Siren,[32] and a few years later the great Kaleva Church, designed by Reima Pietilä and Raili Paatelainen[33]. The narration favours large-format photographic images, accurate in framing, with essential models and floor plans on a dark background.

Particular attention is given to North American production over the years, telling its variety. One of the first presented projects was by architect Victor Lundy, for a temporary Presbyterian church in a woodland in Florida; a small wooden building with glass walls, surrounded by greenery; the faithful listen outdoors, or in the car, thanks to the speakers placed on the trees; It is defined in the article as "the most modern form of a spontaneous church".[34]

29 "Una cappella di Le Corbusier", *Domus,* no. 288 (1953): 2-3.

30 Gio Ponti, "Invito ad andare a Ronchamp", *Domus,* no. 323 (1956): 1-2.

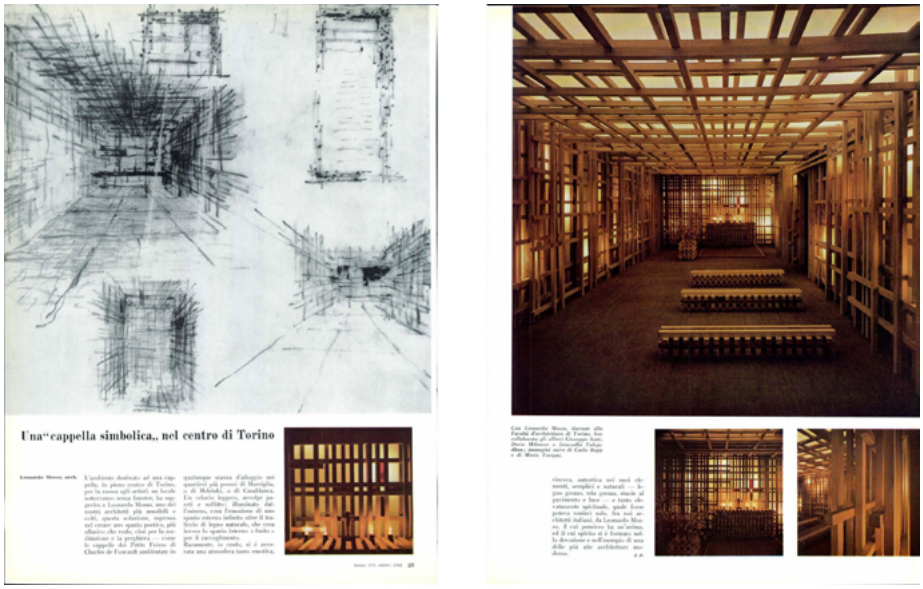
31 Ponti, "Invito ad andare a Ronchamp", 2.

32 "Opere e progetti di Kaija e Heikki Siren", *Domus,* no. 390 (1962): 1-4.

33 "La grande chiesa di Kaleva. Reima Pietilä e Raill Paatelainen, arch.tti", *Domus,* no. 455 (1967): 13-20.

34 "Una chiesa all'aperto. Victor Lundy, arch", *Domus,* no. 307 (1955): 8.

Fig. 10
Full article: Gio Ponti, "Invito ad andare a Ronchamp" (source: *Domus*, n. 323, 1956 – *Courtesy of Archivio Domus – Editoriale Domus S.p.A.*).


Una "cappella simbolica„ nel centro di Torino

Two Californian churches are also presented, very experimental and different from the European production, by Richard Neutra: the Miramar Chapel[35] characterised by a transparent façade with the staircase that runs through it, the cross and the V-shaped cut of the crown and, nine years later, the Tower of Hope[36] with the church on the fifteenth floor of a crystal building.

The lightness of Neutra is counterbalanced by the enormous, mighty Benedictine abbey of Collegeville, Minnesota, designed by Marcel Breuer[37], whose colour photographs make the strength of the materials even more dominant; a particular emphasis in the text is given to the story of the liturgical requirements placed on the project by the Benedictine community.

The extreme variety documented in foreign projects can also be seen in what is published on Italian sacred architecture.

Of particular interest are the articles presenting the Chapel for the Mass[38] of the artist by Leonardo Mosso in the center of Turin (now demolished) **(Fig. 11)**, the project of the church of Riola[39] by Alvar Aalto for Cardinal Lercaro, a chapel in a holiday center in Maremma[40] by Ico and Luisa Parisi, the chapel Pro iuventute Don Gnocchi[41] by the architect Massimo Bodini.

The most substantial articles are dedicated to buildings that are still referred to today as exemplary for the modern architecture of those years, starting with the church of Nostra Signora della Misericordia in Baranzate, designed by Man-

35 "Una chiesa di Neutra in California. Richard J. Neutra, arch", *Domus,* no. 362 (1960): 3-8.

36 "Una chiesa di Richard Neutra. Richard and Dion Neutra, architects, Serge Koschin, collaborator", *Domus,* no. 479 (1969): 5-9.

37 Gio Ponti, "Per una abbazia benedettina nel Minnesota", *Domus,* no. 391 (1962): 1-6.

38 Gio Ponti, "Una 'cappella simbolica' nel centro di Torino. Leonardo Mosso, arch", *Domus,* no. 419 (1964): 28-29.

39 Gio Ponti, "La chiesa italiana di Alvar Aalto", *Domus,* no. 447 (1967) 1-6.

40 "Un centro per le vacanze in Maremma. Studio 'La Ruota' di Ico e Luisa Parisi, collaboratore, Lamberto Marsili, ing", *Domus,* no. 439 (1966): 46-54.

41 "Una chiesa in collina. Bodini Massimo, arch", *Domus,* no. 453 (1967): 22.

Fig. 11
Full article: Gio Ponti, "Una "cappella simbolica" nel centro di Torino. Leonardo Mosso, arch." (source: *Domus*, n. 419, 1964 – *Courtesy of Archivio Domus – Editoriale Domus S.p.A.*).

giarotti, Morassutti and Favini, universally known as the Glass church. In 1957[42] the editorial staff published an elegant perspective drawing accompanied by a brief note on the daring construction technique, a structure of pillars and roof beams in prestressed concrete and opaque double-glazed walls. In 1959[43] the finished work was published, with full-page photographs, an introductory text and comments in the captions.

Equally relevant is the presentation of the Church on the Autostrada del Sole. The piece bears Ponti's signature[44] and is a tribute to the architect Michelucci, a very long text compared to the usual style of *Domus*, with absolutely personal notes: the church is such a masterpiece that Michelucci "can die happy" (in many years): "his church, which is ancient and modern at the same time, handmade with ancient techniques (by old surviving stonemasons, and master masons from sixty onwards), and simultaneously with the very modern and courageous concrete structure of the tent vault".[45]

Other sacred architectures well present in the pages of *Domus* are the churches of Enrico Castiglioni, with four projects published over the years; the first, dated 1953, is the Basilica[46], an ideal project, not designed for a specific place, which would also be presented later in the Exhibition of Sacred Architecture in Bologna in 1955. Between 1962 and 1964 the following were published, in order: the parish church of Prospiano, in Gorla Minore; the project for the church of S. Anna in Busto Arsizio, the one for a church in Suna di Verbania (the last two will not be built).

The presentation of the church of Prospiano is signed by Ponti[47], the description and the other two articles are by Castiglioni himself. Each one is accompanied by technical drawings and poetic freehand sketches, alternating with photographs of well-kept models, almost a built space. Ponti presents the building in Prospiano as "religious spaces and volumes, or of religious sonorities and silences, or simply of religiosity"[48]. And the narrative is set on this register, the religiosity of the space that offers itself as a place of isolation and protection for prayer, solemn and austere for ceremonies, resonant for the multitude, silent for solitude.

Finally, a final group of monographic articles is dedicated to the architecture for the cult of Ponti himself: *Domus* publishes the church and monastery of the Carmelo del Bonmoschetto in Sanremo, S. Maria Annunciata at the Ospedale San Carlo in Milan, the Ciborium for the Sanctuary of Oropa.

---

42 "Progetto per una chiesa di vetro. A. Mangiarotti e B. Morassutti, arch.tti, A. Favini, ing", *Domus,* no. 330 (1957): 1.

43 "Una chiesa di vetro, in Lombardia. Angelo Mangiarotti, Bruno Morassutti, arch.tti", *Domus,* no. 351 (1959): 1-8.

44 Gio Ponti, "A Michelucci, sulla chiesa di San Giovanni", *Domus,* no. 413 (1964): 1-25.

45 Ponti, "A Michelucci, sulla chiesa di San Giovanni", 1.

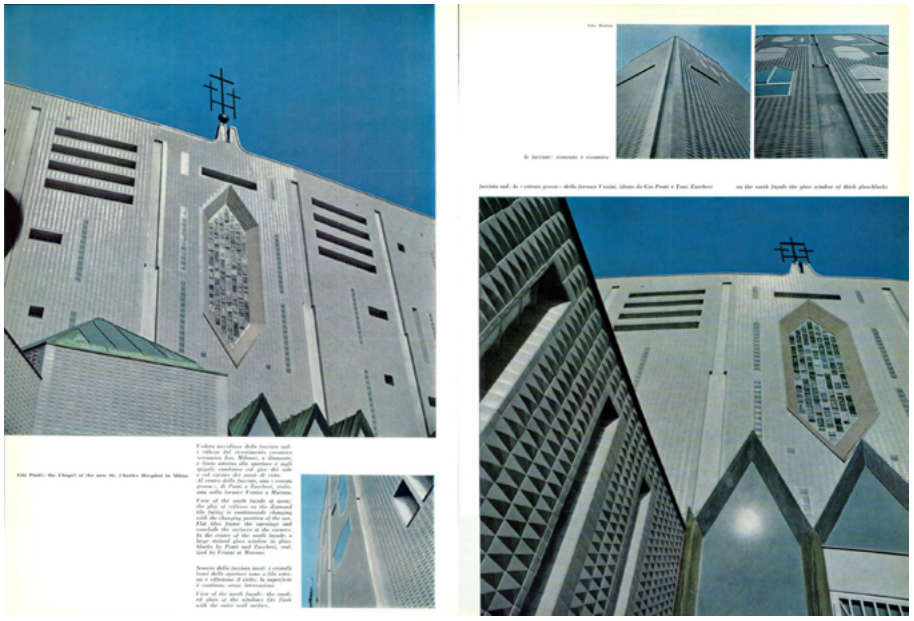
46 "Una Basilica. Enrico Castiglioni, arch", *Domus,* no. 287 (1953): 1-3.

47 Gio Ponti, "Una chiesa lombarda. Enrico Castiglioni, arch", *Domus,* no. 393 (1962): 1-8.

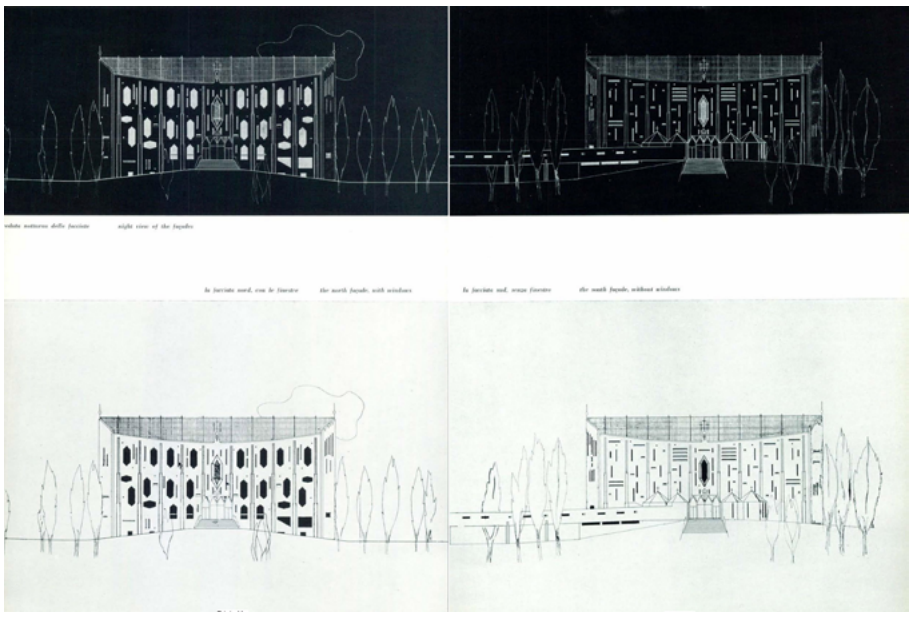
48 Ponti, "Una chiesa lombarda. Enrico Castiglioni, arch", 1.




12a



12b



12c

Fig. 12a, Fig. 12b, Fig. 12c
Pages from Gio Ponti, "La cappella del nuovo Ospedale di San Carlo a Milano" (source: Domus, n. 445, 1966 – *Courtesy of Archivio Domus – Editoriale Domus S.p.A.*).

The cloistered monastery for the Carmelo in Sanremo is recounted by Ponti[49] in the first person, for what it was for him to build it, an exceptional, interior experience. It is narrated as an architecture that must be finished by time, by the greenery that must enter the spaces and cover the white walls, give them a patina because the Carmels are ancient places; "An architecture that has its own spiritual structures, as well as its own constructive ones."[50]

The church at the S. Carlo Hospital[51] (Fig. 12) is also presented by Ponti himself in a concise report in twelve points that are as many principles summarised in his work; they are briefly explained in the text, recounted by large colour photographs and technical drawings. The style of the presentation is very reminiscent in this case of the thoughts he expressed in *In praise of Architecture*[52].

As a corollary to the articles on architecture, *Domus* publishes some columns, such as the "Exhibition Newsletters", which present what is happening in the field of the arts, and "Editions for architects". The Exhibition newsletter, especially in the fifties, offers many ideas in the field of the sacred; for example, a review of German handicrafts is presented for the Holy Year with statues, monstrances, sacred works; or an exhibition of sacred handicrafts in Venice, or an embroidery made by the Dominican nuns of Augsburg, or even sacred works by Manzù and Ugo Lucerni. The Editions for Architects highlight most of the publications relating to the sacred architecture of those years, with a keen eye on foreign publications[53]. In 1970 *Domus* also published a review of *Orientamenti dell'Arte sacra dopo il Vaticano II*, edited by Giovanni Fallani[54], a book that contains many of the reflections developed on *Fede e Arte* in the previous years, at the end of a profound theoretical reasoning. From the point of view of architecture, the series explored in this work closes in 1970 with two churches, completely different from each other: a sanctuary on Lake Tiberias in Tagba[55] designed by Luigi Moretti and the Co-cathedral of Taranto designed by Ponti.

The first is a futuristic project, never realised, an experimental and avant-garde architecture that developed strongly in those years. The narration is entrusted to the power of the photographs of the models, printed in full page in colour, accompanied by a presentation by the architect Pica and a description by Moretti himself (Fig. 13).

The co-cathedral, still under construction at that time, is presented in an

---

49 Gio Ponti, "Il Carmelo del Bonmoschetto, monastero delle Carmelitane scalze in San Remo. Gio Ponti, arch., Antonio Fornaroli, ing., nello studio Ponti Fornaroli Rosselli", *Domus,* no. 361 (1959): 1-16.

50 Gio Ponti, "Il Carmelo del Bonmoschetto, monastero delle Carmelitane scalze in San Remo. Gio Ponti, arch., Antonio Fornaroli, ing., nello studio Ponti Fornaroli Rosselli", 4.

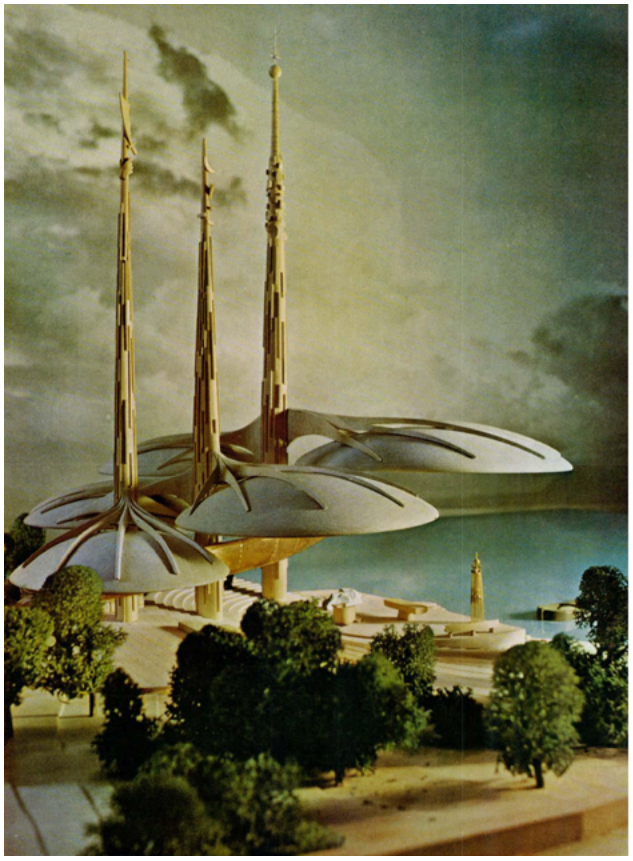
51 Gio Ponti, "La cappella del nuovo Ospedale di San Carlo a Milano", *Domus,* no. 445 (1966): 1-14.

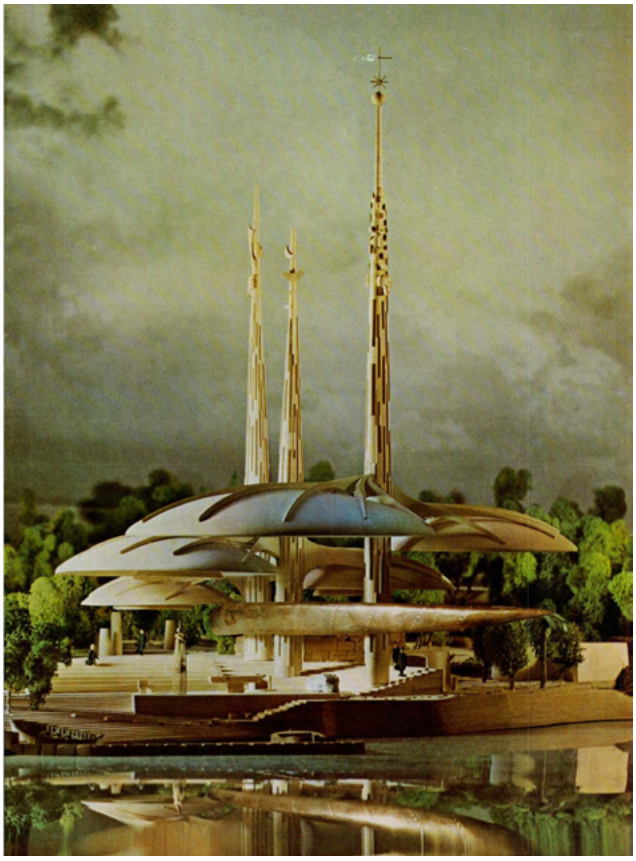
52 Gio Ponti, *Amate l'Architettura* (Genova: Vitali e Ghianda, 1957).

53 Agnoldomenico Pica, review of Albert Chist-Janer – Mary Mix-Foley, *Modern Church Architecture. A guide to the form and spirit of 20th century religious buildings*, McGraw-Hill 1962, *Domus,* no. 399 (1963): 15; Agnoldomenico Pica, review of George E. Kidder Smith, *Nuove chiese in Europa* (Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, 1964); *Domus,* no. 428 (1965): n.p.; Agnoldomenico Pica, review of Joseph Rykwert, *Church Building* (London: Burns and Oates, 1966), *Domus,* no. 444 (1966): 20.

54 Agnoldomenico Pica, review of Giovanni Fallani, *Orientamenti dell'Arte sacra dopo il Vaticano II* (Bergamo: Minerva Italica, 1969), *Domus,* no. 485 (1970): 56.

55 Agnoldomenico Pica, "Due opere di Luigi Moretti. Una casa sul Tirreno e un santuario sul lago di Tiberiade", *Domus,* no. 482 (1970): 6-18.









"Announcement by Image"[56]; Ponti presents his work with a majestic photograph framing it from a distance, silhouetted against the sky at the top of the staircase, almost completed. Ten lines present the motivations and the essence of the project: "It is impossible to conceive of a human civil society that does not have at its center a Temple that represents, with religious thoughts, the divine mystery of life, so that the ferocity of men may be placated in its confrontation."

Ponti's works are an ideal expression of his path of research as an architect, which is reflected in the editorial choices of *Domus*; and the magazine is the narration in text and images of the worldview of a great architect, in continuous reflection on the mystery of God and its translation into space.

## Fede e Arte (1953-1967)

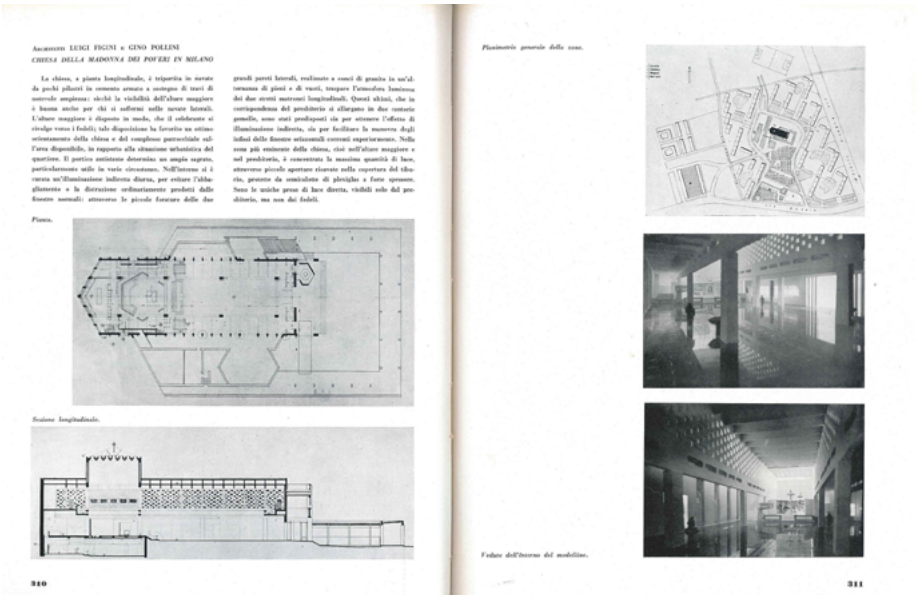
*Fede e Arte* is the magazine published by the Pontifical Central Commission for Sacred Art in Italy; it was founded in 1953 by Archbishop Giovanni Costantini, president of the Commission, as a space for the promotion and dissemination of sacred art and the activities of the Commission itself. From the very first issue, the magazine aims to work in an international context, as stated in the subtitle, "International Review of Sacred Art". It is the official reference of the Holy See in the artistic field.

On Costantini's death in 1956, he was succeeded by Monsignor Giovanni Fallani, both as president of the Commission and director of the magazine, a role

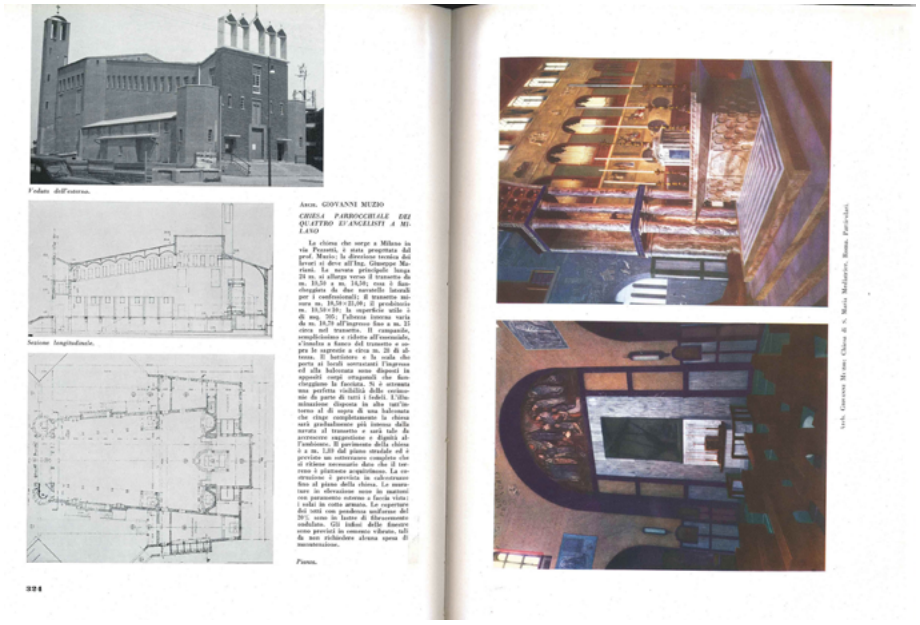
Fig. 13
Pages from Agnoldomenico Pica, "Due opere di Luigi Moretti. Una casa sul Tirreno e un santuario sul lago di Tiberiade" (source: *Domus*, n. 482, 1970 – *Courtesy of Archivio Domus – Editoriale Domus S.p.A.*).

56 Gio Ponti, "Annuncio per immagine", *Domus,* no. 490 (1970): 2.

14a



14b



he held until the last issue in December 1967. His are the broadest texts framing the themes, the theoretical contributions that convey the Holy See's official line of thought on sacred art.

The other signature that is constantly present is Monsignor Mario Alfano, who participates in the drafting and writes the technical notes on the work of the Pontifical Commission in his capacity as its Secretary. The editorial committee includes prelates and technicians (architects and engineers, art historians, critics), exactly as was the case in the Commission itself, which had an ecclesiastical and a technical component within it.

As a magazine of the Holy See, *Fede e Arte* punctually publishes the official acts relating to sacred art in those years, as well as the Holy Father's letters and addresses at conferences and on anniversaries; these are the basis for reflections and comments that are then expanded upon from a theoretical and practical point of view[57].

Fig. 14a, Fig. 14b
Pages from Giuseppe Zander, "Rassegna documentale" (source: *Fede e Arte,* no. 9/10 /11, 1956.

57 For a theoretical framework of the topics addressed, please refer to my thesis, note 1.

The fulcrum of the Commission's work in the early 1950s was the approval of projects for the construction of new churches throughout Italy, thanks to state funding.

There are many articles dedicated to the legislation of the Italian State, starting with the text of the Law (Law 18.XII.1952, n. 2522), then updates, operational circulars and notes; this is flanked by the presentation of two, three, four projects approved in each issue; these are parish churches, episcopates, churches in rural hamlets and annexed to convents of religious orders. At the same time, some projects for large complexes in Rome were presented, such as the new headquarters of the North American Roman College[58], or the church and general house of the Friars Minor designed by architect Muzio[59].

At the end of 1956 this great activity of documenting the work carried out by the Commission came to an end with a triple issue of *Fede e Arte*, which presents a review of sixty churches[60] built or under construction with the contribution of the State **(Fig. 14)**. The introductory note, edited by the architect Giuseppe Zander, provides information about the enormous number of projects that have passed through the scrutiny of the Pontifical Commission; at the time of writing, the archive contains about a thousand topographic files, many of which contain multiple project proposals.

The text is preceded by exhaustive bibliographical indications and the architectures are published in series, in a homogeneous way, following the scheme with which the previous works were presented: two pages for each, title, place, designer, a brief description of the work, technical drawings (floor plans, elevations, sections); In some cases a perspective view or photograph of the model, or of the work under construction, is added, as few buildings have already been completed. The vast majority of the architecture illustrated is in central and southern Italy, with a significant presence of Roman churches.

In the following years, under the guidance of Mons. Fallani, there is a progressive evolution in the topics addressed and also in the way they are treated. The number of articles presenting the projects approved by the Commission is decreasing, while the reports of congresses, competitions, and in-depth studies on contemporary sacred architecture are increasing.

In fact, the latter is the theme that is felt to be increasingly urgent and progressively takes up space in the pages of *Fede e Arte*, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, with increasingly in-depth and careful articles in the choice of works.

In 1957, for example, *Fede e Arte* recounts in a triple monographic issue[61] the international competition for the Sanctuary of Nostra Signora delle Lacrime in Syracuse, the first great occasion of a European competition. The published

58 Enrico P. Galeazzi, "La nuova sede sul Gianicolo del pontificio collegio americano del nord", *Fede e Arte,* no. 12 (1953): 354-367.

59 Marcello Piacentini, "Una nuova chiesa romana dell'architetto Giovanni Muzio", *Fede e Arte,* no. 1 (1954): 1-10.

60 Giuseppe Zander, "Rassegna documentale", *Fede e Arte,* no. 9/10/11 (1956): 275-368.

61 "Il concorso internazionale per il Santuario della Madonna delle Lacrime in Siracusa", *Fede e Arte,* no. 7-8-9 (1957).

texts contain an essay by Rudolf Schwarz, member of the jury, and reflections by the editors of some European magazines such as Hugo Schnell (director of *Das Münster*) and Pierre Vago (president of the editorial board of *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui*). What emerges is not so much the winning project itself, but the construction of a path, the chorus of voices involved in the organization to which the architects respond with 91 projects from all over the world. A very different position from the one that emerged in the pages of *Arte Cristiana*.

The pre-Council years are for *Fede e Arte the* most dense with texts on the relationship between parish churches and the urban territory. The founding introduction to the topic is found in Fallani's words, which ask the central question about one aspect of parish life: "What kind of Christian life does a church of today represent, what relationship does it maintain with the problems of the population? In new cities, the topic necessarily enters into town planning."[62] Articles are published presenting how some Dioceses are working to promote research on religious town planning and liturgy, particularly in Bologna, Turin and Milan, and other general articles[63] on this topic.

From 1959 the publication of contemporary projects resumed, according to the intentions declared by Fallani at the end of 1958: quarterly journals on an organic subject, with themes even closer to the needs of a parish church. Each issue offers extensive monographic articles on production in different European countries, in-depth texts, the result of specific and detailed research.

The first major chapter on contemporary European architecture is dedicated to France[64] and is written by architect Pierre Vago, secretary general of the *"Union Internationale des architects".* In about fifty pages the history of French architecture unfolds, from the church of Perret in 1922 to contemporary achievements; the leitmotif of the story is the constant "search for tradition", understood in its highest and most complex form. Particularly interesting are the chapters relating to two works that return and return to the pages of magazines: the chapel of Vence and Ronchamp. They are both defined as

> personal works"; the first is "a kind of testament of that great artist who was Matisse, [...] a moving, but personal, work"[65]; the second "is a decoration, it is a plastic work, a kind of sculpture, which has no value except in so far as the one who conceived it is a great artist; in this respect, the church of Ronchamp moves us.[66]

The author, however, warns that Ronchamp indicates a wrong path to follow because it is "a scenario", it is appearance, better to follow paths of research, perhaps more modest, using traditional materials to arrive at forms that "recall

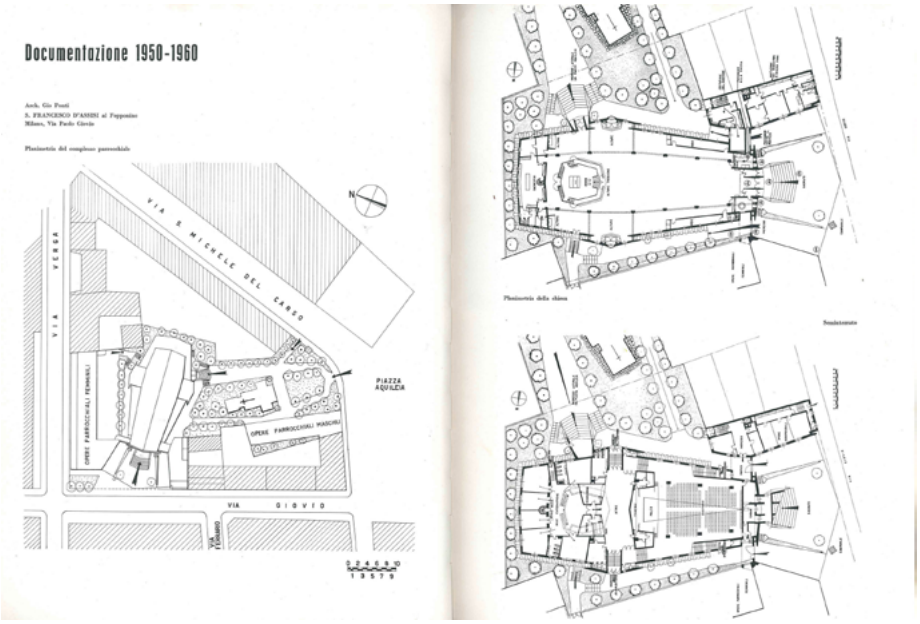
62 Giovanni Fallani, "La prima pietra di una chiesa", *Fede e Arte,* no. 6-7 (1958): 186-193.

63 Francois Houtart, "Come si presenta, oggi, una parrocchia", *Fede e Arte* 1 (1959): 11-16; Francois Houtart, "'Planning' parrocchiale e costruzione di chiese", *Fede e Arte,* no. 6-7 (1958): 222-228; Mariano Pallottini, "La chiesa nel piano regolatore", *Fede e Arte,* no. 1 (1959): 17-35; Paul Winninger, "Le dimensioni della parrocchia", *Fede e Arte,* no. 2 (1959): 126-135.

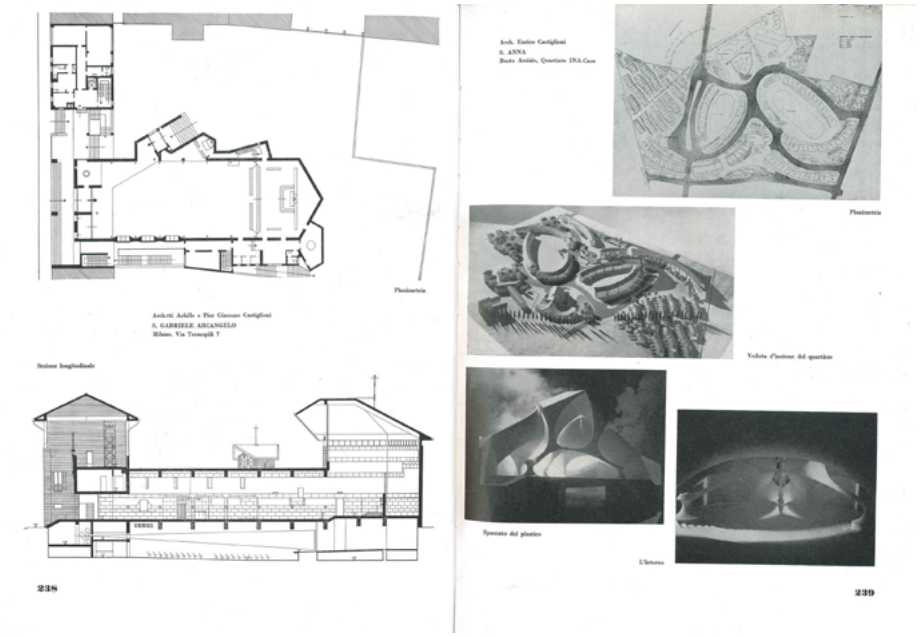
64 Pierre Vago, "Il momento attuale dell'architettura in Francia", *Fede e Arte,* no. 1 (1959): 60-112.

65 Vago, "Il momento attuale dell'architettura in Francia", 62.

66 Vago, "Il momento attuale dell'architettura in Francia", 66.




15a




15b

those of the past, without imitating or copying them".

The presentation of the projects is therefore no longer a "simple" technical or documentary report by the designer, but becomes an organic exposition of reflections built from the projects, usually grouped by geographical area (for example Germany[67], United States[68], Spain[69], Austria[70], Holland[71], …, in-depth studies on the churches of the Diocese of Cologne[72], the churches of Paris, on Japanese Christian art).

67 "Architettura sacra in Germania", *Fede e Arte,* no. 3 (1959).

68 Pasquale Carbonara, "Architettura sacra contemporanea negli Stati Uniti", *Fede e Arte,* no. 4 (1959): 412-444.

69 Luis Moya Blanco, "L'architettura religiosa contemporanea in Spagna", *Fede e Arte,* no. 2 (1960): 196-236.

70 Robert Kramreiter, "Architettura religiosa contemporanea in Austria", *Fede e Arte,* no. 3 (1960): 316-354.

71 Joseph Timmers, "Le nuove chiese in Olanda", *Fede e Arte,* no. 4 (1960): 452-479.

72 Giuseppe Zander, "Chiese dell'ultimo decennio nell'Arcidiocesi di Colonia", *Fede e Arte,* no. 4 (1960): 382-397.

Fig. 15a, Fig. 15b
Pages from "Documentazione 1950-1960 " (source: *Fede e Arte*, no. 3, 1962).

In the three years preceding the Council, starting in 1960, *Fede e Arte* promoted an enormous work of knowledge of international sacred architecture, collected a "living documentation", as the editorial staff wrote in a note, and focused on the themes of the debate.

In preparation for the Council, in 1962 articles on sacred architecture were published, with in-depth studies on urban planning, sociology and plant engineering in churches, a monographic issue on the Diocese of Milan was also published[73] (Fig. 15); 1963 was mainly devoted to studies on sacred art.

In 1964 a text was published on Michelucci's church on the Autostrada del Sole[74] in Campi di Bisenzio. The article, written by Italicus, presents the building with three photographs and a critical commentary that seeks a difficult balance between appreciation and ill-concealed reservations, for a "bold and modern church that will make the rounds of magazines all over the world"[75]. The comparison with Ronchamp emerges, an example to which it is impossible not to connect it, but which "has the advantage of a collected and rational unity"[76] because, according to Italicus, in Michelucci's church the articulations of the plan are dispersive, particularly in relation to the altar. Even works of art, some of which are excellent, lose value because of the way they are arranged. The article closes with the final remark: "Will it be just a symbol or a place of worship in the full meaning of the word, as understood by and for Catholics?"[77]

The year 1965 of *Fede e Arte* is above all to be remembered for its theoretical texts, with extensive reflections starting with Paul VI's Address to Artists in the Sistine Chapel. *Fede e Arte* in 1966 dealt mainly with ancient churches and sacred art (Marian iconography, for example), and the effort to document and present the conciliar decisions was substantially over. Few contemporary churches have been presented, including the chapel of the *Pro iuventute* "D. C. Gnocchi"[78] on the hills of Turin and the chapel of Luisa and Ico Parisi[79] in Maremma; this last one have also been published in the pages of *Domus* and *Arte Cristiana*. 1967 was the last year of *Fede e Arte,* with three monographic issues, respectively on a competition, on the liturgical renewal of existing presbyteries[80] (with specific attention to the relationship with State protection laws), and the last on sacred figurative art.

At the end of 1967 *Fede e Arte* ceased publication with a note from the Editors, prefixed to the last issue: "this ends a part of our long and laborious itinerary of study and research, in the sectors of sacred architecture and figurative arts in Italy and the world".

It is the closure of fifteen years of research guided directly by the Holy See.

---

73 "Le nuove chiese di Milano", *Fede e Arte,* no. 3 (1962).

74 Italicus, "La chiesa di s. Giovanni Battista sull'autostrada", *Fede e Arte,* no. 1 (1964): 24-27.

75 Italicus, "La chiesa di s. Giovanni Battista sull'autostrada", 24.

76 Italicus, "La chiesa di s. Giovanni Battista sull'autostrada", 25.

77 Italicus, "La chiesa di s. Giovanni Battista sull'autostrada", 27.

78 Massimo C. Bodini, "La cappella torinese della *Pro iuventute* D. C. Gnocchi", *Fede e Arte,* no. 2 (1966): 228-239.

79 Ugo Schnell, "L'edificio sacro quale Casa del Logos", *Fede e Arte,* no. 4 (1966): 448-455.

80 "Liturgia e presbiterio nelle disposizioni di tutela e rinnovamento", *Fede e Arte,* no. 2 (1967).

## Chiesa e Quartiere (1955-1968)

*Chiesa e Quartiere* is the magazine of the Diocese of Bologna, published from 1955 (in autonomous form from 1957) to 1968. I do not intend here to retrace in detail the fifteen years of its history because there is an accurate volume[81] published a few years ago that masterfully reconstructs the events and themes addressed. Its pages are the continuation of the research path begun in 1955 at the "First Congress of Sacred Architecture". The activities are led by the "Study and Information Centre for Sacred Architecture", which focuses on the church building, observed in its links with the city and in the spatial relationships within the building itself.

The working group includes architects from Bologna architects and professors from the various regions of Italy. The magazine, published quarterly, moves in a very specialised field of research centered on architecture, unlike *Arte Cristiana* or *Fede e Arte* which considered architecture in a broader reasoning on art. This specific interest in the discipline of architecture brings the Bolognese publication closer to the pages of *Domus*; it is no mystery that Ponti appreciated its high quality and it is also no coincidence that some architects such as Luigi Figini and Enrico Castiglioni wrote in both magazines.

*Chiesa e Quartiere* publishes many theoretical texts by architects and priests, starting with Ponti and Fallani themselves; and then Ludovico Quaroni and Luigi Moretti, Father Costantino Ruggeri, Monsignor Enrico Villa, Cardinal Michele Pellegrino and Frederic Debuyst, just to name a few of the best known.

The magazine obviously pays particular attention to the achievements in its Diocese, but does not set limits in terms of territory, scale or type. It ranges with ease from a church in Neutra, California, to a review of German churches and the new complex in a Bolognese suburb; but there are also general texts on European sacred architecture. The narrative is indeed very diverse; the texts are very full-bodied and detailed, and there are large pages devoted to the debate in society, for example with columns of readers' letters, which offer a broader cross-section of the points of view present.

The most narrated building is Ronchamp[82], which recurs continuously in the pages of *Chiesa e Quartiere*: there are texts by Le Corbusier, colour photographic reports, theoretical articles.

Even the Matisse chapel, which had been completed a few years before, was presented in one of the first issues; the text is a page full of thoughts by Father Albert-Marie Avril[83], who recounts his acquaintance with Matisse and the theoretical work of the master.

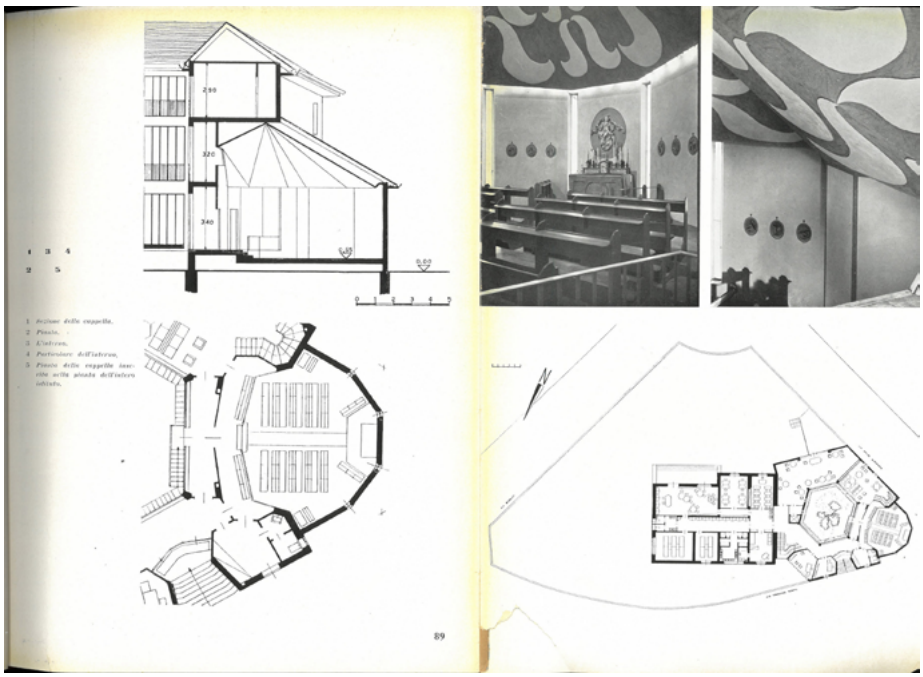
1959 saw the publication of a double issue (9-10) of *Chiesa e Quartiere* dedi-

81 Glauco Gresleri and Maria B. Bettazzi and Giuliano Gresleri, *Chiesa e Quartiere. Storia di una rivista e di un movimento per l'architettura a Bologna* (Bologna: Editrice compositori, 2004).

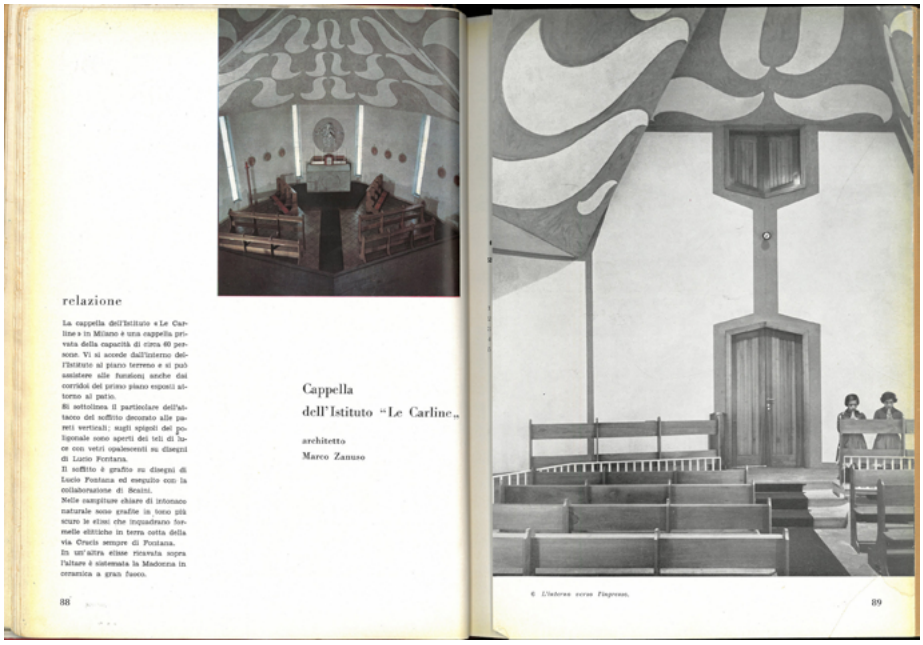
82 "Prospettive giuridiche intorno a Ronchamp", *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 1 (1957): 6; Le Corbusier, "Il discorso di Ronchamp", *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 6 (1958): 29; "Ein tag mit Ronchamp. (Un giorno con Ronchamp)", *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 11 (1959): 22-26; "Il colore di Ronchamp", *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 17 (1961): 12; Giuseppe Samonà, "'L'espace indicible' di Le Corbusier a Ronchamp", *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 17 (1961): 13-18.

83 Albert M. Avril, "Henri Matisse", *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 6 (1958) 17.

16a



16b




cated entirely to the experiences in the Diocese of Milan[84], the result of the collaboration of the Bologna Study Centre with the Study Centre of the Ambrosian Archdiocese. The general framework focuses on the three key themes of Lercaro and Montini's speeches: pastoral concerns, sociological concerns, that is the Church as a great family, and artistic concerns, the beauty of the Lord's house. The texts are by Cardinal Montini, Father Aldo Milani, and the architects Vittorio Gandolfi and Antonello Vincenti; ten Milanese architectures are then presented, and the issue concludes with articles on furniture, the arts, and the relationship between liturgy and art architecture **(Fig. 16)**.

84 "Milano di Dio, il problema delle nuove chiese analizzato sotto il profilo pastorale urbanistico artistico", *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 9-10 (1959): 17-20; Direzione, "Parole del Cardinale Giovanni Battista Montini Arcivescovo di Milano", *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 9-10 (1959): 21; Aldo Milani, "Compito missionario", *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 9-10 (1959): 22-23.

Fig. 16a and Fig. 16b
Pages from Marco Zanuso, "Cappella dell'Istituto «Le Carline»" (source: *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 9-10 , 1959).

Among the numerous projects of those years, two are particularly interesting and also recurring in other magazines, both from 1964: the chapel for the Messa dell'Artista (Artist's Mass)[85] in Turin by Leonardo Mosso and the church by Michelucci on the Autostrada del Sole.

The Turin chapel is a space for prayer, a temporary work created for the thirtieth anniversary of the Messa per l'Artista Association, in conjunction with a conference in Turin. The work is narrated on the pages of *Chiesa e Quartiere* directly by the designer, architect Leonardo Mosso.

*Chiesa e Quartiere* dedicates a double issue to Michelucci's church[86] in order to give "documentation the space it deserves for such a courageous and significant work"[87], as Fr. Gherardi writes in the editorial. The work is intimately linked by a ribbon of concrete to distant cities, it belongs to them as a new cathedral for a new scale of the community dimension. Michelucci launched a prophetic cry of hope that is full of insights, anticipations and encouragement for the work of tomorrow.

In December 1966 Alvar Aalto's project for the church of Riola was published and, in the same issue, the project for the church and student complex of the Holy Trinity[88] in Milan by the Swiss architect Fritz Metzger.

With the end of 1966 the phase of exploration of Italian architecture seems to come to an end, in advance of the magazine's actual closure. In the last period, the texts are influenced by the contingent situation with general reflections on the community, the contribution of the Council, the fractures and the internal situation of the Diocese leading to the magazine's closure in mid-1968.

## Nuove Chiese (1964-1969)

*Nuove Chiese* is the magazine of the Diocese of Milan, published under the impetus of the New Churches Committee, which promotes its dissemination. Its purpose is to raise awareness among the Catholic public opinion of the Diocese and to raise funds to create a widespread presence of parish churches in the area, ensuring a constant Christian presence at a time of great growth in the city and the hinterland.

The magazine systematically documents the numerous Milanese realisations of those years that continue, thanks to the great energy of Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini, the path already started by Cardinal Ildefonso Schuster.

The publication of the magazine begins while the construction fervour is fully underway and from the first issues inaugurations, ceremonies of laying the first stone are recounted; fundraisers are live, and many articles urge donations.

Of all the journals analysed, it is certainly the least technical. The narrative is

85 Leonardo Mosso, "Cappella per la messa dell'artista a Torino", *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 29 (1964): 54-60.

86 *Numero doppio dedicato alla chiesa di S. Giovanni Battista a Campi Bisenzio, Firenze. Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 30-31 (1964).

87 Luciano Gherardi, "Editoriale", *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 30-31 (1964): 2.

88 Fritz Metzger, "Centro comunitario studentesco della Trinità a Milano", *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 40 (1966): 26-27.

developed from a pastoral, exhortative point of view, with constant attention to the social, community data, to the relationship with the urban surroundings in which the new buildings are established. The construction of new churches is experienced as a mission, "to build churches is to plant the Church, it is to extend the Kingdom of God, it is to bring Christ into souls through the sensitive sign of unity, faith and prayer"[89], Monsignor Milani writes in an editorial.

Even taking into account this general indication, the five years of publication are a very rich documentation for the architecture and construction of the city, which takes us into the fervor of the period and offers a unique cross-section of the events of those years. The first issues are an opportunity to take stock of what is happening in the Diocese; thus, for example, the presentation in Rome to the Pope of the volume "His Churches" is a moment to remember the 123 churches built in the eight years of Montini's presence in Milan[90]. Reports of the Committee's annual meeting, reports on churches under construction and planned ones are published periodically (Fig. 17).

Among the macro-topics addressed, the positions taken on the decorum of churches, their poverty, the insertion of works of art[91], all reflecting the demands of the society of those years, stand out.

Special attention, which is not found in the other magazines except marginally in *Chiesa e Quartiere,* is given to the relationship with the administrative and political structure of the city, with interviews with Councillors (for town planning, education), the President of the Province, or reasoning in perspective on the presence of churches in the much broader framework of town planning, for example in the Milanese inter-municipal plan PIM.

On the urban front, it was Monsignor Enrico Villa, an architect, who wrote several articles on this theme, which he brings together in the term "pastoral urban planning", explaining the Church's needs to be present in the territory in order to shape together the society of the future. Already the titles show this continuous attention to the relationship between pastoral and urban themes: "Churches: A Social Fact", "Churches: An Obligatory Itinerary", "The *Houses of God*, witness of Civilization", "The New Churches of Milan, Churches for Dialogue"[92] just to name a few. Interspersed in the texts are images of Milanese churches, usually identified by title, address, designer, documenting the extreme variety of the creations. There is no real standard format for the presentation of projects, in general each article is dedicated to one building. The texts are usually entrusted to the editorial staff; they are accompanied by photographs and an interior plan with a clear legend on the use of the spaces, showing a specific attention to the non-technical audience of the magazine.

---

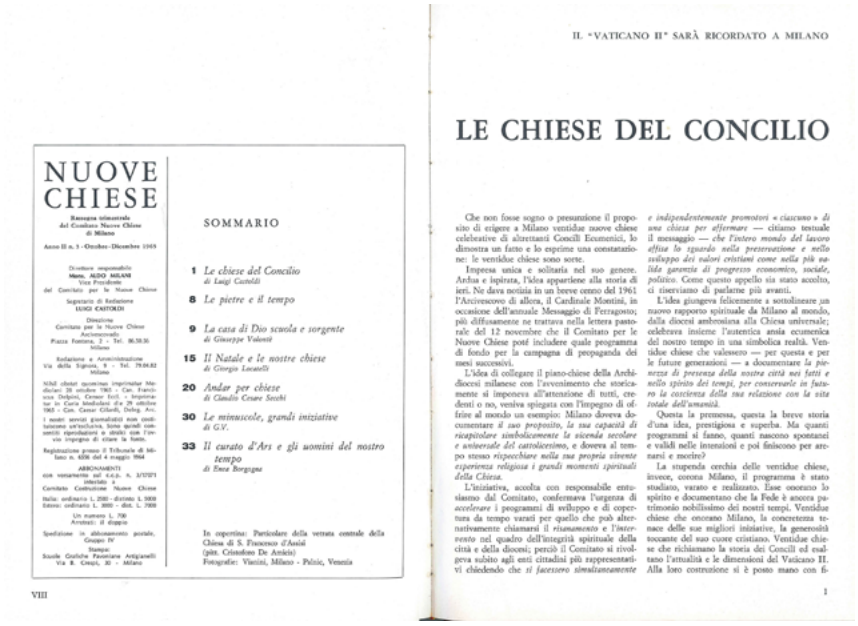
89 Aldo Milani, "La nostra missione, la nostra avventura", *Nuove Chiese,* no. 3 (1965): 1.

90 "Il libro del miracolo spirituale. 123 chiese: itinerario milanese del Cardinale Montini", *Nuove Chiese,* no. 2 (1964): 11-13.

91 Costantino Ruggeri, "Semplicità, povertà, trasparenza delle chiese", *Nuove Chiese,* no. 2 (1965): 10-16; Luigi Castoldi, "Ventidue pannelli, un frate e la sofferenza", *Nuove Chiese,* no. 4 (1966): 9-15; Giuseppe Volontè, "Ispirata misura di canoni e scopi", *Nuove Chiese,* no. 3 (1965): 33-35.

92 Enrico Villa, "Le nuove chiese di Milano: chiese per il dialogo," *Nuove Chiese,* no. 3 (1966): 31-41.

17a



NUOVE CHIESE

Rassegna trimestrale del Comitato Nuove Chiese di Milano

Anno II n. 3 - Ottobre-Dicembre 1965

Direttore responsabile Mons. ALDO MILANI Vice Presidente del Comitato per le Nuove Chiese

Segretario di Redazione LUIGI CASTOLDI

Direzione Comitato per le Nuove Chiese Arcivescovado Piazza Fontana, 2 - Tel. 86.38.36 Milano

Redazione e Amministrazione Via della Signora, 9 - Tel. 79.04.82 Milano

Nihil obstat quominus imprimatur Mediolani 20 octobre 1965 - Can. Franciscus Delpozzi, Censor fcrl. - Imprimatur in Curia Mediolani die 29 octobre 1965 - Can. Cesar Ciliotti, Dofug. Arc.

I nostri servizi giornalistici non costituiscono un'esclusiva, sicchè quindi consentiti riproduzioni e stralci con l'invito cortese di citare la fonte.

Registrazione presso il Tribunale di Milano n. 4356 del 4 maggio 1964

ABBONAMENTI con versamento sul c.c.p. n. 3/37371 intestato a Comitato Costruzione Nuove Chiese

Italia: ordinario L. 2000 - sostegno L. 5000
Estero: ordinario L. 3000 - sost. L. 7000

Un numero L. 700
Arretrati: il doppio

Spedizione in abbonamento postale, Gruppo IV

Stampa: Scuole Grafiche Pavoniane Artigianelli Via B. Crespi, 30 - Milano

SOMMARIO


1 *Le chiese del Concilio* di Luigi Castoldi

8 *Le pietre e il tempo*

9 *La casa di Dio scuola e sorgente* di Giuseppe Valenti

15 *Il Natale e le nostre chiese* di Giorgio Locatelli

20 *Andar per chiese* di Claudio Cesare Secchi

30 *Le minuscole, grandi iniziative* di G.V.

33 *Il curato d'Ars e gli uomini del nostro tempo* di Enea Borgogna


In copertina: Particolare della vetrata centrale della Chiesa di S. Francesco d'Assisi (pitt. Cristoforo De Amicis)
Fotografie: Vinitni, Milano - Palmi, Venezia

VIII

IL "VATICANO II" SARÀ RICORDATO A MILANO

# LE CHIESE DEL CONCILIO

Che non fosse sogno o presunzione il proposito di erigere a Milano ventidue nuove chiese celebrative di altrettanti Concili Ecumenici, lo dimostra un fatto e lo esprime una constatazione: le ventidue chiese sono sorte.

Impresa unica e solitaria nel suo genere. Ardua e ispirata, l'idea appartiene alla storia di ieri. Ne dava notizia in un breve cenno del 1961 l'Arcivescovo di allora, il Cardinale Montini, in occasione dell'annuale Messaggio di Pentecoste; più diffusamente ne trattava nella lettera pastorale del 12 novembre che il Comitato per le Nuove Chiese poté includere quale programma di fondo per la campagna di propaganda dei mesi successivi.

L'idea di collegare il piano-chiese della Arcidiocesi milanese con l'avvenimento che storicamente si imponeva all'attenzione di tutti, credenti o no, veniva spiegata con l'impegno di offrire al mondo un esempio: Milano doveva documentare *il suo proposito, la sua capacità di ricapitolare simbolicamente la vicenda secolare e universale del cattolicesimo*, e doveva al tempo stesso *rispecchiare nella sua propria vivente esperienza religiosa i grandi momenti spirituali della Chiesa*.

L'iniziativa, accolta con responsabile entusiasmo dal Comitato, confermava l'urgenza di *accelerare* i programmi di sviluppo e di copertura da tempo varati per quello che può alternativamente chiamarsi il *risanamento* e l'*intervento* nel quadro dell'integrità spirituale della città e della diocesi; perciò il Comitato si rivolgeva subito agli enti cittadini più rappresentativi chiedendo che *si facessero simultaneamente e indipendentemente promotori « ciascuno » di una chiesa per affermare* — citiamo testuale il messaggio — *che l'intero mondo del lavoro affisa lo sguardo nella preservazione e nello sviluppo dei valori cristiani come nella più valida garenzia di progresso economico, sociale, politico*. Come questo appello sia stato accolto, ci riserviamo di parlarne più avanti.

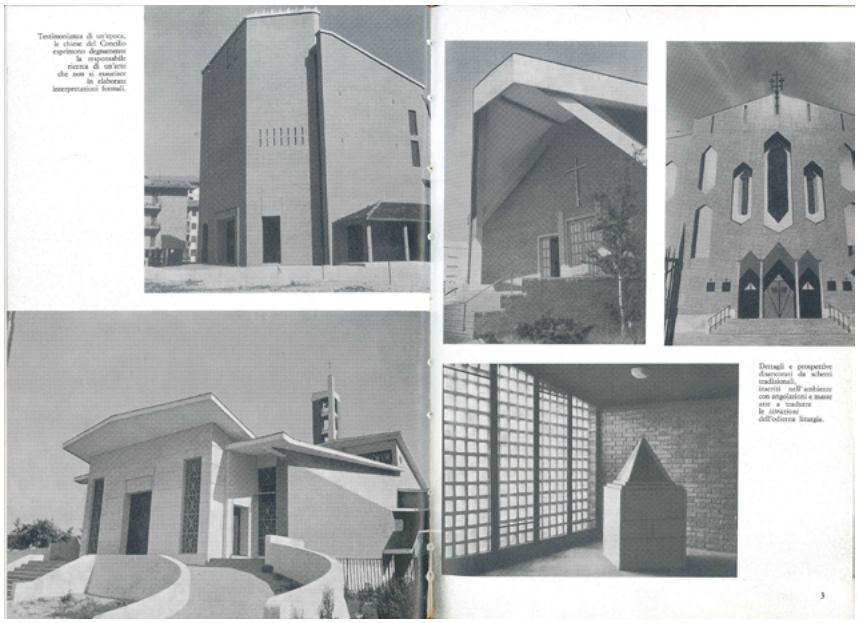
L'idea giungeva felicemente a sottolineare un nuovo rapporto spirituale da Milano al mondo, dalla diocesi ambrosiana alla Chiesa universale; celebrava insieme l'autentica ansia ecumenica del nostro tempo in una simbolica realtà. Ventidue chiese che valessero — per questa e per le future generazioni — a documentare *la piena presenza della nostra città nei fatti e nello spirito dei tempi, per conservarle in fatto la coscienza della sua relazione con la vita totale dell'umanità*.

Questa la premessa, questa la breve storia d'una idea, prestigiosa e superba. Ma quanti programmi si fanno, quanti nascono spontanei e validi nelle intenzioni e poi finiscono per arenarsi e morire?

La stupenda cerchia delle ventidue chiese, invece, corona Milano, il programma è stato studiato, varato e realizzato. Esse onorano lo spirito e documentano che la Fede è ancora patrimonio nobilissimo dei nostri tempi. Ventidue chiese che onorano Milano, la concretezza tenace delle sue migliori iniziative, la generosità toccante del suo cuore cristiano. Ventidue chiese che richiamano la storia dei Concili ed esaltano l'attualità e le dimensioni del Vaticano II. Alla loro costruzione si è posto mano con fi-

1

17b

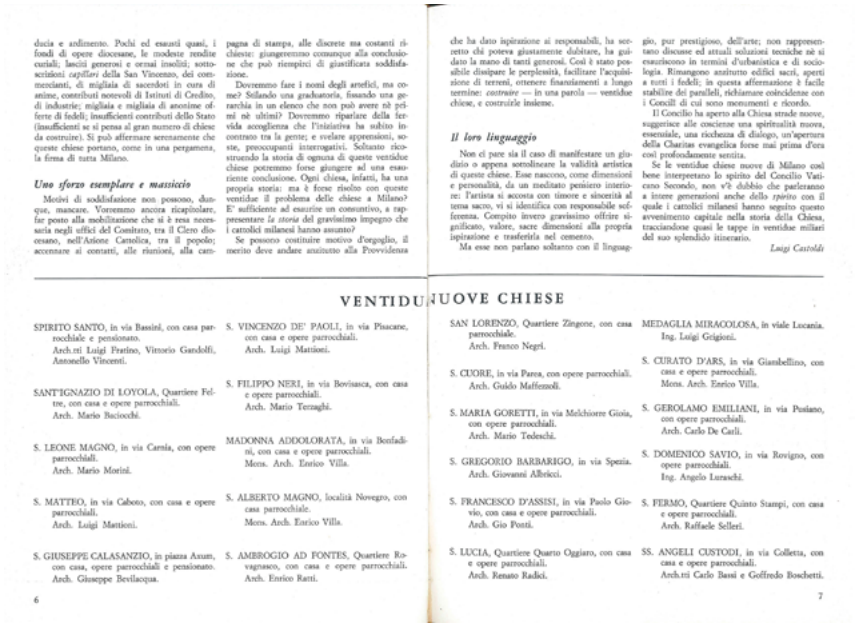


Testimonianza di un'epoca, le chiese del Concilio esprimono degnamente la responsabile ricerca di un'arte che non si esaurisce in elaborate interpretazioni formali.

Dettagli e prospettive disarticolati da schemi tradizionali, inseriti nell'ambiente con angolazioni e masse atte a tradurre le istanze dell'odierna liturgia.

3

17c



ducia e ardimento. Pochi ed esausti quasi, i fondi di opere diocesane, le modeste rendite curiali, lasciti generosi e ormai insoliti, sottoscrizioni *capillari* della San Vincenzo, dei commercianti, di migliaia di sacerdoti in cura di anime, contributi notevoli di Istituti di Credito, di industrie; migliaia e migliaia di anonime offerte di fedeli; insufficienti contributi dello Stato (insufficienti se si pensa al gran numero di chiese da costruire). Si può affermare serenamente che queste chiese portano, come in una pergamena, la firma di tutta Milano.

### *Uno sforzo esemplare e massiccio*

Motivi di soddisfazione non possono, dunque, mancare. Vorremmo ancora ricapitolare, far posto alla mobilitazione che si è resa necessaria negli uffici del Comitato, tra il Clero diocesano, nell'Azione Cattolica, tra il popolo; accennare ai contatti, alle riunioni, alla campagna di stampa, alle discrete ma costanti richieste: giungeremmo comunque alla conclusione che può riempirci di giustificata soddisfazione.

Dovremmo fare i nomi degli artefici, ma come? Stilando una gradatoria, fissando una gerarchia in un elenco che non può avere nè primi nè ultimi? Dovremmo riparlare della fervida accoglienza che l'iniziativa ha subito incontrato tra la gente; e svelare apprensioni, sospette, preoccupanti interrogativi. Soltanto ricostruendo la storia di ognuna di queste ventidue chiese potremmo forse giungere ad una esauriente conclusione. Ogni chiesa, infatti, ha una propria storia: ma è forse risolto con queste ventidue il problema delle chiese a Milano? E' sufficiente ad esaurire un consuntivo, a rappresentare *la storia* del gravissimo impegno che i cattolici milanesi hanno assunto?

Se possono costituire motivo d'orgoglio, il merito deve andare anzitutto alla Provvidenza che ha dato ispirazione ai responsabili, ha secretto chi poteva giustamente dubitare, ha guidato la mano di tanti generosi. Così è stato possibile dissipare le perplessità, facilitare l'acquisizione di terreni, ottenere finanziamenti a lungo termine: *costruire* — in una parola — ventidue chiese, e costruirle insieme.

### *Il loro linguaggio*

Non ci pare sia il caso di manifestare un giudizio o appena sottolineare la validità artistica di queste chiese. Esse nascono, come dimensioni e personalità, da un meditato pensiero interiore: l'artista si accosta con timore e sincerità al tema sacro, vi si identifica con responsabile sofferenza. Compito invero gravissimo offrire significato, valore, sacre dimensioni alla propria ispirazione e trasferirla nel cemento.

Ma esse non parlano soltanto con il linguaggio, pur prestigioso, dell'arte; non rappresentano discusse ed attuali soluzioni tecniche nè si esauriscono in termini d'urbanistica e di sociologia. Rimangono anzitutto edifici sacri, aperti a tutti i fedeli; in questa affermazione è facile stabilire dei parallelli, richiamare coincidenze con i Concili di cui sono monumenti e ricordo.

Il Concilio ha aperto alla Chiesa strade nuove, suggerisce alle coscienze una spiritualità nuova, essenziale, una ricchezza di dialogo, un'apertura della Charitas evangelica forse mai prima d'ora così profondamente sentita.

Se le ventidue chiese nuove di Milano così bene interpretano lo spirito del Concilio Vaticano Secondo, non v'è dubbio che parleranno a intere generazioni anche dello *spirito* con il quale i cattolici milanesi hanno seguito questo avvenimento capitale nella storia della Chiesa, tracciandone quasi le tappe in ventidue milliari del suo splendido itinerario.

*Luigi Castoldi*

## VENTIDUE NUOVE CHIESE

SPIRITO SANTO, in via Bassini, con casa parrocchiale e pensionato.
Arch.tti Luigi Fratino, Vittorio Gandolfi, Antonello Vincenti.

SANT'IGNAZIO DI LOYOLA, Quartiere Forlanini, con casa e opere parrocchiali.
Arch. Mario Bacciocchi.

S. LEONE MAGNO, in via Carnia, con opere parrocchiali.
Arch. Mario Morini.

S. MATTEO, in via Caboto, con casa e opere parrocchiali.
Arch. Luigi Mattioni.

S. GIUSEPPE CALASANZIO, in piazza Axum, con casa, opere parrocchiali e pensionato.
Arch. Giuseppe Bevilacqua.

S. VINCENZO DE' PAOLI, in via Pisacane, con casa e opere parrocchiali.
Arch. Luigi Mattioni.

S. FILIPPO NERI, in via Bovisasca, con casa e opere parrocchiali.
Arch. Mario Terraghi.

MADONNA ADDOLORATA, in via Bonfadini, con casa e opere parrocchiali.
Mons. Arch. Enrico Villa.

S. ALBERTO MAGNO, località Novegro, con casa parrocchiale.
Mons. Arch. Enrico Villa.

S. AMBROGIO AD FONTES, Quartiere Rogoredo, con casa e opere parrocchiali.
Arch. Enrico Ratti.

SAN LORENZO, Quartiere Zingone, con casa parrocchiale.
Arch. Franco Negri.

S. CUORE, in via Parea, con opere parrocchiali.
Arch. Guido Maffezzoli.

S. MARIA GORETTI, in via Melchiorre Gioia, con opere parrocchiali.
Arch. Mario Tedeschi.

S. GREGORIO BARBARIGO, in via Spezia.
Arch. Giovanni Albricci.

S. FRANCESCO D'ASSISI, in via Paolo Giovio, con casa e opere parrocchiali.
Arch. Gio Ponti.

S. LUCIA, Quartiere Quarto Oggiaro, con casa e opere parrocchiali.
Arch. Renato Radici.

MEDAGLIA MIRACOLOSA, in viale Lucania.
Ing. Luigi Grigioni.

S. CURATO D'ARS, in via Giambellino, con casa e opere parrocchiali.
Mons. Arch. Enrico Villa.

S. GEROLAMO EMILIANI, in via Pusiano, con opere parrocchiali.
Arch. Carlo De Carli.

S. DOMENICO SAVIO, in via Revigno, con opere parrocchiali.
Ing. Angelo Lurascbi.

S. FERMO, Quartiere Quinto Stampi, con casa e opere parrocchiali.
Arch. Raffaele Selleri.

SS. ANGELI CUSTODI, in via Colletta, con casa e opere parrocchiali.
Arch.tti Carlo Bassi e Goffredo Boschetti.

6

7

Fig. 17a, Fig. 17b, Fig. 17c
Pages from Luigi Castoldi, "Le chiese del Concilio" (source: *Nuove Chiese*, no. 3, 1965).

There are only a few columns on the churches in the world, with the exception of Ronchamp, to which a special issue was dedicated at the beginning of 1967[93]. The reason for talking about Ronchamp again is masterfully explained by Monsignor Milani; it is a balance that balances the urgencies of Milanese action and the recognition that it "is the Church where the believer -today- would like to pray, like an intimate, familial domestic chapel, all ours. Like very few other new churches in the world. Heritage, therefore, of all Christianity."[94]

In the five years of publication of the magazine, one can feel a change in the horizon in which the construction of Milanese churches moves; at the national level some research experiences have already been closed (*Fede e Arte*, *Chiesa e Quartiere*) and in the Diocese the changes in the social fabric are felt, the movement of 1968, all factors that will lead to a reduction in projects for new churches, especially in the city.

A text by Monsignor Milani, with the eloquent title "But do they really need them? Resigned Addiction"[95] ideally closes the magazine's work. It is a long article in which he reflects on the fact that it is no longer fashionable to build churches, on a rampant sense of "skepticism about the need for other new churches"[96]; this, however, must be opposed with all force because "churches are necessary: in masonry, wood, concrete, brick, glass and aluminum; with a horizontal structure or with a vertical momentum, with a plan or a Latin cross, surrounded by the churchyard or high on the hillock, they will in any case represent an indestructible element of the spirituality of all times"[97].

## "The Archbishop's Construction Site'"[98]

In the Italian panorama, the Diocese of Milan stands as a central place for sacred architecture in those years, already recognised at that time as a special place for the quantity of its realisations, combined with the cultural and design liveliness of its professionals; under Montini's guidance, it is so active in construction that it is described in the pages of *Fede e Arte* as "The Archbishop's construction site".[99]

1969, the year in which the experience of *Nuove Chiese* came to an end, was the final time limit of this period of enormous growth of parish structures in the area. In the 1970s, the realisations continued, but with smaller numbers and without the same vitality and fervour that animated the previous years.

It is very difficult to give an exact number of how many churches were actually

93 *N 1 – Speciale*, *NC,* no. 1 (1967).

94 Aldo Milani, "Presentazione", *Nuove Chiese,* no. 1 speciale (1967): 2.

95 Aldo Milani, "Ma occorrono davvero?" *Nuove Chiese,* no. 1 (1969): 2-9.

96 Milani, "Ma occorrono davvero?", 9.

97 Milani, "Ma occorrono davvero?", 9.

98 An in-depth study on Milan has already been published by me: Laura Lazzaroni, "Il cantiere dell'Arcivescovo. Esperienze milanesi nelle riviste degli anni cinquanta e sessanta", *Rivista dell'Istituto per la Storia dell'Arte Lombarda,* no. 40 (2023): 81-90.

99 Aldo Milani, "Il cantiere dell'arcivescovo di Milano", *Fede e Arte,* no. 3 (1962): 216-223.

built at that time, but here are some indications from the books of the time: "Le nuove chiese della Diocesi"[100] reports sixty buildings in the city of Milan between 1950 and 1960; the book published in 1964 as a tribute to Pope Paul VI,[101] "Le sue Chiese" reports the construction of 123 buildings throughout the Diocese in his eight years of leadership; finally, a count relating to the twenty years analysed in the volume by Professor Cecilia De Carli[102] brings the number to about one hundred and seventy in the entire Ambrosian territory, of which just under half in the city of Milan.

It is a constructive effort unparalleled in Italy, considering that it relies almost entirely on economic resources found in the territory, an element that makes the Archdiocese of Milan in those years an absolutely lively and in fact autonomous laboratory, both from the decision-making and financial point of view, that relies on the general instances of renewal of the Church of those years brought forward by Montini first as archbishop of Milan and then as pontiff.

Milan has a large group of cultured and committed professionals, who deal with new celebratory instances and new spatial forms, participate in national congresses and promote reflections on the different magazines. And Milan is home to two important magazines that observe the new architecture from this privileged position, but all the magazines deal with what was happening in the Ambrosian Diocese. The magazines of those years on the whole illustrate, or at least leave traces, of about eighty projects; again, each magazine chooses what to present according to its line of research, and it is interesting to note overlaps and differences.

The period of greatest attention to Milanese architectural events on the magazines coincided with the presence of Montini in Milan. At that time, *Fede e Arte* and *Chiesa e Quartiere* published their most significant substantial reviews and monographic articles, which contained as many as ten buildings in common with the two magazines[103], a substantial aggregation of projects, probably favoured by the temporal proximity of the publications.

*Fede e Arte* publishes thirty-five Milanese projects condensed into three articles, dated 1956, 1959 and 1962 respectively.

The most complete text is the double monographic issue of 1962 dedicated to Milan, called "The Archbishop's Construction Site", which collects about thirty buildings. It is the most substantial review among those present in the magazines and includes churches already built and works in the pipeline, the vast majority of which are in the municipality of Milan.

Each project is presented with a fact sheet, essentially composed of graphic

100 Arturo Faccioli, "Le nuove chiese di Milano: 1950-1960", Arcivescovado, Comitato per le nuove chiese, Milano, 1962.

101 Comitato per le nuove chiese Milano, *Le sue chiese* (Milano: Comitato per le nuove chiese di Milano, 1964).

102 Cecilia De Carli, *Le nuove chiese della Diocesi di Milano 1945-1993* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1994).

103 The churches present in both are:
Castiglioni A. – Castiglioni P. G., Milan, S. Gabriele Arcangelo; Cerutti E., Milan, S. Maria Liberatrice; Figini L. – Pollini G., Milan, Madonna dei Poveri; Fratino L. – Gandolfi V. – Vincenti A., Milano, S. Spirito; Galesio A., Milan, S. Eugenio; Gardella I., Cesate, St. Francis of Assisi; Mangiarotti A. – Morassutti B., Baranzate, Our Lady of Mercy; Tedeschi M. – Magistretti V., Milan, S. Maria Nascente at QT8; Tedeschi M. – Ramous C., Milan, S. Marcellina and S. Giuseppe alla Certosa (project completed).

and photographic material; all the fact sheets are without commentary and only indicate the architect's name, title of the building and address. The documentation collected is quite heterogeneous, just like the projects presented.

*Chiesa e Quartiere* publishes seventeen projects, ten of which are contained in a double monographic issue of 1959 entitled "Milano di Dio. The problem of new churches analysed from a pastoral, urban, artistic point of view".[104] The work is the result of the collaboration between the Centro di Studio Bolognese and the Centro di Studio Ambrosiano and aims to document the research work that took place in Milan in those years, starting with Montini's commitment to the "New Churches Campaign". Milan and Bologna worked, as Lercaro says in his editorial, to "give to the houses of the Lord the living language of our time, but worthy, and beautiful, and above all sacred."

The main themes are first framed, such as the state of the art from a pastoral point of view and the relationship with town planning, and then ten church projects built in the previous three years are presented. The unifying feature of the ten chosen churches[105] is that they were built in the previous three years and are "different attempts to fully express the sacred theme with the architectural means of our time"[106], as the Editorial Board points out. Each building is presented in detail, with a brief report by the designers, photographs of the whole and details, technical drawings, and possibly photos of the model.

*Chiesa e Quartiere* also publishes some individual projects in the following years, as the church in Rescaldina by Magistretti[107], with an in-depth article in 1960; and other three in the following year[108].

In 1966 the last project for Milan was presented, the church of Santa Trinità by the Swiss architect Fritz Metzger[109].

*Domus* makes a completely different choice: it publishes only nine projects related to the Ambrosian Diocese, spread over the years, six of which are described in extensive monographs and three are reinserted in larger texts. *Domus* publishes the churches that it considers to be excellencies, or at least important in the architectural panorama of the time; it is certainly a small number, but it brings together qualitatively interesting examples.

The six monographs present: the Church of Baranzate, with two separate articles, first at the design stage and then once realised; the Chapel for the Mother and Child Village at QT8 **[Fig. 18]**, in which the works of the Pomodoro brothers

---

104 "Milano di Dio. Il problema delle nuove chiese analizzato sotto il profilo pastorale urbanistico artistico", *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 9-10 (1959): 17-20.

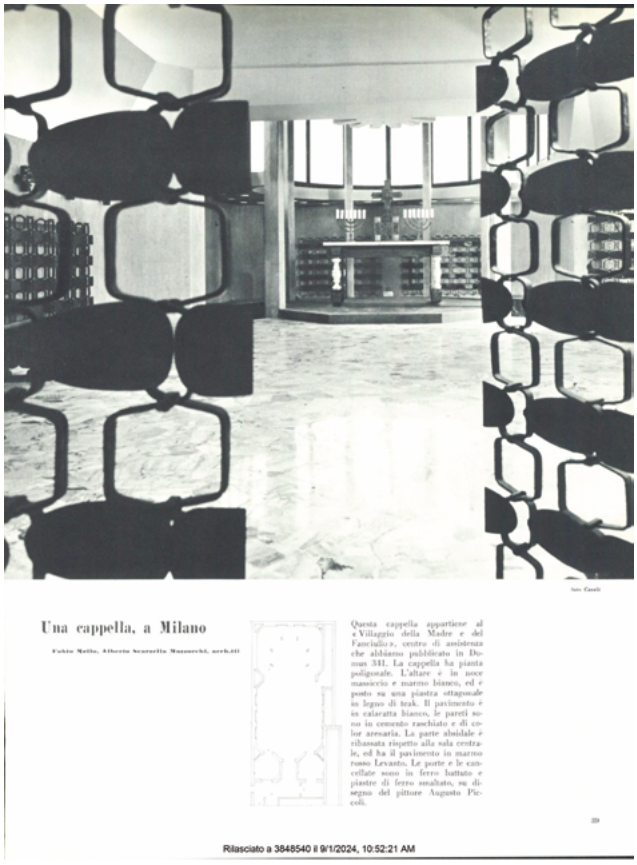
105 For the complete list, please refer to my thesis (see footnote 1) or to Laura Lazzaroni, "Il cantiere dell'arcivescovo. Esperienze milanesi nelle riviste degli anni cinquanta e sessanta", *Rivista dell'Istituto per la Storia dell'Arte Lombarda*, no. 40 (2023): 81-90.

106 N.D.C.D., "Dieci nuove chiese a Milano", *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 9-10 (1959): 30-32.

107 Vico Magistretti, "Chiesa a Rescaldina (Milano)", *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 15 (1960): 57-66.

108 Augusto Magnaghi and Mario Terzaghi, "Nuova chiesa parrocchiale al quartiere Bovisasca a Milano", *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 18 (1961): 53-54; Luigi Fratino and Vittorio Gandolfi and Antonello Vincenti, "Chiesa parrocchiale in via Bassini a Milano", *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 18 (1961): 55-59; Angelo Galesio, "Chiesa e complesso parrocchiale di S. Eugenio in via del Turchino a Milano", *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 18 (1961): 60-66.

109 Fritz Metzger, "Centro comunitario studentesco della Trinità a Milano," *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 40 (1966): 26-27.

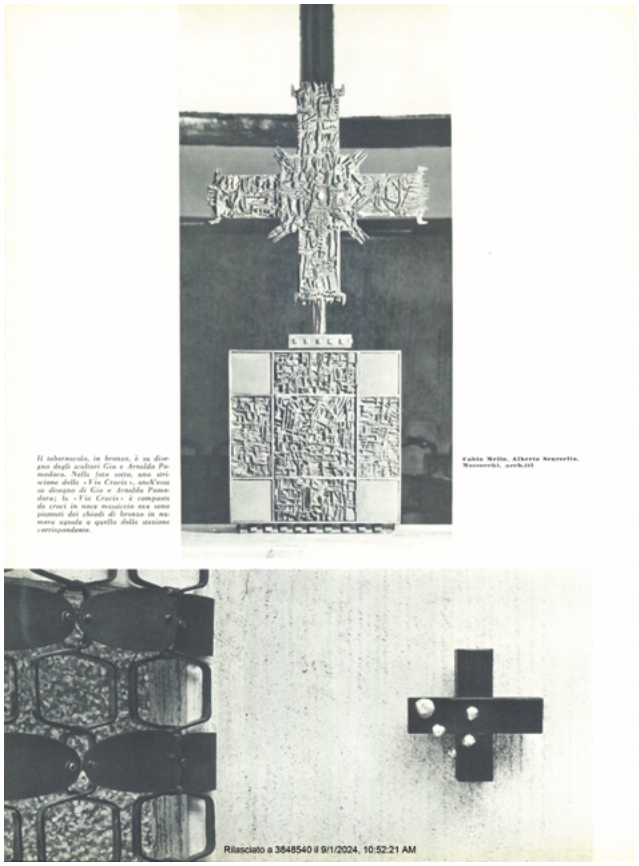


Una cappella, a Milano

Fabio Nelli, Alberto Sezzerlin Mazzorchi, archi.ti

Questa cappella appartiene al «Villaggio della Madre e del Fanciullo», centro di assistenza che abbiamo pubblicato in Domus 341. La cappella ha pianta poligonale. L'altare è in noce massiccio e marmo bianco, ed è posto su una piastra ottagonale in legno di teak. Il pavimento è in calcarata bianco, le pareti sono in cemento raschiato e di colore arenaria. La parte absidale è ribassata rispetto alla sala centrale, ed ha il pavimento in marmo rosso Levanto. Le porte e le cancellate sono in ferro battuto e piastre di ferro smaltato, su disegno del pittore Augusto Piccoli.

Rilasciato a 3848540 il 9/1/2024, 10:52:21 AM



Rilasciato a 3848540 il 9/1/2024, 10:52:21 AM

18a 18b

stand out; the church at the Ospedale S. Carlo by Ponti, presented in a long and detailed photographic article, and finally three projects by Enrico Castiglioni: an ideal basilica, not realised **[Fig. 19]**; the church of S. Enrico in Prospiano, and the project for the church of Sant'Anna in Busto Arsizio, later realised in the 1970s with other forms and other designers.

*Arte Cristiana* makes still different choices; it presents eighteen projects, about two-thirds of them in monographic articles, the others in the 'Religious Building Surroundings' section. The realisations promoted in the individual texts are mostly the direct work of exponents of Scuola Beato Angelico or of architects appreciated by them, such as Antonello Vincenti, also a member of the Diocesan Commission for Sacred Art. Overall, these are "internally approved" projects and therefore presented as exemplary. Most of them have no counterpart in other magazines.

More interesting, in the context of the comparison with other publications, are the works included in the section "Intorni di edilizia religiosa" (Religious building surroundings); the editor, the architect Sergio Paolo Caligaris, focuses on some Milanese churches after the Second World War, which had never been considered by *Arte Cristiana*, such as the Glass Church[110] in Baranzate. Built ten years earlier, Caligaris describes it and criticises its insertion in the urban context, expressing fairly sharp judgments, in line with the editorial choices of the magazine in which he writes. These articles, as the title suggests, look at the

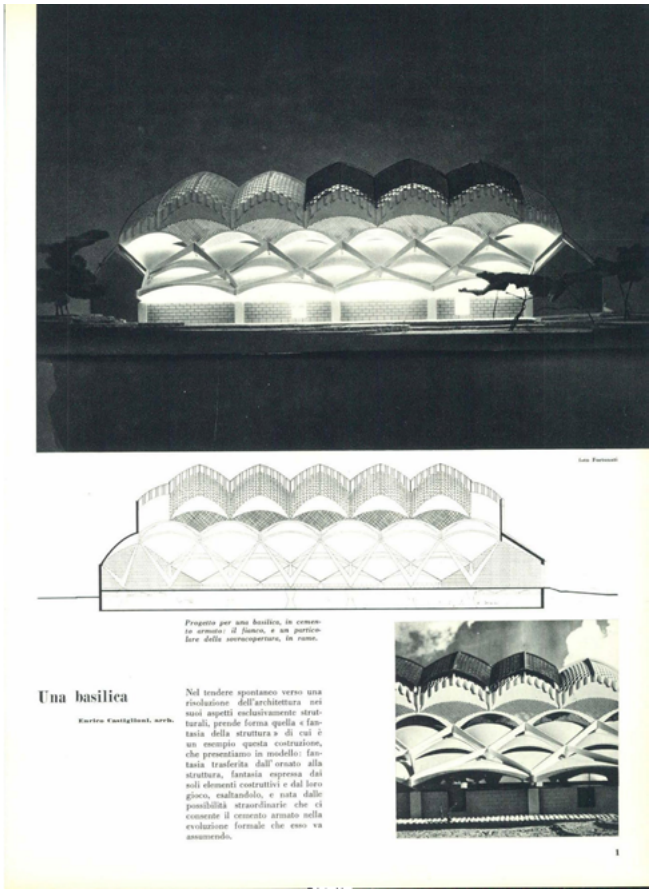
Fig. 18a. and Fig. 18b
Full article: "Una cappella, a Milano" (source: *Domus*, n. 352, 1959 – *Courtesy of Archivio Domus – Editoriale Domus S.p.A.*).

110 Sergio P. Caligaris, "I recinti: Armeno - Carpugnino - Baveno – Vettigné – Serapo", *Arte Cristiana,* no. 570 (1969): 315-328.

churches from the outside, in their relationship with the city; it is the only unitary set of texts on *Arte Cristiana* that analyse the relationship between building and neighborhood, a theme debated at the theoretical level in those years and here translated into a specific practical case.

Although the number of published buildings is rather large in total, there are basically only two points of contact in the Milanese context: the Glass Church by Mangiarotti and Morassutti and the church of S. Gabriele Arcangelo in Milan by Achille and Piergiacomo Castiglioni.

*Arte Cristiana* presents both with a delay and only specifically for their relationship with the urban context; *Domus* narrates the Glass Church with a splendid service, while it only mentions S, Gabriele Arcangelo in a much larger text; *Fede e Arte* succinctly presents these two buildings in a file, just like all the others; *Chiesa e Quartiere* offers more detail, with reports and photographs. Each publication adds a piece to the overall mosaic.


Una basilica

Enrico Castiglioni, arch.

Nel tendere spontaneo verso una risoluzione dell'architettura nei suoi aspetti esclusivamente strutturali, prende forma quella « fantasia della struttura » di cui è un esempio questa costruzione, che presentiamo in modello: fantasia trasferita dall'ornato alla struttura, fantasia espressa dai soli elementi costruttivi e dal loro gioco, esaltandolo, e nata dalle possibilità straordinarie che ci consente il cemento armato nella evoluzione formale che esso va assumendo.



A text written by Montini in 1962, while he was still archbishop of Milan, marks the point on the architectural research of that period, indicating what the new churches of the city are: they are works that have now consciously and profoundly detached themselves from the traditional and conventional forms of the churches of the past, whether ancient or recent. "In them, one will perceive the restless search for novelty; restless, but immediately uniform, so that one will see a recurring manner, a common style emerging in the new architectural lines, which is now sufficiently defined to characterise our historical and artistic period".[111]

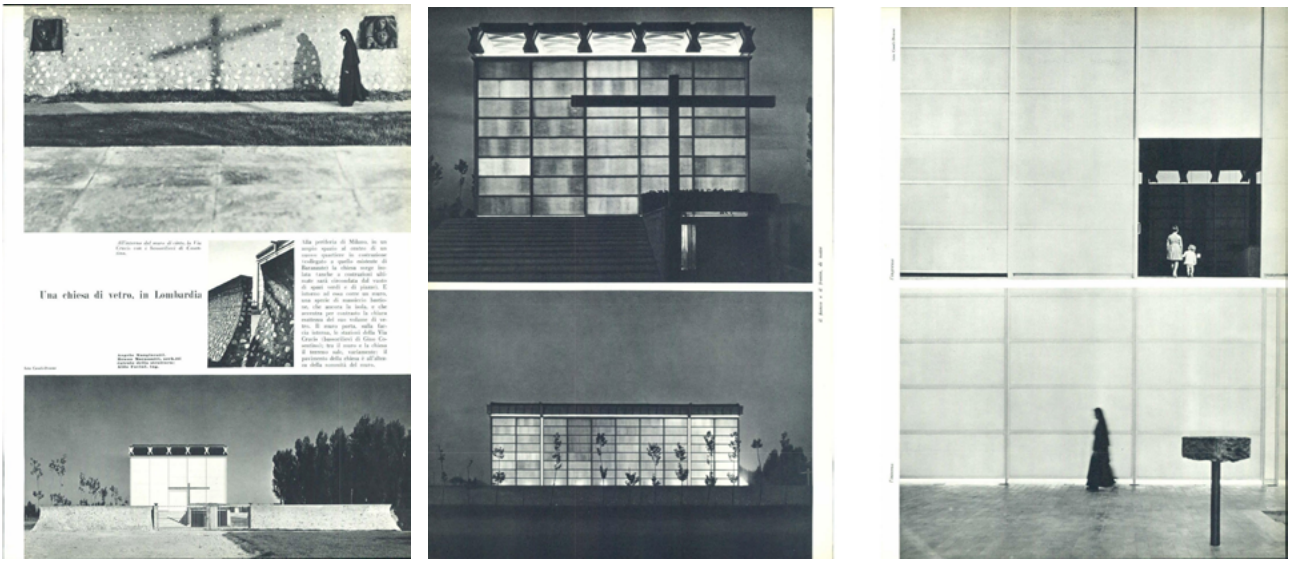
## Assonances and Divergences. First Conclusions of a Research Path

What is presented here shows in brief the enormous documentary work on new churches carried out by architecture magazines from 1950 to 1970. It is an incredible collection of documentary material, analysis and research on spaces and their fundamental link with liturgical use, which also underwent profound changes in the same period. The paths of these researches are not unitary, but precisely for this reason richer and more stimulating, testifying to a creative fervour and public attention on the subject at different levels in society.

It is difficult to say precisely how many buildings have actually been published in the twenty years analysed, it is likely to be more than two hundred architectures in Italy, not counting foreign ones. The difficulty of a precise count is given

Fig. 19
Pages from "Una basilica. Enrico Castiglioni, arch." (source: *Domus*, n. 287, 1953 – *Courtesy of Archivio Domus – Editoriale Domus S.p.A.*).

111 Giovanni B. Montini, "Queste nuove chiese", *Fede e Arte,* no. 3 (1962): 224-225.




20a 20b

by the fact that the methods of presentation are very varied; they range from monographic articles on a single project to reviews, up to just a photograph of a detail or an analysis of the decorative apparatus; to all this must be added the documented projects that were not realised. To give some broad indications, and just to remain in Italian architecture, *Fede e Arte* published more than one hundred churches in series among those financed by Italian laws, to which other architectures were added in the following years. Looking at what has been published concerning the Diocese of Milan in the various magazines, there are about eighty buildings. In this great mass of material, the points of contact between the various magazines are more sporadic than one might think, or rather, the contacts are continuous and there is often a common cultural substratum, but the individual architectures narrated by several voices are not so numerous.

In the end, there are only two projects presented in all five magazines: Ronchamp and the church on the Autostrada del Sole.

The plateau of points of contact is slightly widened if we consider the buildings published in extensive articles in at least three magazines; *Nuove Chiese* remains somewhat excluded from these comparisons in general, due to its brevity in time and strong polarization on Milan.

Among the Italian works considered most representative in the publications of the time are the Carmelo del Bonmoschetto by Ponti, the Glass church by Mangiarotti and Morassutti **[Fig. 20]**, a chapel in a holiday resort in Maremma by Ico and Luisa Parisi[112] **[Fig. 21]**. In the quantity of texts dealing with new churches, this is a very small number.

Normally the publication of an architectural space is done to show a positive example; the only exceptions are Ronchamp and Vence, which are observed and debated, and the texts of *Arte Cristiana*, which does not spare even negative reviews of certain buildings while publishing them.

Fig. 20a and Fig. 20b
Pages from "Una chiesa di vetro, in Lombardia. Angelo Mangiarotti, Bruno Morassutti, arch.tti." (source: *Domus*, n. 351, 1959 – *Courtesy of Archivio Domus – Editoriale Domus S.p.A.*).

112 "Un centro per le vacanze in Maremma. Studio "La Ruota" di Ico e Luisa Parisi; collaboratore, Lamberto Marsili, ing", *Domus,* no. 439 (1966): 46-54; "Nuova chiesa per un complesso turistico alberghiero", *Arte Cristiana,* no. (1966): 259-262; Ugo Schnell, "L'edificio sacro quale Casa del Logos", *Fede e Arte,* no. 4 (1966): 448-455.

Looking at what was written about Vence and Ronchamp is interesting because it shows the great distance of thought of the different magazines, especially in the 1950s.

Matisse's Chapel is the first disruptive work of the post-war period discussed in all the magazines, albeit at different times; the articles have a very different slant. As we have already seen, *Arte Cristiana* presents it in an absolutely negative way; the first point of contrast is the non-recognizability of the figures represented, and secondly, the little prominence given to the altar. Quite different is the attitude of *Domus,* which exalts Matisse's artistic gesture and the joy emanating from it.

Initially, even *Fede e Arte*, in the words of Cardinal Costantini, criticised the non-recognizability of the images; only a few years later, however, in 1958, Monsignor Fallani, in the same pages, writes that "the stained glass window creates a light that detaches us from the usual light of day and sets us on the paths of hope; this is what happened in ancient cathedrals, ... this is the greatest enchantment of the little chapel of Vence."[113] The theme of abstraction is addressed again in 1958 in the pages of *Chiesa e Quartiere*[114] by Father Avril, who recognised in Matisse's work a capacity to translate emotions that "would not know how to free themselves in any other way." Different sensitivities and different points of view.

The other place that arouses enormous interest and obliges all magazines to confront it is Le Corbusier's Ronchamp chapel.

Among the convinced supporters are *Domus*, with Ponti inviting people to go to Ronchamp[115], an "extraordinary formal invention", exciting on a religious level, and the editorial staff of *Chiesa e Quartiere*.

On the pages of *Fede e Arte* there is more caution, not to say opposition; in 1954 there is a long analysis on the absence of images, something impossible to accept if one wants to build an "ideal type" of Catholic church, and moreover of the countryside. Again in 1959 the architect Vago, called to give a lecture on French architecture in Rome, criticised the work as "architecture of appearance",[116] a sign that a part of the Catholic world had not yet dissolved its reservations about Ronchamp.

In a somewhat unexpected way, *Arte Cristiana* does not enter directly into the debate, but chooses to republish an article by *Art Sacré*[117] postponing comments to later notes, which, however, will never be published; the French text highlights the fact that it is a sanctuary, a mystical place, and this is the point on which *Arte Cristiana* stands, implicitly removing it from the "church" category, a little like the one written about Vence.

---

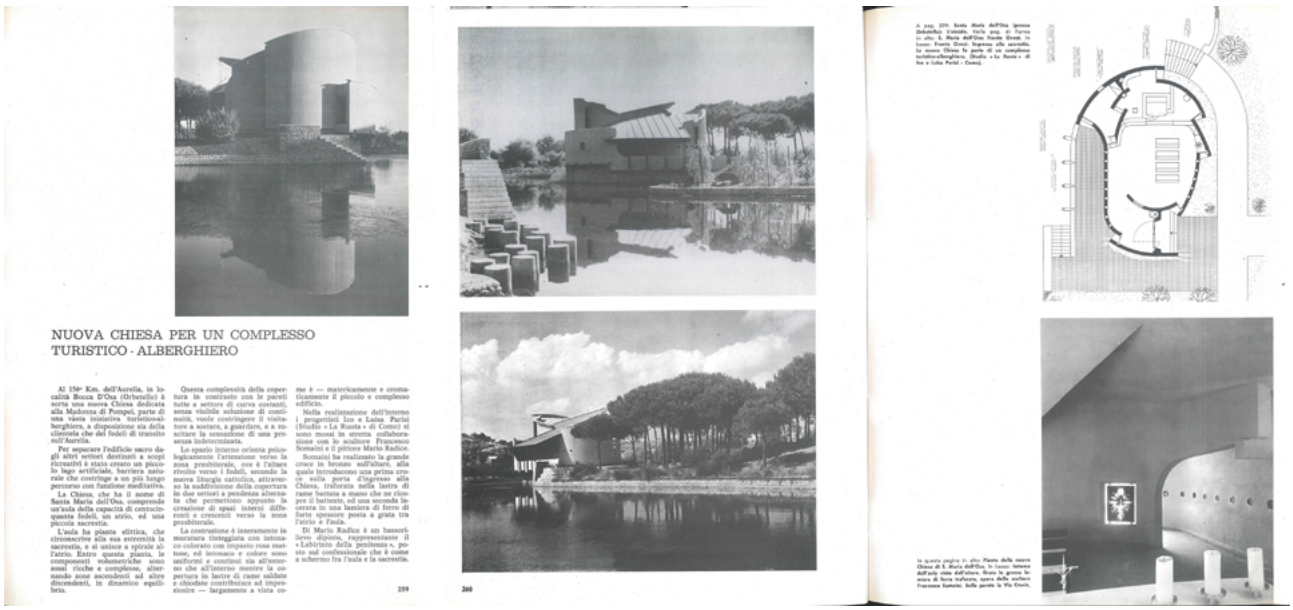
113 Giovanni. Fallani, "Chiese nuove dell'ultimo decennio", *Fede e Arte,* no. 12 (1958): 432-435.

114 Albert M. Avril, "Henri Matisse", *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 6 (1958): 17.

115 "Una cappella di Le Corbusier", *Domus,* no. 288 (1953) 02-03; Gio Ponti, "Invito ad andare a Ronchamp", *Domus,* no. 323 (1956): 1-2.

116 Pierre Vago, "Il momento attuale dell'architettura in Francia", *Fede e Arte,* no. 1 (1959): 66.

117 "Si parla di Ronchamp (Cherubini da *L'Art Sacrè*)", *Arte Cristiana*, no. 443 (1956): 34.




21a 21b

The Tent on the Autostrada del Sole is a bit like the Italian equivalent of Ronchamp, everyone goes there on pilgrimage, everyone writes about it with extensive photographic and textual reports [Fig. 21].

*Chiesa e Quartiere* recounts it in a monographic issue dedicated to its designer; Ponti writes a tribute to Michelucci in *Domus*, publishing large-format photographs; *Arte Cristiana* also interprets this work positively; the least enthusiastic is perhaps the editor of *Fede e Arte*, Italicus, who raises some doubts about the success of the work and expresses reservations about the presence of works of art in relation to architecture.

Another aspect that is surprising when looking at which buildings are published in several magazines is that the works chosen as the most representative, or at least perceived as such in the debate, are mostly chapels, shrines, churches that are not the seat of a community. Yet parish churches make up the overhelming majority of the realizations of those years, and the number of buildings published from time to time well describes the multiplicity of the projects. It is perhaps precisely the breadth of the ensemble that makes it improbable to choose the same buildings; each magazine decides what to present according to its own critical slant or territorial affiliation.

The fact that the number of projects presented in several magazines is really small compared to the number of churches built and published does not mean, however, that the architectural critics of those years were not able to select the most interesting works.

The sensibility of some of the designers emerges from the whole; their works are perhaps featured in more than one magazine, each publication simply chooses a different church, as already emerged for the churches of Gandolfi, or of Ponti himself, or for Figini and Pollini of whom *Domus* presents several works, but not their most famous Milanese church, the Madonna dei Poveri. In return, the architects won a prize for it as part of the Vis Securit - Domus 1955 Competition, co-organised by the same publishing house. The work would later

Fig. 21a. and Fig. 21b. Pages from "Nuova chiesa per un complesso turistico alberghiero" (source: *Arte Cristiana*, no. 538, 1966).

be mentioned several times in Domus, for example by Gillo Dorfles[118]; or, a few years later, by architect Pica[119]. All simple notes, indicative of the continuous cross-reference between books, magazines and architecture that existed in the culture of those years.

The comparisons presented so far were related to works that are observed in their design completeness with monographic articles. The case of reviews is different, here the points of contact between different magazines obviously increase.

In this respect, the comparison between *Arte Cristiana* and the two magazines of Rome and Bologna deserves a closer look.

*Arte Cristiana* made an absolutely personal selection of architectures; in the 1950s, it published a number of reviews which, however, showed churches that were totally different from what *Fede e Arte* chose and were largely different from the churches presented at the Bologna Exhibition in 1955. Most of the buildings narrated in *Arte Cristiana* did not find an echo in the Bologna Exhibition of 1955[120], and, conversely, the works presented in Bologna were not published by *Arte Cristiana* in the following years, marking different points of observation of the new architecture.

In the first half of the 1950s, on the other hand, there were repeated convergences between *Arte Cristiana* and *Fede e Arte* due to affinity of views on the themes of sacred art and iconography, less evident in the documentation of architecture. Both aim to promote their work, so *Fede e Arte* documents what is approved by the Pontifical Commission, while *Arte Cristiana* promotes its achievements, or what is very close to its canons. Other common points are those more properly related to the liturgical sphere, especially with regard to attention to official texts, norms, and the Pope's speeches.

A theme that the editorial staff of *Arte Cristiana*, *Fede e Arte* and, to a lesser extent, *Chiesa e Quartiere* are confronted with is that of the planimetric configuration of buildings and its compliance with the needs of the liturgy.

Other topics dealt with by the three Catholic magazines are competitions for new churches, architecture exhibitions, and study Weeks on Sacred Art, all valuable moments of exchange and confrontation between technicians and ecclesiastical structure. Obviously also in this field the positions are different and the reading of each event in its complexity emerges from the polyphony of the whole.

The reasons why a magazine favours one work or another by the same author may differ, but the amount of buildings constructed in the post-war period is such that there is ample room for choice. There is certainly a time element to be taken into account and there are reasons for balance in the individual magazines, so that having published one project by such an architect probably pre-

---

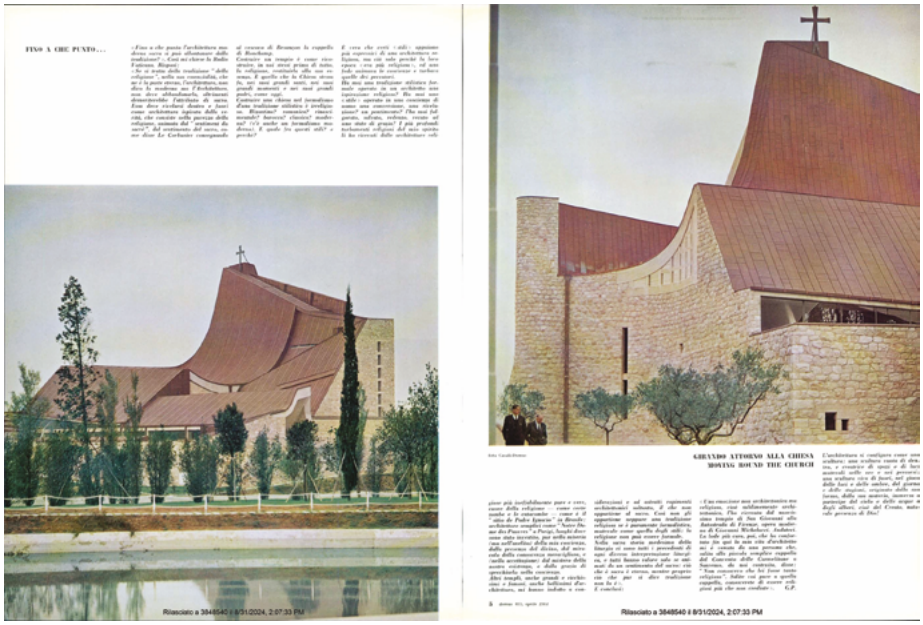
118 Gillo Dorfles, review of Eugenio Gentili Tedeschi, *Figini e Pollini* (Milano: Il Balcone, 1959), *Domus,* no. 361 (1959): 30.

119 Agnoldomenico Pica, "Un libro su Figini e Pollini", *Domus,* no. 415 (1964): 1-2.

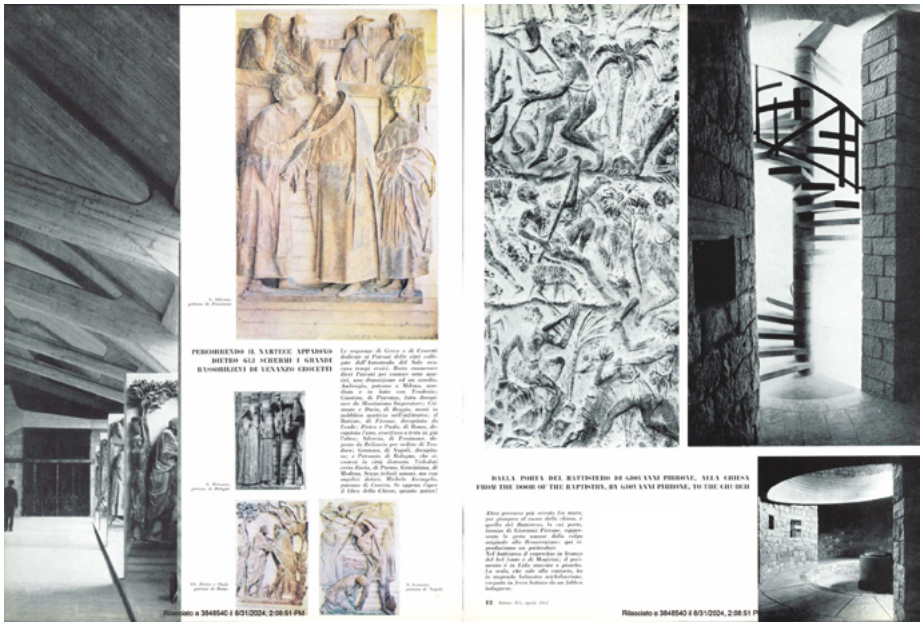
120 Mino Borghi, "I Congresso d'architettura sacra a Bologna", *Fede e Arte,* no. 11 (1955): 347-348.




22a




22b




22c

Fig. 22a., Fig. 22b., Fig. 22c. Pages from Gio Ponti, "A Michelucci, sulla chiesa di San Giovanni" (source: *Domus*, n. 413, 1964 – *Courtesy of Archivio Domus – Editoriale Domus S.p.A.*).

cludes the publication of another one shortly afterwards. Ponti himself did not consider it necessary to propose all his religious architecture to his public, but he choses two exemplary ones: the Carmelo in Sanremo and the church of the Ospedale S. Carlo in Milan; on these he built a more general narrative of his thought. Of Ponti, however, *Fede e Arte* only publishes the church of S. Francesco al Fopponino, already planned when the review on Milan came out. *Chiesa e Quartiere* instead only published the Carmelo. *Arte Cristiana* chooses the Carmelo and S. Francesco, but the latter only in an urban analysis.

The need to make a selection is also felt among the works of undoubtedly prolific architects, such as Gandolfi, whose four projects for the Milanese territory were published; *Chiesa e Quartiere* and *Nuove Chiese* present the Madonna del Lago at Idroscalo di Segrate, *Fede e Arte* chooses a project that will not be realised for S. Ildefonso in Milan; *Nuove chiese* also presents Maria Regina in Pioltello and S. Francesco di Sales in Milan; *Domus* , on the other hand, does not publish any Milanese church by Gandolfi, but it is the only magazine to have published his first church, in Fornovo nell'Emilia, in 1950.

On the whole, a polyphonic and unassuming account of the sacred architecture built in those years emerges, offering possibilities for investigation on different levels, for example between the works of a single architect, or parallels and differences in specific contexts.

## Some Final Thoughts

The sacred architecture of the period analysed is an immense heritage, with an incredible wealth of works seeking new forms, suitable for celebration and in dialogue with society and its urban spaces. Placing the articles published in different magazines in parallel improves the general understanding of the picture of those years.

In the light of what has been presented and discussed so far, I try to highlight a few key points of each magazine.

*Arte Cristiana* has the peculiarity of being able to propose its ideal by publishing works created by its own circle of designers. Reading the theoretical articles and looking at the buildings, however, a sense of misalignment between the theoretical writings and the proposed realizations emerges at several points. The texts argue in favour of a modernity in materials and architectural forms, which must be simple and functional for the liturgy, aligned with the demands coming from various parts of the Catholic world that found fulfillment in the Council. However, the architectures realised and published in *Arte Cristiana* are based on spatially classical forms with a marked figurativeness in the decorative apparatus that refers to previous traditions. An alignment to tradition that does not express itself in the liturgical tradition but appreciates a tradition of spatial forms and decoration. In this sense, it is not surprising that the pages of *Arte Cristiana* show works that are largely different from other magazines.

*Fede e Arte* stands out as the magazine that best expresses theoretical positions and offers its readers a broad outlook and search for a method. The care in

the presentation of the projects does not reach the refinement and precision in the graphic design that can be found in *Domus* or *Chiesa e Quartiere*, but the pontifical magazine is the place of the great ecclesiastical debate. Under the guidance of Monsignor Fallani, topics and views on the international scene are broadened, meetings, conferences and study weeks are organised, the results of which flow into the pages of the magazine; It is a stimulating, lively, incredibly active framework, which holds a very high level in the fifteen years of publication.

***Chiesa e Quartiere***, compared to all other publications, pays special attention to the relationship of new churches with town planning and the city. Readers are invited to participate in the discussion with letters sent to the editorial office. The quality of the project presentations is very high, with substantial texts, beautiful pictures and numerous theoretical insights.

***New Churches*** recounts Milan, the fervour of those years, focuses on "doing", building relationships with civil society, raising funds, marking the territory with a Christian presence. The living force of building, of making sense, is stronger than precision in presentation, uniformity or graphic completeness.

***Domus*** writes from a position that could be defined as secular, but observes sacred architecture in three hundred and sixty degrees, often dwelling on the correspondence between form and function. It favours the presentation of the individual project over reviews, presents very diverse works and does not limit its gaze to Italian architecture. The chosen buildings show different types of places of worship, without size limits, moving with ease from small chapels to basilicas, unlike the magazines of the Holy See or Dioceses that focus their attention on parish churches. The guide for the editorials staff's choices is the curious and intelligent gaze of Ponti, who writes the majority of the texts on the churches he publishes, further confirmation of his sensitivity and interest in the combination of religion and architecture.

The magazines record the theoretical acquisitions and propose to their audience the images of the works that, with new sensitivity, translate theoretical reasoning into forms and spaces. The image is the physical medium that allows storytelling without being present in a place; the image is the announcement of an architecture, "which will then be an image of itself (architectures being images, in space)," writes Ponti[121] **[Fig. 22]**.

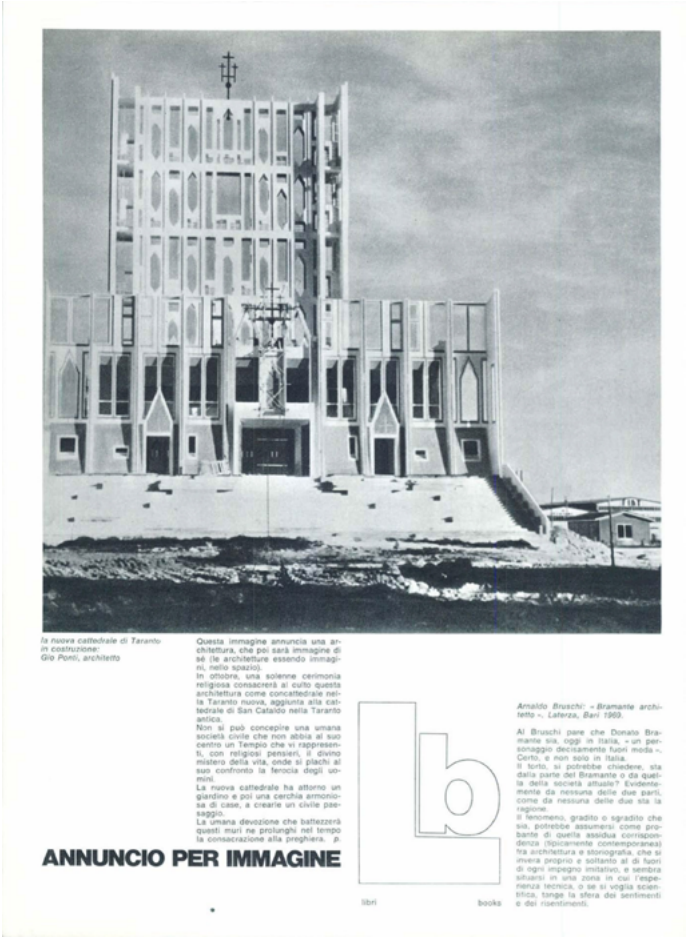



Fig. 23
Full article: Ponti, Gio. "Annuncio per immagine" (source: *Domus*, n. 490, 1970 – *Courtesy of Archivio Domus – Editoriale Domus S.p.A.*).

121 Gio Ponti, "Annuncio per immagine", *Domus,* no. 490 (1970): 2.

Today, fifty years later, those images and those texts tell us about a unique historical moment, a choral construction of places that still mark their space in the city, a bit like Archbishop Montini hoped for when presenting the new churches of Milan: "We trust that the observant eyes of these new Churches will become indulgent and benevolent [...] for the hope that they project from the decade of their appearance in the panorama of the Lombard metropolis onto those of the future"[122].

122 Giovanni Battista Montini, introduzione a "Le nuove chiese di Milano 1950-1960", in *Le nuove chiese di Milano: 1950-1960*, ed. Arturo Faccioli (Milano: Arcivescovado-Comitato per le nuove chiese, 1962), 9.

## Bibliography


Agnello, Giuseppe. "Il concorso per il tempio alla Madonnina delle Lacrime." *Arte Cristiana*, no. 454 (1957): 79-86.

Alce, Venturino. "Le nuove chiese della diocesi di Bologna." *Arte Cristiana*, no. 417 (1953): 121-129.

Alfano, Mario. "L'attività della Pontificia Commissione Centrale per l'Arte Sacra in Italia." *Fede e Arte*, no. 12 (1953): 376-377.

Alfano, Mario. "Sul Santuario della Madonna delle Lacrime in Siracusa." *Fede e Arte*, no. 4-5 (1958): 171-175.

"Ancora sul santuario di Siracusa." *Arte Cristiana*, no. 456 (1957): 130.

"Architetto mons. Giuseppe Polvara." *Arte Cristiana,* no. 572 (1970): 33-34.

"Architetto Mons. Giuseppe Polvara per trent'anni direttore di *Arte Cristiana*." *Arte Cristiana*, no. 572 (1970): 33-34.

"Architettura sacra in Germania." *Fede e Arte*, no. 3 monographic issue (1959).

*Attività del Comitato nuove chiese 1959*. Tip. Igap Impresa Gen. Affissioni Pubblicità, 1959.

Avril, Albert M. "Henry Matisse." *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 6 (1958): 17.

Benedetti, Sandro. *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee: il caso italiano.* Milano: Jaca Book, 2000.

Bodini, Massimo C. "La cappella torinese della *Pro iuventute* 'D. C. Gnocchi'." *Fede e Arte,* no. 2 (1966): 228-239.

Borghi, Mino. "I Congresso d'architettura sacra a Bologna." *Fede e Arte,* no. 11 (1955): 347-348.

Borsotti, Marco. *Chiese e modernità.* Milano: Solferino Edizioni, 2015.

Boselli, Goffredo ed. *Chiesa e città. Atti del VII Convegno liturgico internazionale. Bose, 4-6 giugno 2009*. Bose: Qiqajon-Comunità di Bose, 2010.

Caligaris, Sergio P. "Ambientamenti e no. La Risurrezione al quartiere Vialba. San Giovanni Bono al quartiere S. Ambrogio." *Arte Cristiana*, no. 574 (1970): 149-158.

Caligaris, Sergio P. "I recinti: Armeno-Carpugnino-Baveno–Vettigné–Serapo." *Arte Cristiana*, no. 570 (1969): 315-328.

Caligaris, Sergio P. "Il Carmelo di Bonmoschetto." *Arte Cristiana*, no. 482 (1960): 99-105.

Capponi, Carlo and Maria A. Crippa. *Gio Ponti e l'architettura sacra: finestre aperte sulla natura, sul mistero, su Dio*. Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2005.

Carbonara, Pasquale. "Architettura sacra contemporanea negli Stati Uniti." *Fede e Arte*, no. 4 (1959): 412-444.

Casciato, Maristella, and Fulvio Irace. *Gio Ponti: amare l'architettura.* Firenze: Forma Edizioni, 2019.

Comitato per le nuove chiese di Milano, *Le sue chiese.* Milano: Comitato per le nuove chiese di Milano, 1964.

Cassinari, Bruno. "Visita a Matisse: la Chapelle de Vence." *Domus*, no. 250 (1950): 53-56.

Castiglioni, Enrico. "Che cos'è una chiesa." *Domus*, no.403 (1963): 1-11.

Castiglioni, Enrico. "Una chiesa indigena. Progetto per la nuova chiesa parrocchiale di Suna di Verbania." *Domus*, no. 420 (1964): 2-7.

Castoldi, Luigi. "Le chiese del Concilio." *Nuove Chiese*, no. 3 (1965): 1-7.

Castoldi, Luigi. "Ventidue pannelli, un frate e la sofferenza." *Nuove Chiese*, no. 4 (1966): 9-15.

Crippa, Maria A. "L'esperimento pastorale del card. Giovanni Battista Montini nella diocesi ambrosiana" in *La diocesi di Milano e le nuove chiese 1954-2014: atti del convegno, 4 novembre 2014*. edited by Laura Lazzaroni. Milano: Centro Ambrosiano, 2016.

De Carli, Cecilia. *Le nuove chiese della Diocesi di Milano 1945-1993*. Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1994.

Della Piana, Giovanni O. "Un decennio di esperienze nell'architettura sacra moderna." *Arte Cristiana*, no. 427 (1954): 144-146.

"Dieci nuove chiese a Milano." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 9-10 (1959): 30-32.

"Documentazione 1950 1960." *Fede e Arte*, no. 3 (1962): 226-271.

Dorfles, Gillo. "Considerazioni sull'architettura sacra." *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 9-10 (1959): 33-42.

Dorfles, Gillo. review of Gentili Tedeschi, Eugenio. *Figini e Pollini* (Milano: Il Balcone, 1959), *Domus*, no. 361 (1959): 30.

"Editoriale." *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 12 (1959): 14.

"Ein tag mit Ronchamp. (Un giorno con Ronchamp)", *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 11 (1959): 22-26.

Faccioli, Arturo. *Le nuove chiese di Milano: 1950-1960*. Milano: Arcivescovado, Comitato per le nuove chiese, 1962.

Fallani, Giovanni. "Chiese nuove dell'ultimo decennio", *Fede e Arte*, no. 12 (1958): 432-435.

Fallani, Giovanni. "La prima pietra di una chiesa", *Fede e Arte*, no. 6-7 (1958): 186-193.

Fallani, Giovanni, eds. *Orientamenti dell'Arte Sacra dopo il Vaticano II*. Bologna: Minerva italica, 1969.

Foresti, Alessandro. "La tenda del Battista lungo l'autostrada", *Arte Cristiana*, no. 519 (1964): 201-210.

Fratino, Luigi, Vittorio Gandolfi, and Antonello Vincenti. "Chiesa parrocchiale in via Bassini a Milano." *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 18 (1961): 55-59.

Galeazzi, Enrico P. "La nuova sede sul Gianicolo del pontificio collegio americano del nord." *Fede e Arte*, no. 12 (1953): 354-367.

Galesio, Angelo. "Chiesa e complesso parrocchiale di S. Eugenio in via del Turchino a Milano." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 18 (1961): 60-66.

Gandolfi, Vincenzo. "Chiesa all'Idroscalo." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 9-10 (1959): 56-61.

Gherardi, Luciano. Centro di studio e informazione per l'architettura sacra, *Dieci anni di architettura sacra in Italia 1945-1955.* Bologna: Edizione dell'ufficio tecnico organizzativo arcivescovile, 1956.

Gherardi, Luciano. "Editoriale", *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 30-31 (1964): 2-3.

Gnech, Cleto. *Ventidue chiese per ventidue concilî*. Milano: Comitato per le nuove chiese di Milano, 1969.

Gresleri, Glauco, Maria B. Bettazzi, and Giuliano Gresleri. *Chiesa e quartiere. Storia di una rivista e di un movimento per l'architettura a Bologna*. Bologna: Editrice compositori, 2004.

Houtart, Francois. "Come si presenta, oggi, una parrocchia." *Fede e Arte,* no. 1 (1959): 11-16.

Houtart, Francois. "'Planning' parrocchiale e costruzione di chiese." *Fede e Arte,* no. 6-7 (1958): 222-228.

"Il colore di Ronchamp." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 17 (1961): 12.

"Il concorso internazionale per il Santuario della Madonna delle Lacrime in Siracusa." *Fede e Arte,* no. 7-8-9 monographic issue (1957).

Italicus. "La chiesa di S. Giovanni Battista sull'autostrada." *Fede e Arte,* no. 1 (1964): 24-27.

Kidder Smith, George Everard. *Nuove chiese in Europa*. Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, 1964.

Kramreiter Robert. "Architettura religiosa contemporanea in Austria." *Fede e Arte,* no. 3 (1960): 316-354.

"La grande chiesa di Kaleva. Reima Pietilä e Raill Paatelainen, arch.tti." *Domus,* no. 455 (1967): 13-20.

Lazzaroni, Laura. "Il cantiere dell'arcivescovo. Esperienze milanesi nelle riviste degli anni cinquanta e sessanta." *Rivista dell'Istituto per la Storia dell'Arte Lombarda*, no. 40 (2023): 81-90.

Le Corbusier, "Il discorso di Ronchamp." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 6 (1958) 29.

Lercaro Giacomo, "Prolusione al Congresso Nazionale di architettura sacra di Bologna." *Arte Cristiana,* no. 439 (1955): 151-154.

Longhi, Andrea, *Storie di chiese, storie di comunità: progetti, cantieri, architetture*. Roma: Gangemi, 2017.

Magistretti, Vico. "Chiesa a Rescaldina." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 9-10 (1959): 66-67.

Magistretti, Vico. "Chiesa a Rescaldina (Milano)." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 15 (1960): 57-66.

Magnaghi, Augusto and Mario Terzaghi, "Nuova chiesa parrocchiale al quartiere Bovisasca a Milano." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 18 (1961): 53-54.

Mangiarotti Angelo, and Bruno Morassutti."Chiesa a Baranzate." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 9-10 (1959): 72-79.

Metzger, Fritz. "Centro comunitario studentesco della Trinità a Milano." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 40 (1966): 26-27.

Milani, Aldo. "Compito missionario." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 9-10 (1959): 22-23.

Milani, Aldo. "Il cantiere dell'Arcivescovo di Milano." *Fede e Arte,* no. 3 (1962): 216-223.

Milani, Aldo. "La nostra missione, la nostra avventura." *Nuove Chiese,* no. 3 (1965): 1.

Milani, Aldo. "Ma occorrono davvero?" *Nuove Chiese,* no. 1 (1969): 2-9.

Milani, Aldo. "Presentazione." *Nuove Chiese,* no. 1 speciale (1967): 1-3.

"Milano di Dio. Il problema delle nuove chiese analizzato sotto il profilo pastorale urbanistico artistico." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 9-10 (1959): 17-20.

Montini, Giovanni B. "Queste nuove chiese." *Fede e Arte,* no. 3 (1962): 224-225.

Mosso, Leonardo. "Cappella per la messa dell'artista a Torino." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 29 (1964): 54-60.

Moya Blanco, Luis. "L'architettura religiosa contemporanea in Spagna." *Fede e Arte,* no. 2 (1960): 196-236.

"Numero doppio dedicato alla chiesa di S. Giovanni Battista a Campi Bisenzio, Firenze." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 30-31 (1964).

"Nuova chiesa per un complesso turistico alberghiero." *Arte Cristiana,* no. 538 (1966): 259-262.

"Opere e progetti di Kaija e Heikki Siren." *Domus,* no. 390 (1962): 1-4.

Pallottini, Mariano. "La chiesa nel piano regolatore." *Fede e Arte,* no. 1 (1959): 17-35.

Paolo VI. *Omelia agli artisti nella Cappella Sistina (7 maggio 1964)*. *AAS 56* (1964): 438-444.

"Parole del Cardinale Giovanni Battista Montini Arcivescovo di Milano." *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 9-10 (1959): 21.

Piacentini, Marcello. "Una nuova chiesa romana dell'architetto Giovanni Muzio." *Fede e Arte,* no. 1 (1954): 1-10.

Pica, Agnoldomenico. "Due opere di Luigi Moretti. Una casa sul Tirreno e un santuario sul lago di Tiberiade." *Domus,* no. 482 (1970): 6-18.

Pica, Agnoldomenico. Review of Chist-Janer, Albert – Mix-Foley, Mary. *Modern Church Architecture. A guide to the form and spirit of 20th century religious buildings.* (McGraw-Hill, 1962). *Domus,* no. 399 (1963): 15.

Pica, Agnoldomenico. Review of Fallani, Giovanni. *Orientamenti dell'Arte sacra dopo il Vaticano II.* (Bologna: Minerva Italica, 1969), *Domus,* no.485 (1970): 56.

Pica, Agnoldomenico. Review of Kidder Smith, George E., *Nuove chiese in Europa* (Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, 1964), *Domus,* no. 428 (1965)

Pica, Agnoldomenico. Review of Rykwert, Joseph. *Church Building* (London: Burns and Oates, 1966), *Domus,* no. 444 (1966): 20.

Pica, Agnoldomenico. "Un libro su Figini e Pollini." *Domus,* no. 415 (1964): 1-2.

Polvara, Giuseppe. *Domus Dei.* Milano: Società Editrice Amici dell'Arte Cristiana, 1929.

Ponti, Gio. "A Michelucci, sulla chiesa di San Giovanni." *Domus,* no. 413 (1964): 1-24.

Ponti, Gio. *Amate l'Architettura*. Genova: Vitali e Ghianda, 1957.

Ponti, Gio. "Annuncio per immagine." *Domus,* no. 490 (1970): 2.

Ponti, Gio. "Chiesa e monastero a Bonmoschetto (Sanremo)." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 12 (1959): 48-58.

Ponti, Gio. "Il Carmelo del Bonmoschetto, monastero delle Carmelitane scalze in San Remo. Gio Ponti, arch., Antonio Fornaroli, ing., nello studio Ponti Fornaroli Rosselli." *Domus*, no. 361 (1959): 1-16.

Ponti, Gio. "Invito ad andare a Ronchamp." *Domus,* no. 323 (1956): 1-2.

Ponti, Gio. "La cappella del nuovo Ospedale di San Carlo a Milano." *Domus,* no. 445 (1966): 1-14.

Ponti, Gio. "La chiesa italiana di Alvar Aalto." *Domus,* no. 447 (1967): 1-6.

Ponti, Gio. "Per una abbazia benedettina nel Minnesota." *Domus,* no. 391 (1962): 1-6.

Ponti, Gio. "Protagonisti nella esecuzione delle opere per la chiesa di san Giovanni Battista, di Giovanni Michelucci, alla Autostrada del Sole nell'ingresso di Firenze." *Domus,* no. 413 (1964)

Ponti, Gio. "Religione ed architetti." *D,* no. 372 (1960): 41- 44.

Ponti, Gio. "Una 'cappella simbolica' nel centro di Torino. Leonardo Mosso, arch." *Domus,* no. 419 (1964): 28-29.

Ponti, Gio. "Una chiesa lombarda. Enrico Castiglioni, arch." *Domus,* no. 393 (1962): 1-8.

Ponti, Gio. "Una nuova chiesa. Roberto Menghi arch." *Domus,* no. 273 (1952): 1-5.

"Progetti premiati al concorso Vis Securit – Domus 1955." *Domus,* no. 318 (1956)

"Progetto per una chiesa di vetro. A. Mangiarotti e B. Morassutti, arch.tti, A. Favini, ing." *Domus,* no. 330 (1957): 1.

"Prospettive giuridiche intorno a Ronchamp." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 1 (1957): 6.

Ruggeri, Costantino. "L'arredamento nella Casa del Signore." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 9-10 (1959): 91-97.

Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II. *Constitutio de sacra Liturgia. Sacrosanctum Concilium (4 decembris 1963)*. AAS 56 (1964): 97-138.

Samonà Giuseppe. "'L'espace indicible' di Le Corbusier a Ronchamp." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 17 (1961): 13-18.

Santi, Giancarlo. *Arte e artisti al Concilio Vaticano II: preparazione, dibattito, prima attuazione in Italia*. Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2014.

Santi, Giancarlo. *L'architettura delle chiese in Italia: il dibattito, i riferimenti, i temi*. Bose: Edizioni Qiqajon, Comunità di Bose, 2012.

Santi, Giancarlo. *Le nuove chiese in Italia nel XX secolo: profilo storico, repertorio, bibliografia.* Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2019.

Schnell, Ugo. "L'edificio sacro quale Casa del Logos." *Fede e Arte,* no. 4 (1966): 448-455.

"Si parla di Ronchamp (Cherubini da L'Art Sacrè)." *Arte Cristiana*, no. 443 (1956): 34.

Stella, Angelo. "Nuove chiese della Diocesi di Alba." *Arte Cristiana,* no. 427 (1954): 135-143.

Timmers, Joseph. "Le nuove chiese in Olanda." *Fede e Arte,* no. 4 (1960): 452-479.

Trebbi Giorgio. "Dopo Siracusa." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 2 (1957): 60.

Trebbi Giorgio. "Risultati del concorso per il Tempio della Madonna delle Lacrime in Siracusa." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 2 (1957): 61.

"Un centro per le vacanze in Maremma. Studio 'La Ruota' di Ico e Luisa Parisi, collaboratore, Lamberto Marsili, ing." *Domus,* no. 439 (1966): 46-54.

"Un concorso internazionale per il Santuario della Madonna delle Lacrime." *Are Cristiana,* no. 440 (1955): 206.

"Una basilica. Enrico Castiglioni, arch." *Domus,* no. 287 (1953): 1-3.

"Una cappella, a Milano." *Domus,* no. 352 (1959): 39-40.

"Una cappella di Le Corbusier." *Domus,* no. 288 (1953): 2-3.

"Una cappella privata. Roberto Menghi, arch." *Domus,* no. 252-253 (1950): 33.

"Una chiesa all'aperto. Victor Lundy, arch." *Domus,* no. 307 (1955): 8.

"Una chiesa di Neutra in California. Richard J. Neutra, arch." *Domus,* no. 362 (1960): 3-8.

"Una chiesa di Richard Neutra. Richard and Dion Neutra, architects, Serge Koschin, collaborator." *Domus,* no. 479 (1969): 5-9.

"Una chiesa di vetro, in Lombardia. Angelo Mangiarotti, Bruno Morassutti, arch.tti" *Domus,* no. 351 (1959): 1-8.

"Una chiesa in collina. Bodini Massimo, arch." *Domus,* no. 453 (1967): 22.

Vago, Pierre. "Il momento attuale dell'architettura in Francia." *Fede e Arte,* no. 1 (1959): 60-112.

Vigorelli, Valerio. "Esempi di altari della Scuola Beato Angelico." *Arte Cristiana,* no. 503 (1962): 199-216.

Vigorelli, Valerio. "La lezione di Vence." *Arte Cristiana,* no. 424 (1954): 33-38.

Vigorelli, Valerio. "Osservazioni contro la Chiesa rotonda in margine al congresso bolognese." *Arte Cristiana,* no. 439 (1955): 173-179.

Vigorelli, Valerio. "Trecento chiese in otto anni (immane compito d'una Commissione)." *Arte Cristiana,* no. 413 (1953): 12-18.

Vigorelli, Valerio. "Un maestro dell'architettura sacra. Mons. Giuseppe Polvara." *Arte Cristiana,* no. 554 (1968): 47-79.

Villa, Enrico. "Le nuove chiese di Milano: chiese per il dialogo." *Nuove Chiese,* no. 3 (1966): 31-41.

Volonté, Giuseppe. "Ispirata misura di canoni e scopi." *Nuove Chiese,* no. 3 (1965): 33-35.

Winninger, Paul. "Le dimensioni della parrocchia." *Fede e Arte,* no. 2 (1959): 126-135.

Zander, Giuseppe. "Chiese dell'ultimo decennio nell'Arcidiocesi di Colonia." *Fede e Arte,* no. 4 (1960): 382-397.

Zander, Giuseppe. "Rassegna documentale." *Fede e Arte,* no. 9/10/11 (1956): 275-368.

Zanuso, Marco. "Cappella dell'Istituto «Le Carline»." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 9-10 (1959): 88-90.

**Giovanni Bellucci**

# Giacomo Lercaro, an Architect among Architects? The Scientific Planning of the "Seconda Bologna" between the 1950s and 1960s.

INVITED

*Bologna, Giacomo Lercaro, Ecclesial Planning, Churches and City, Chiesa e quartiere*

**/Abstract**

**Giacomo Lercaro's arrival in Bologna in the spring of 1952 and his appointment as cardinal the following year opened a 15-year period in which the Emilian city was at the center of important initiatives that gained notoriety both nationally and internationally. With regard to urban and architectural issues, Cardinal Lercaro was able to use method and planning to set up a meticulous plan that in about 15 years led to the construction of many parish centers and churches. These places of worship, characterized by a highly modern language that until that moment had only very few similar examples in Italy, became new points of reference for the neighborhoods in which they arose, helping to resolve some of the social and aggregative as well as ecumenical problems that characterized those suburbs. The design of those churches was entrusted not only to designers of great fame such as Alvar Aalto, Le Corbusier, Pier Luigi Nervi but also to young architects such as Giuseppe Trebbi or Glauco Gresleri that Lercaro had the intuition to aggregate in a group (Ufficio Nuove Chiese) called to carry out other functions as well. Also important and not to be underestimated were the links created in other European contexts generating a dense network of exchanges and relationships that contributed to increasing the notoriety of Lercaro and the city of Bologna, the object of analysis and a debate that is still current today.**

**/Author**

**Giovanni Bellucci**
**University of Bologna**
**giovanni.bellucci2@unibo.it**

Giovanni Bellucci trained at the Marche Polytechnic University in Ancona, where he obtained a master's degree in Building Engineering-Architecture and a PhD in History of Architecture. His research focuses mainly on 20th century architecture with reference to the Italian and Swedish contexts, with studies conducted in major archives including MAXXI and the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome, the CSAC in Parma and the Arkitekturmuseet, Stadsarkivet and Riksarkivet in Stockholm. He has carried out periods of study in Sweden that recently led to the publication of an book on Sven Backström and Leif Reinius that earned him the "Bruno Zevi International Prize".

He is the author of articles and essays in reviews, books and conference proceedings. He is a member of AISTARCH (Italian Association of the History of Architecture), AISI (Italian Association of the History of Engineering) and since 2025 member of the Technical Scientific Organising Committee of AAA/Italy (National Association of Archives of Contemporary Architecture). He has been a reserarch fellow and scholarship holder. He is adjunct professor in History of Architecture at the Faculty of Engineering of Ancona and Bologna.



CC 4.0
https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/20802
Copyright © 2024 Giovanni Bellucci

One of the most famous descriptions of Italy in the 1950s is certainly that of Guido Piovene in the pages of the book *Viaggio in Italia* published in 1957.[1] Both for the variety of the themes exposed that went from politics to cooking, from social issues to artistic, architectural and urban topics, up to the narration of the most folkloristic events and traditions of every hidden corner of the peninsula, Piovene described the Italy of the "boom economico" without hiding contradictions and critical issues. In the pages on Bologna[2] the author outlines the strengths and difficulties of the city that, in the mid-fifties, was full of construction sites[3] and characterised, as was the case with most Italian cities of that period, by a notable demographic increase due to strong immigration coming mainly from the south of Italy. The resulting unemployment problem was only partially calmed by the resurgence of the agricultural sector and the growth of the industrial sector. The author does not ignore some bitter controversies such as the one concerning the choice of the route of the pass road between Bologna and Florence as a future strategic hub for the motorway between Milan and Naples[4] which is part of a wider problem of management of the mountain areas which, starting from those years, began to show critical issues due to depopulation and abandonment, a topic which is still current and unresolved today. Piovene also reports in the volume the description of the meetings he had with many personalities and in Bologna, among others, he met with the mayor



1

Fig. 1
Giacomo Lercaro with the mayor Giorgio La Pira during the celebrations for the awarding of the academic medal of the University of Florence at the Salone dei Duecento of Palazzo Vecchio for the action carried out in the field of architecture, Florence 11 April 1957 (source: *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 2, June 1957: 24).

1 Guido Piovene, *Viaggio in Italia* (Milano: Mondadori, 1957).

2 Piovene, *Viaggio in Italia*, 214-227.

3 The vigorous reconstruction work in Bologna after 1945 is demonstrated in particular by the number of building permits that increased from 1,475 in 1946 to over 4,000 in 1952, the year in which Giacomo Lercaro arrived in Bologna. See: *Report on the urban planning activity carried out by the Technical Office of the Municipality of Bologna from 1946 to 1952* (source: Municipality of Bologna, *Liber Paradisus Archive*, folder "Studi PRG dal 1889 al 1952").

4 The "Leonardo da Vinci" project, studied since 1952 by engineers Francesco Balatroni (1881-1961) and Bruno Bottau (1910-1983), both full professors at the University of Bologna, which foresaw the passage through the valley of the Sessa river and the Montepiano pass for a new modern infrastructure connecting Bologna and Florence, was opposed to the one (surprisingly chosen for the Autostrada del Sole) developed by Francesco Aimone Ielmoni (1910-1991), professor at the Milan Polytechnic, technician commissioned by the four large Italian companies (Fiat, Montecatini, Pirelli and Pesenti) that had joined forces to build the first Italian motorway. See: Alberto Bucchi and Francesco Mazzotta, "Il corso di Strade nell'Università di Bologna," in ed. Ezio Messina, Domenico Mirri and Paolo Macini, *Nascita e sviluppo dell'ingegneria all'Università di Bologna* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2019), 149; Enrico Menduini, *L'autostrada del sole* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1999), 43, 51-52; Luciano Righetti, *L'autostrada appenninica Bologna-Firenze* (Bologna: Costa, 2010), 33-34.

Giuseppe Dozza (1901-1974), with the painter Giorgio Morandi (1890-1964), with the rector of the *Alma Mather Studiorum* Felice Battaglia (1902-1977) and with the cardinal Giacomo Lercaro (1891-1976) who described him as follows:

> I met the cardinal at the archbishopric […] The cardinal sat in his study; small in stature, with a large and slightly curved nose, lively little eyes, brown and grey, brown in complexion but grey hair under the purple skullcap; an almost Saracen face, which can be explained by his Ligurian origins, and whose marked features appear as if dissolved in the priestly unction, in the cheerful and sweet expression.[5]

The representation, very faithful to the iconographic image that can still be appreciated today from hundreds of photos as well as some videos that immortalize the cardinal **[Fig. 1]**, contains two different souls of a man who was only apparently fragile, endowed with a marked resourcefulness, a fundamental quality for someone who was working to leave, perhaps unconsciously, a clear trace not only in the history of Bologna. Courage and at the same time also unscrupulousness in initiating daring projects, in making choices that were not always unanimously shared, in supporting stances that were not exclusively in the religious sphere and therefore ill-supported by the secular community and in particular by political representatives, sometimes bizarre initiatives that aroused a certain perplexity in quiet Bologna.

> Cardinal Lercaro, a dominant figure in a Christianity with strong social overtones that his adversaries accuse of demagogy, is the man who has been given a diocese that is more inclined to emotion than to logic. Luckily for him, he has a lively imagination and faith in imagination; he does not believe in the impossible. Only he could have come up with the idea of having the Three Wise Men arrive, on the day of the Epiphany, in a procession through the snow through the streets of Bologna, waiting for them at the threshold of San Petronio. The Three Wise Men arrived on real camels, rented from a circus.[6]

Bishop Giacomo Lercaro took office in Bologna on 19 April 1952 after carrying out his ministry from April 1947 and for the next five years in the neighbouring archdiocese of Ravenna. He was consecrated a cardinal the following 12 January 1953 by Pope Pius XII – Giovani Pacelli (1876-1958) –, marked the beginning of a 15-year long phase that ended on 12 February 1968 with his "resignation" (officially for health reasons) after the well-known homily of New

5 Piovene, *Viaggio in Italia*, 224 (translated by the author).

6 Piovene, *Viaggio in Italia*, 224 (translated by the author).

Year's Eve 1968[7] in which Lercaro explicitly deplored the US bombings in Vietnam.[8] In these 15 years of active presence in Bologna, which from a "political" point of view abroad aroused some interest, Lercaro's presence only attracted further attention to this small geographical area[9] where extremely significant results were achieved, particularly in terms of architecture and town planning. Furthermore, Lercaro's action was not isolated but part of a very complex network given by the contribution of similar exponents of the Catholic world active in various European contexts. All together, they have contributed to facilitating human and cultural exchanges aimed – through visits, exhibitions and seminars, the publication and scientific editing of journals, conference proceedings and volumes – at the knowledge and study of the new sacred spaces and parish centres that were being built in some Italian, German, Portuguese cities, etc.The radical renewal that affected both the language and the design process aimed at defining buildings of worship in some European contexts from the early 1950s onwards, with respect to which the participation of the communities of the faithful was even hoped for, certainly anticipated what was later affirmed at the close of the Second Vatican Council, in particular in Sacrosantum Concilium, and the new approach to the liturgy, an issue that has been widely discussed since the end of the 19th century by spokesperson of the liturgical movement.[10] Lercaro in Bologna, Josef Frings (1887-1978) archbishop and later cardinal of the diocese of Cologne between 1942 and 1969, Manuel Gonçalves Cerejeira (1888-1977) Patriarch of Lisbon between 1929 and 1971 during the complex years of

---

7 Giacomo Lercaro, "Omelia del 1° gennaio 1968," *Bollettino dell'arcidiocesi di Bologna*, no. 58 (1967): 537-542 later reprinted among others in: Massimo Toschi, *Pace e Vangelo. La tradizione cristiana di fronte alla guerra* (Brescia: Queriniana, 1980), 304-310.

8 The story of Lercaro's "forced dismissal" and his relationship with Pope Paul VI – Giovanni Battista Montini (1897-1978) –, was the subject of numerous studies since the months following the event, most of which were inclined to accredit that Lercaro's was certainly an involuntary resignation. See in particular: Lorenzo Bedeschi, *Il cardinale destituito. Documenti sul "caso" Lercaro* (Turin: Gribaudi, 1968); Luciano Martini, "La destituzione del card. Lercaro," *Testimonianze. Quaderni mensili*, no. 101 (January-February 1968): 12-13.
In 2019, the study of unpublished documents (and in particular on the one hand the private archives of Giacomo Lercaro and Giuseppe Dossetti preserved at the "Fondazione per le Scienze Religiose" in Bologna and on the other documents preserved at the Vatican archive) led to the publication of two volumes in which the dark plots of the Roman Curia behind Lercaro's resignation and therefore not by direct will of Pope Paul VI are clearly evident. See: Alberto Melloni, *Rimozioni. Lercaro 1968* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2019); Leonardo Sapienza, *Paolo VI. Uno uno che tendeva le mani* (Cinisello Balsamo: Edizioni San Paolo, 2019).

9 Particularly significant is the incipit of one of the many articles published in the United States:
"The only politics or economics of our Cardinal," said his secretary to me thoughtfully, "are to give full justice to every man and to increase the grace of all the children of God."
And yet. His Eminence, Giacomo Cardinal Lercaro, Archbishop of Bologna, Italy, is exalted in some quarters and defamed in others. His followers call him a great social and liturgical reformer. The Communists – and Bologna is the main city in the Reddest area outside the Iron Curtain – call him the "little boy scout Cardinal." There is probably no more controversial prelate in the Church today. Certainly, no other has captured the imaginations of worker and scholar, Christian and Communist. While those around him seethe and speculate, he continues in his complex duties with piety, humility and no small degree of detachment.
Seated uneasily, for many affairs of Church pressed him, In his ascetic quarters close to the Cathedral of St. Petronius, he said, with moving sincerity, "Why do so many people seen me out to interview me? I am doing no more and no less than a simple parish priest who is seeking to save the souls of his flock."
In the summer of 1952, the then Archbishop Lercaro greeted the faithful of his new post, Bologna, with a phrase that served to crystallize his social philosophy … "I was born poor. I' have lived poor and everything I have is yours." On a multitude of occasions since then, he has repeated the same words to his people in one form or another.
See: Vincent R. Tortora, "Cardinal Lercaro of Bologna," *The Catholic Worker XXI*, no. 10 (May 1955): 5.

10 More details on the issues of the German Liturgical Movement in relation to Italy, Romano Guardini's contribution and te relationship between architecture and liturgy in: 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 Rothenfelds. Alle radici del Movimento Liturgico* ed. Katherin Bollenbeck, Giorgio Della Longa and Antonio Marchesi (Trento: Efferre Edizioni, 2012), 23-39; Andrea Longhi, ed., *Architettura e liturgia. Autonomia e norma nel progetto* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2017).

the military dictatorship of António Salazar (1889-1970) and in parallel, as well as later, many other cardinals and charismatic figures following their example,[11] promoted and encouraged in particular the activity of young designers called to a difficult challenge with precise orders and requests aimed at the use of a totally new language compared to the one usually employed for ecclesiastical buildings up to that time.[12]

These are the general assumptions useful to define the thesis of the essay focusing on the incisive impulse given by Lercaro to local architectural issues by attempting to broaden the field of definitions with which it has been identified so far. Cardinal, prelate, eminence, "porporato", in the dozens of publications about him, Lercaro is mentioned in many ways, but in relation to what he did during the period in which he was active in Bologna, can we attempt to approximate his figure to that of a technician, a planner, even to that of an urban planner or architect? These last two definitions are certainly not to be understood in the strictest and most common sense of the term but rather in a broader and more inclusive form according to a terminology certainly closer to and characterizing Lercaro's approach. Significant in support of this thesis are both the concrete actions and the words of the numerous public speeches attended by Lercaro, starting from the one on 11 April 1957 at Palazzo Vecchio on the occasion of the awarding of the academic medal of the University of Florence for "the action carried out in the field of architecture". In the presence of the mayor Giorgio La Pira (1904-1977) and the architect Raffaello Fagnoni (1901-1966), dean of the faculty of architecture, Lercaro held a lecture entitled "Current position of the architect in front of the theme of the sacred"[13] in which he emphasized the centrality of the assembly space as a place dedicated to liturgical celebration, the fulcrum of Catholic worship. Quoting *The Expanding Environment* by the German philosopher Erwin Anton Gutkind (1886-1968) translated into Italian in 1955[14], Lercaro underlines the lack in today's rapidly expanding suburbs of

11 Concerning the European context, in addition to the essays in this volume focusing in particular not only on Italy but also on Spain, Portugal, England and Germany, see: Giorgio Della Longa, Antonio Marchesi and Massimiliano Valdinoci, eds., *Architettura e liturgia nel Novecento. Esperienze europee a confronto*, Proceedings of the International Conference, Venice, October 7-8, 2004 (Rovereto: Nicolodi, 2006), 19-112; Giorgio Della Longa, Antonio Marchesi, Massimiliano Valdinoci and Walter Zahner, eds., *Architettura e Liturgia nel Novecento. Esperienze europee a confronto*, Proceedings of the International Conference, Venice, October 26-27, 2006 (Rovereto: Stella Edizioni, 2008), 23-83.

12 On how to understand a modern church, see the concise but effective article published in the first issue of the magazine created by Lercaro: Roberto Papini, "Ricetta per fare una chiesa," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 1-2 (January-February 1956): 20. In the same issue, 2 articles are published that clearly express the opinion on recently completed works: the first one about the church designed by Vico Magistretti and Mario Tedeschi in the experimental district Q.T.8 in Milan (pages 13-16). The second is entitled "The museum of horrors", on the temple of the Annunciation in Nazareth, which is described as: "… the latest, unheard-of example of rhetoric, waste of money and clumsiness disguised as a church" (page 21, translated by the author).
In the new series of the magazine that started in 1957, another fundamental text by Luigi Figini was published, reaffirming the central theme for the Italian rationalist architects of the first hour, namely the root of modernism in Italy in the minor architecture of the Mediterranean countries and not, as the detractors claimed, the mere copying of the pioneering works of architects from beyond the Alps. See: Luigi Figini, "Il tema del sacro nell'architettura minore delle isole del Mediterraneo," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 1 (March 1957): 21-33.

13 Highlights of the day and Lercaro's full speech in: Giacomo Lercaro, "Posizione attuale dell'architetto di fronte al tema sacro," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 2 (June 1957): 25-31.
The speech was published again in the posthumous volume edited by Giorgio Trebbi that collects some of the cardinal's speeches on the relationship between church and city: Giacomo Lercaro, *La chiesa nella città. Discorsi e interventi sull'architettura sacra* (Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, 1996), 27-39.

14 Erwin Anton Gutkind, *The Espanding Environment* (London: Freedom Press, 1953); Erwin Anton Gutkind, *L'ambiente in espansione* (Milano: Edizioni di comunità, 1955).

material and social reference points and in particular underlines the absence of vertical axes (bell towers) which for centuries have instead distinguished the presence of a "Community". Only when architecture returns to the service of the community, Lercaro continues, will it be possible to regain awareness of the social values naturally implicit in the urban planning theme which cannot ignore a much broader study which also involves other skills (sociologists[15], philosophers, historians, etc.) in addition to those of the designing architect. The latter, moreover, should not limit itself to confronting only the assigned plot of land and various technicalities or constraints imposed by legislation, but should rather be the interpreter of the parish community and its bishop, the spiritual guide of the community[16]. Lercaro unhesitatingly indicates, like a design teacher to his pupils, the peculiarities of the liturgical space, which must not be the result of compromise with history and therefore without limits on form and the use of materials, rather emphasising the possibilities offered by modern technology, reconciling in a unitary gesture that synthesises creativity, functional requirements and the spirit of the community.

In Turin on 27 January 1958, Lercaro, introduced by Professor Giuseppe Maria Pugno, dean of the Faculty of Architecture at the Polytechnic[17], was once again the protagonist with a lesson entitled 'Church and neighbourhood', in which the cardinal developed with extreme clarity the nodal points of his urban planning project in which the church and the parish centre play a crucial role[18]. Here, probably even more than in Florence in 1956, Lercaro gives a lesson in urban planning and sociology, citing one of the examples certainly most discussed in those years not only in Italy with regard to new neighbourhoods and functional integration, namely the satellite town of Vällingby[19] just outside Stockholm. In the perfect Swedish organisational machine, Lercaro laments, the church was left out and the established community lacked soul and, citing Josep Lluís Sert (1902-1983) and the MARS group's programme at the VIII CIAM, he adds:

> ... if we want to give our cities a definite shape, we must classify them and divide them into sectors, establishing centres and hearts for each of them.
>
> These hearts will act as catalysts and community life will develop around them.

---

15 On this topic, Lercaro was invited to participate in the First National Conference on religious sociology in Milan in March 1954. His paper was published in: Giacomo Lercaro, "Sociologia religiosa e azione pastorale," in Giacomo Lercaro, *Discorsi, Cristianesimo e mondo contemporaneo* (Rome: Herder, 1964), 201-211. See also: Giacomo Lercaro, "Compiti, fini e limiti della Sociologia religiosa," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 3-4-5, (October 1956): 9-11.

16 Lercaro cites the example of Pope Sisto V who, representing the community of Rome and spokesman for the needs of the citizens before the executors, was fundamental to the Baroque city plan of the same name. Cfr. Lercaro, "Posizione attuale dell'architetto di fronte al tema sacro", 28.

17 About the day and Prof. Pugno's introductory speech see: "Lezione del Cardinale Giacomo Lercaro a Torino," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 5 (March 1958): 22-24.

18 Giacomo Lercaro, "Chiesa e quartiere," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 5 (March 1958): 25-34. The text was republished in: Lercaro, *La chiesa nella città. Discorsi e interventi sull'architettura sacra*, 41-56.

19 On various topics of Nordic architecture, the editors of *Chiesa e quartiere* had dealt with the Swedish context following a trip in the summer of 1957. See: Mario Roggero, "Note e riflessioni su di una esperienza urbanistica," *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 3 (September 1957): 23-29.

> In these new nuclei, public buildings of different kinds will be grouped together; according to a defined harmony of form and space; they will be the meeting places for the people... The function of these new city centres is first and foremost to bring the members of the community together, to facilitate direct contact.[20]

Another theme addressed by Lercaro in the lecture is that of the setting of architecture and how the church must be able to integrate with the neighbourhood from an urbanistic point of view and at the same time express its own identity, just as in the past religious buildings were an element that distinguished the landscape. Once again, Lercaro calls for dynamic forms and a non-trivial spatial development (the reference mentioned is to Ronchamp) that at the same time respects unavoidable liturgical needs.

Last but not least, the aforementioned interest beyond the borders for the figure of Lercaro combined also in this case with the mastery of themes related to architecture for which he is recognized in various international contexts. The cardinal is in fact sent by the University of Notre Dame, one of the most famous private Catholic academic institutions in the United States of America, where in the summer of 1959 the 20th edition of the annual liturgical week takes place on the theme "Lay Participation in the Mass" **[Fig. 2]**. The calendar of meetings and conferences held between 23 and 26 August includes among the most important moments on Monday 24 the communication by Lercaro entitled "The Relationship Between Participation in the Liturgy and Social Action".[21] Starting from that year, the University of Notre Dame established an annual architecture prize named after Cardinal Lercaro, open to students and professionals from all over the world. In the first edition, the jury included architects Barry Byrne (1883-1967), Felix Candela (1910-1997) and Rudolf Schwarz (1897-1961).[22]

Others in the past have attempted to broaden the value and design capabilities of Lercaro starting from the one who probably had the greatest impact on the urban planning history of Bologna in the second half of the twentieth century, namely Pier Luigi Cervellati (1936). The Bolognese architect who had a decisive role in confirming the Emilian capital once again at an international level as a shining example of innovation thanks to the Plan for the Historic Centre, in a collective volume of 2002 proposes this food for thought referring to Lercaro as the one who had the greatest impact on transforming the outskirts of Bologna into a city and therefore characterising, similarly to what happened in the

20 Lercaro, "Chiesa e quartiere", 29 (translation by the author).

21 See: "Bologna's Cardinal Lercaro To Address Liturgists at ND," *The Monitor CII*, no. 11, 5 June 1959; "Colorful Cardinal To Speak At Liturgical Convention," *The Catholic Northwest Progress 62*, no. 31, 31 July 1959; "Italian Prelate to See Spellman," *The New York Times*, August 3, 1959. Lercaro arrived in the United States on August 8 to fulfill a busy schedule that concluded with the conferral of an honorary doctorate in law from Notre Dame on September 3. See: "Notre Dame Degree Is 'Popular Passport'," *The Catholic Advocate 8*, no. 36, September 3, 1959.

22 See: "256 Church Designs Enter Competition," *The Catholic Standard and Times 65*, no. 48, August 19, 1960; Patrick O'Donnell, "Card. Lercaro International Architecture Awards Awarded to the University of Notre Dame, United States," *Church and Neighborhood*, no. 16 (December 1960): 5-8. Lercaro's speech on that occasion is in: Giacomo Lercaro, *La chiesa nella città. Discorsi e interventi sull'architettura sacra* (Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, 1996), 65-71.



2

past, the design action with the action of space and time.[23] The comparison that Cervellati proposes a few lines later between Lercaro and Adriano Olivetti (1901-1960) supporting his thesis is that of two figures who, although radically different in thought and interests, are united by this propensity and closeness to architecture, through evidently tangent paths. The proximity to the themes of the modern and the direct link created with some architects up to the assignment of the tasks for the realization of some works in addition to the non-secondary questions related to publishing with particular reference to reviews[24] are concrete facts that both for Olivetti, who as is known had a decisive role in the INU, and for Lercaro can support this thesis that leads to the definition of two transversal figures of humanist-architects. Lercaro is therefore a cardinal among architects, perhaps a cardinal-architect who operated without hesitation and directed a new generation of designers towards modernity understood not only from the point of view of architectural language but also in the way of experiencing the city and participating in the Catholic rite of the mass.

Finally, the opposition to the thesis of Lercaro-architect according to the observation that having never actually put pencil and square to hand even just to summarily define some idea on paper, finds excellent examples in the twentieth century among architects themselves. The best-known case is certainly that of Walter Gropius (1883-1969), who was completely incapable of drawing from

23 Pier Luigi Cervellati, "L'intuizione urbanistica di Cardinale Lercaro: la Parrocchia, casa di Dio tra le case degli uomini," in *Ha edificato la città. Architettura sacra e urbanistica nell'intuizione di Giacomo Lercaro* (Bologna: Edizioni Nautilus, 2002), 21-31.
On the 'extended' meaning of the term architect, see also: Crispino Valenziano, *Architetti di chiese* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1995): 25-42.

24 It is probably no coincidence, testifying to the closeness of spirit, that in many issues of *Chiesa e quartiere* there are several advertising pages dedicated to Olivetti's Edizioni di Comunità. A short article in memory of the entrepreneur who suddenly passed away is also published in the magazine. See: Luigi Figini, "Ricordo di Adriano Olivetti," *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 13 (1960): 98.

Fig. 2
Cardinal Richard Cushing welcomes Giacomo Lercaro at Logan Airport, Boston 8 August 1959 (private collection).

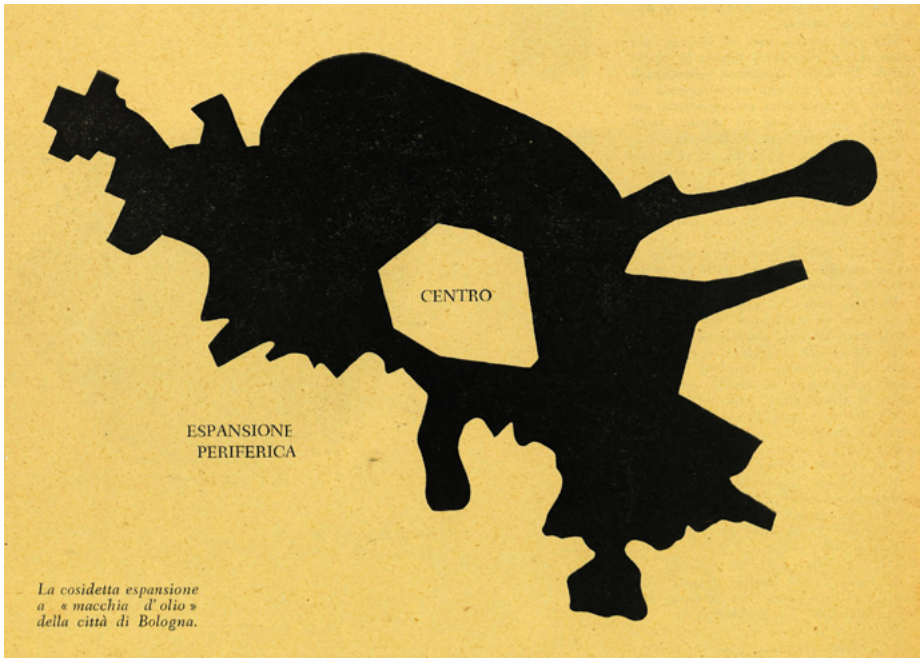
his university years onwards and thus caused his voluntary resignation after only one semester at the Technische Hochschule in Munich and later also at the Berlin Hochschule, never completing his studies. From his earliest work as a designer, Gropius was forced to rely on draughtsmen to put his ideas on paper, according to a process of verbal description and progressive refinement that in the specific case of the German architect was called "creative assimilation".[25] A paradigmatic case that will force one of the great masters of the modern movement to find excellent collaborators such as Adolf Meyer (1881-1929), Maxwell Fry (1899-1987) in the short period in which he spent in London until he created after his definitive transfer to the United States the TAC – The Architects Collaborative formed mostly by young architects recently graduated called to carry out first of all a team work. This is a clear analogy with the "Ufficio Nuove Chiese" that Lercaro set up in 1955 to carry out his project, and it is no coincidence that as with Gropius, in whom unlike other 20th-century masters no similar constancy and formal rigour can be seen in his works, Lercaro's churches also present considerable differences, an expression of the different interpretation of Lercaro's indications by the designers working on them.

The events taking place during Lercaro's time in Bologna can be chronologically grouped into three successive phases:[26] the first, which goes from his arrival from Ravenna to the organisation of the action plan and some major events in Bologna (1952-1956), the second, in which the projects for the new churches and parish centres were defined, some construction sites were started and the first works were concluded (1956-1965) and finally the third, which coincides with the last two years of Lercaro's activity in Bologna immediately after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council until his dismissal (1965-1968).

The first time period coincides with a particularly important phase for Bologna both from a political-administrative and urban-architectural point of view because the first post-war General Regulatory Plan was being drawn up. The task entrusted by the city council on 14 July 1952 to a commission formed by a group of planners within the administration and others of clear fame including Plinio Marconi (1893-1974), Giuseppe Vaccaro (1896-1970) and Piero Bottoni (1903-1973), led, after dozens of meetings and the participation in the works of a so-called "restricted group" formed by other technicians, to the delivery of the plan in 1954. Adopted by the city council on 12 October 1955 and definitively approved on 18 April 1958, the new plan however gave only vague indications regarding one of the most consistent problems of the city, namely the

25 Winfried Nerdinger, *Walter Gropius* (Berlin: Bauhaus-Archiv, 1985), 29-31.

26 For a complete biography on Lercaro's years in Bologna see: Giuseppe Battelli, "Una 'guerra fredda' nel cuore dell'Italia centrista. La Bologna del Cardinale Lercaro e del Pci che governa la città, 1952-1956," in Giuseppe Battelli, *Il cardinale e la città. Studi su Giacomo Lercaro e la chiesa di Bologna* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2022), 187-252; Giuseppe Battelli, "La dimensione internazionale dell'episcopato bolognese di G. Lercaro," in *La chiesa di Bologna e la cultura europea*, Atti del convegno di studi, Bologna, December 1-2, 200 (Bologna: Giorgio Barghigiani Editore, 2002), 255-299. See also the concise note in: "Dieci anni," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 1 (March 1957): 3-4 and Glauco Gresleri, "Per un rinnovamento dell'architettura sacra (1955-1965)," in *Giacomo Lercaro. Vescovo della chiesa di Dio (1891-1976)* ed. Angelina Alberigo (Genova: Marietti, 1991), 99-111.




3

planning of the new expansion districts.[27] It is no coincidence that, except for a few praiseworthy cases that substantially coincide with the INA-Casa plans that in Bologna led to the construction of "Borgo Panigale" and "Due Madonne" in the first seven-year period and of "San Donato", "Cavedone" and "Barca" in the second seven-year period, the new districts immediately denoted the lack of attention paid by planners to aspects related to the definition of aggregative and socio-cultural buildings, schools, as well as churches and parish centres, fundamental structures for the creation of that neighbourhood identity that is fundamental for the constitution of a strong, emancipated and aware community.[28] In this sense, Lercaro shrewdly found ample room for action by welcoming the consensus of the vast marginalised group residing in what was called the "second Bologna" made up of the new neighbourhoods that had already sprung up like wildfire around the historic city and others under construction at an increasingly frenetic pace **[Fig. 3]**. In the 1950s, this new part of the city, in addition to occupying a much larger surface area than the historic core, will also surpass it in terms of the number of residents compared to the total number of people living in the municipal area. All this therefore happens without an effective planning logic, without any functional strategy in the organization of most of the neighborhoods and even less without an efficient infrastructural system.[29]

The first "striking" action taken by Lercaro to initiate a radical change (but certainly also to give visibility to his project) was the procession of the "peaceful

27 See: Giuseppe Vaccaro, Plinio Marconi and Francesco Fantoni, eds., "Cenni illustrativi del nuovo piano regolatore," *Bologna. Rivista del Comune*, no. 14 (February 1955): 4-11; Plinio Marconi, "Lo sviluppo della città fino al nuovo piano," *Urbanistica*, no. 15-16 (1955): 69-70; Carlo Monti, "La città di Bologna negli anni Cinquanta. Il Piano Regolatore e i nuovi quartieri di periferia," in *Il cardinale Lercaro e la città contemporanea* ed. Claudia Manenti (Bologna: Editrice Compositori, 2010), 23-28.

28 R. Cenerini, "Bologna giudizi e polemiche sul piano regolatore," *La Regione Emilia-Romagna*, no. 3 (May-June 1956): 11-19.

29 See: Alberto Pedrazzini, "La vicenda urbanistica dall'emergenza di guerra ai primi anni Settanta," in *Bologna contemporanea (1915-2000)*, vol. 4, tome 2 ed. Angelo Varni (Bologna: Bologna University Press, 2013), 697-741.

Fig. 3
"The so-called 'oil stain' expansion of the city of Bologna"; scheme developed by the Ufficio Nuove Chiese (source: *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 3-4-5, October 1956: 6).

conquest of the suburbs", a certainly theatrical initiative with a strong symbolic value but also marked by the full awareness that the time was ripe to launch his project. On June 26, 1955, on a sultry day in early summer, Lercaro standing on an open car at the head of a procession that included about 50 vehicles began his journey from Porta Saragozza that would end only late at night after having hoisted 17 wooden crosses in 17 areas of the city. This is the first tangible sign, announced in a public communication already on May 14, which marks the start of the process of acquisition of the areas preliminary to the construction sites and the physical presence of the parish centers. From an economic point of view, the purchase of the land required a lot of effort by Lercaro, especially in terms of finding funds: public collections, requests for funding from public bodies (INA-Casa, Municipality, etc.) and private or bank loans were the solutions implemented and which, in a short period of time, guaranteed good donations. Finding funds was a significant problem, only partially resolved by law 2522 of 12 December 1952, "State contribution to the construction of new churches", which provided for an allocation of approximately four billion lire for the financial year 1953/1954 and the same amount for 1954/1955 for the completion and construction of new parish buildings.

But the event that certainly substantiates the initial phase of Lercaro's activity in Bologna and reaffirms with a primarily scientific value the series of technical operations partly already started by the cardinal is the organization of the 1st National Congress of Sacred Architecture. Inaugurated on September 23, 1955 in the presence of important political and religious figures in the great hall of the University of Bologna in the presence of the rector, Professor Felice Battaglia, the congress will see the active participation of dozens of architects from all over Europe and many others who, although not present, have given their full support to the initiative. Equally valuable and numerous is the presence of politicians, members of the clergy, the diplomatic corps and administrators of Italian and foreign bodies and institutions. The initial greeting and the start of the works given by the rector are followed by the prolusion of Lercaro and a tight series of interventions scheduled until September 25: of particular note is the alternation of the interventions entrusted to important designers such as Giovanni Michelucci (1891-1990), Ludovico Quaroni (1911-1987) and Augusto Cavallari-Murat (1911-1989) and exponents of the clergy such as Monsignor Giovanni Fallani (vice president of the Central Pontifical Commission of Sacred Art), Father Tarcisio Piccari (professor of Liturgy at the Angelicum in Rome) and Father Giulio Bevilacqua (director of the monthly magazine "Humanitas").

At the same time as the congress, 4 separate exhibitions were inaugurated that remained open to the public until the October 15th and that required no less important commitment. Here in particular, the young group of architects that Lercaro had somehow identified and deemed capable of carrying out his plan gave an initial demonstration of their ability. The monumental complex of San Giacomo Maggiore and its immediate surroundings were chosen to fulfill this task and used for about 3 weeks to host these events. The "Mostra internazionale del calice e della pianeta" was set up along the main nave of the basilica




4

while the chapel of Santa Cecilia was deemed suitable for the "Mostra del tesoro sacro della diocesi di Bologna". Outside, in the portico along via Zamboni, the panels of the "Rassegna del problema delle nuove chiese di periferia a Bologna" were positioned, while in the small Piazza Rossini in front of the basilica's churchyard, a temporary pavilion was built to display the materials of the "Mostra nazionale dell'architettura sacra 1945-1955".[30]

This temporary architecture, the result of the collaboration between Giorgio Bozzato, Luciano Lullini, Giorgio Trebbi and Enzo Zacchiroli, consisted of a load-bearing structure that exploited the potential of Dalmine Innocenti metal tubes and, through a complex system of stairs and staggered floors, the internal space delimited by light plywood panels could be visited following a unique and non-disorientating path **[Fig. 4, 5]**. The last two exhibitions are particularly important with regard to the continuation of Lercaro's action in Bologna because they already document two issues in an exhaustive manner: on the one hand the urban and specific critical issues detected in the neighborhoods where the intervention would be carried out by building the parish centers[31] and secondly, inside the pavilion, the exhibition of dozens of projects only a small part of which had already been realized which were certainly a stimulus for the decisive transition to the realized phase also in Bologna. Four examples relating to the Emilian capital are present in the exhibition: the parish church of Santa Maria Goretti by Giorgio Bozzato, Giovanni Guenzi and Valerio Valeriani from 1954, the church and convent of the Discalced Carmelites by Romualdo

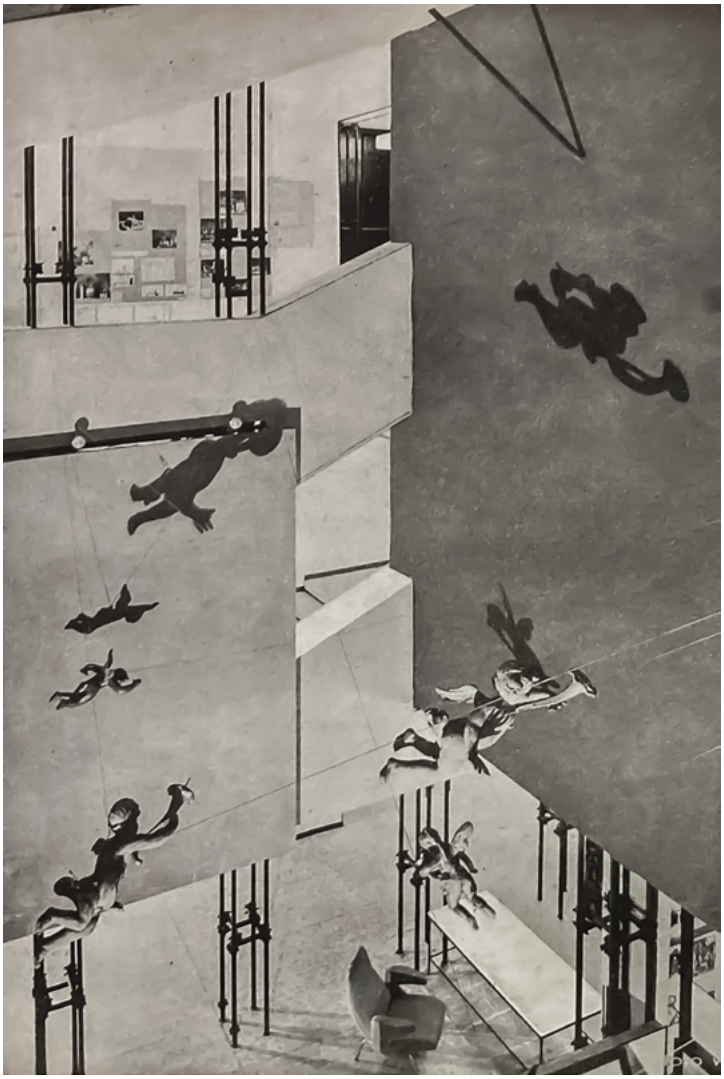
Fig. 4
Giorgio Bozzato, Luciano Lullini, Giorgio Trebbi, Enzo Zacchiroli, temporary pavilion for the "Mostra nazionale dell'architettura sacra 1945-1955", Bologna 1955, exterior view (source: *Dieci anni di architettura sacra in Italia. 1945-1955*, Bologna: U.T.O.A. - Ufficio Tecnico Organizzativo Arcivescovile, 1956, 86).

30 Most of the information and materials relating to this event can still be found today in: *Dieci anni di architettura sacra in Italia. 1945-1955* (Bologna: U.T.O.A. – Ufficio Tecnico Organizzativo Arcivescovile, 1956).

31 On the contents of this report edited by Antonio Ferri, Glauco Gresleri, Danilo Rondelli see: *Dieci anni di architettura sacra in Italia. 1945-1955*, 421-455.

Landriscina from 1949, the church of the Holy Family by Alfredo Leorati from 1951 and one of the first versions of the project (1955) of the parish complex of Borgo Panigale by Giuseppe Vaccaro. A dutiful mention concerning the phase of study and survey of the social criticalities of the outskirts of Bologna is the short film screened during the Congress that Lercaro commissioned from the historian and film critic Renzo Renzi (1919-2004) as an interlude for his friend Giorgio Trebbi.[32] Dove Dio cerca casa of 1955 is a perfect synthesis of the above: the confusion of values of the outskirts where there is a lack of churches which, on the contrary, in the historical centre are sometimes deserted and for this reason in some cases deconsecrated and used for other functions.[33]

Immediately after the Congress, the Archbishop's Technical Organizational Office (UTOA) chaired by Luciano Gherardi, the Study and Information Center for Sacred Architecture (which would only find its official constitution in 1960 with the signature of Lercaro, Luciano Gherardi, Giorgio Trebbi and Glauco Gresleri in the presence of the notary Giorgio Miani)[34] and the Ufficio Nuove Chiese (New Churches Office) whose technical section was entrusted to Trebbi and Gresleri housed in specially equipped spaces in the Archbishop's Palace.[35] The initial tasks entrusted by Lercaro to the technical architects and engineers were not those of designing churches, but programmatically preparatory to this step, which, although fundamental, would only be accomplished later. One of the first objectives pursued by Lercaro was in fact the reconfiguration of the constituent network of the diocese of Bologna, which in his opinion needed to be profoundly revised



5

Fig. 5
Giorgio Bozzato, Luciano Lullini, Giorgio Trebbi, Enzo Zacchiroli, temporary pavilion for the "Mostra nazionale dell'architettura sacra 1945-1955", Bologna 1955, interior view (source: *Dieci anni di architettura sacra in Italia. 1945-1955*, Bologna: U.T.O.A. - Ufficio Tecnico Organizzativo Arcivescovile, 1956, 105).

32 Renzo Renzi also gave an important critical contribution to the artistic, historical and also architectural-urbanistic study of Bologna: Renzo Renzi, *Bologna una città* (Bologna: Cappelli editore, 1964) later republished in a completely revised form as Renzo Renzi, *Bologna una città* (Bologna: Cappelli editore, 1992); Renzo Renzi, *La città di Morandi* (Bologna: Cappelli editore, 1989).

33 The 10-minute short film, produced by Columbus Film, which Renzi founded in 1950 with Enzo Biagi, Luigi Pizzi and Renato Zambonelli, can now be viewed thanks to the generosity of Professor Esteban Fernández-Cobián, who shares it free of charge at the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NLb3JJY0g0 (last accessed November 2024).

34 The official deed recorded in Bologna on 8 October 1960 is reported in: Glauco Gresleri, M. Beatrice Bettazzi, and Giuliano Gresleri, eds., *Chiesa e Quartiere. Storia di una rivista e di un movimento per l'architettura a Bologna* (Bologna: Editrice Compositori, 2004), 304.

35 The establishment of the technical section of the Ufficio Nuove Chiese was documented and its purpose clarified in *Chiesa e quartiere* no. 3-4-5, (October 1955): 4-6. See also: Glauco Gresleri, "La Sezione Tecnica dell'Ufficio Nuove Chiese e la localizzazione degli edifici di culto," in Manenti, *Il cardinale Lercaro e la città contemporanea*, 23-28.

and recalibrated to a maximum value of 5,000 inhabitants for each parish. The theme will occupy Glauco Gresleri in particular for many weeks, small popular referendums will be held, signatures collected, all to understand the citizens' thoughts on the possibility of dividing the territorial structure of the parishes in view of the construction of new churches.[36] In the space of a few months the first competitions for the parish centres were made public and the evaluation of the projects received in response to the first call for tenders, that for the church of San Vincendo de' Paoli, began. At the same time the technicians of the administrative section had started negotiations for the purchase of the land for a total cost of over 500 million lire and the first five new parishes established were made official: San Pio X, Cuore Immacolato di Maria, N.S. della Pace, San Vincenzo de' Paoli and Santa Maria Goretti.[37]

This whole heated series of events took place while the new General Regulatory Plan was being approved and above all while the electoral campaign for the election of a new mayor was underway in the spring of 1956. This too was an important opportunity for Lercaro, who identified and strongly supported the candidature of Giuseppe Dossetti (1913-1996), who had already retired from political life a few years earlier,[38] as an expression of the Christian Democrat current, opposing in his view a strong candidate to the left of the outgoing mayor Dozza. The net confirmation of the latter occurred despite the efforts made and the effective programme proposed by Dossetti who, from the stages of the rallies, firmly stigmatised what was underway and even more so the guidelines contained in the plan regarding interventions on the suburbs. The analyses and especially the counter-proposals found ample space in the well-known *Libro bianco su Bologna*. The result of shared work,[39] the text includes an initial part signed by Dossetti and extremely in-depth data resulting from careful research that the mayoral candidate entrusted to a young scholar and future university lecturer, sociologist Achille Ardigò (1921-2008). The complex issue of the suburbs was given ample space and the need to create recognisable communities to which services, logistical rationality and connections (material and immaterial) with other neighbourhoods could be guaranteed in order to constitute, as in the past, the most authentic sense of the city. Above all, the idea of administrative decentralisation was well detailed (a result achieved in 1962 with the subdivision of the municipal territory into 18 districts) and the creation of a network of peripheral municipal offices, which Lercaro did not fail to have further investigated by the technicians of the Ufficio Nuove Chiese, leading to the drafting of

36 Glauco Gresleri, "Come nasce una nuova parrocchia," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 3-4-5 (October 1956): 42-43. The demonstration of Lercaro's total mastery of every technical, social, architectural and urban planning aspect related to the construction of the new suburban churches can be found in the long article: Giacomo Lercaro, "Rapporto su Bologna – chiese," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 19 (September 1961): 11-37.

37 These and other information made known by the bursar's office of the Ufficio Nuove Chiese, which annually drew up a report on the amount of expenditure and income. See: Aleardo Mazzoli, "Un anno dopo," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 3-4-5 (October 1956): 41; Vittorio Albertazzi, "Un piano economico-finanziario," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 4 (December 1957): 44.

38 Mario Tesini, *Oltre la città rossa. L'alternativa mancata di Dossetti a Bologna* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986); Luigi Giorgi, *Una vicenda politica: Giuseppe Dossetti (1945-1956)* (Cernusco sul Naviglio: Scriptorium, 2003).

39 *Libro bianco su Bologna* (Bologna: Poligrafici «Il Resto del Carlino», 1956).

the "Piano dei servizi della città" (City Services Plan), a programmatic document that anticipated by about a decade what would later be approved by the junta led by Mayor Guido Fanti.[40]

Not last but decisive especially for the communication aspects both on a national and international level is the task entrusted to some members of the Ufficio Nuove Chiese regarding the editorial guidance of the review *Chiesa e quartiere*.[41] This is, as already mentioned, a further element that defines Lercaro's interest in architecture and all the issues of various kinds (social, philosophical, artistic, etc.) related to it, which found ample space in the 47 issues published up to the summer of 1968. The creation of the international network mentioned above derives in the first instance from the editorial contribution activated in the various countries: in France, *Art Sacré* was published as early as 1935, which ceased its activity in 1969 a few months after the closure of *Chiesa e quartiere*,[42] in Germany, was published from 1947 *Das Münster*. *Zeitschrift für christliche Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft*, in Belgium *Art d'Eglise* was published from 1950, in Austria *Christliche Kunstblätter* was published from 1860 and closed down in 1970, the Portuguese magazine *Movimento de Renovaçao de Arte Religiosa* took up the name of the movement of the same name (MRAR) and last but not least in Spain *Ara. Arte Religioso Actual Publicatiòn del Movimento Arte Sacro* was published between 1964 and 1980.[43] Editorial choices that influenced each other while analyzing the same works from different points of view and with different critical outcomes, which sometimes, albeit with a different graphic style, characterize the covers of different countries **[Fig. 6, 7]**.

Regarding the second and temporally broader phase of Lercaro's activity in Bologna[44] and specifically that connected to the projects of the new churches and parish centres, we cannot but start from the plan published on the cover of the 1968 pamphlet *Bologna Nuove Chiese* (Bologna New Churches) as a final balance of what has been achieved or is in progress **[Fig. 8]**. Having overcome, not without difficulty, the difficult period of the "temporary churches" located

40 See: Alberto Pedrazzini, "Aspetti locali della vicenda post bellica bolognese. Dall'emergenza alla ricerca della costruzione di una città per l'uomo," *Mélanges de l'école française de Rome*, vol. 115, no. 2 (2003): 485-509; Enrico Galeotti, "Dossetti, il libro bianco e il decentramento," in *Le orme di Dossetti* ed. Davide Ferrari and Giuseppe Gilberti (Pesaro: Intra, 2024), 79-103.

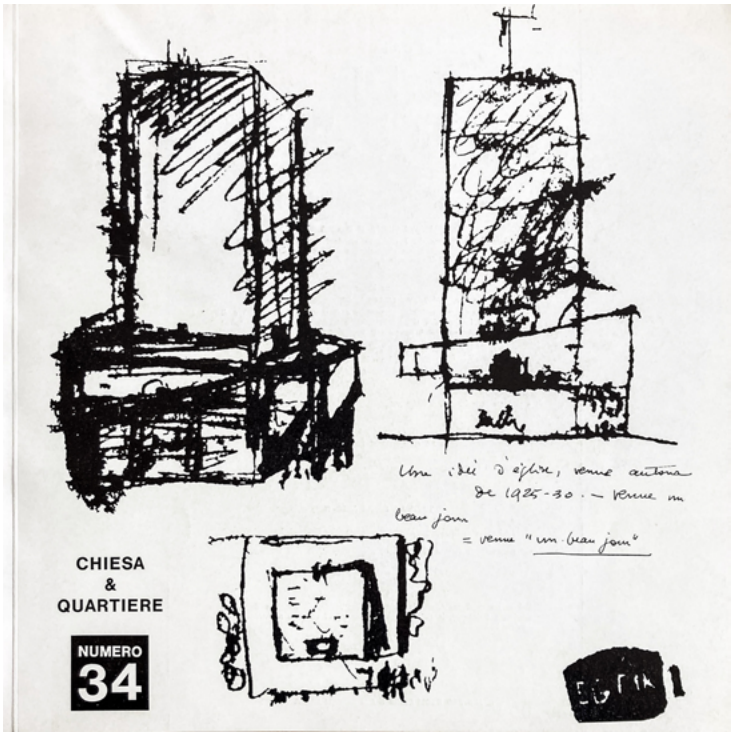
41 On the history of the magazine between 1955 and 1968 and its interests in both Italian and foreign architecture, see in particular: Gresleri, Bettazzi and Gresleri, *Chiesa e Quartiere. Storia di una rivista e di un movimento per l'architettura a Bologna*.

42 On the review «Art Sacré» and the contribution given in particular during the Lercaro years, see: Françoise Caussé, "La critique architecturale dans la revue L'Art Sacré (1937-1968)," *Livraisons d'histoire de l'architecture*, no. 2 (2nd semester 2001): 27-36; Françoise Caussé, *La Revue «L'Art Sacré»: le débat en France sur l'art et la religion (1945-1954)* (Paris: Collection Cerf Histoire, 2010).

43 Not counting Italian magazines, the list still includes reviews from all over Europe: *Workship. A magazine dedicated to the liturgical apostolate*; *Zodiaque*; *Novas Igrejas* (quarterly bulletin of the Segretariado das Novas Igrejas of the Lisbon diocese); *Liturgical Arts. A quarterly dedicated to the arts of the Catholic Church*; *Good Work. Quaterly of the Catholic Art Association*; *Kunst und Kirche*; *Ökumenische Zeitschrift für Architektur*; *L'art d'église, Revue des arts religeux et lithurgiques*; *Chtistliche Kunstblätter*; *Schweizerisches Jahrbuch für christliche Kunst*; *Art Chrétien Rêvue français des chantiers d'Église* and since 1965 also *Art chrétien – structures*.

44 See: Giuseppe Battelli, "Tra chiesa locale e chiesa universale. Le scelte pastorali e le linee di governo dell'arcivescovo di Bologna Giacomo Lercaro, 1952-1968," in Giuseppe Battelli, *Il cardinale e la città. Studi su Giacomo Lercaro e la chiesa di Bologna* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2022), 253-303; Nicla Buonasorte, "La Chiesa pretoriana tra Resistenza e Vaticano II," in *Bologna contemporanea (1915-2000)*, vol. 4, tome 2, ed. Angelo Varni (Bologna: Bologna University Press, 2013), 743-799.




6 7

in basements,[45] garages, shacks and only in a few cases (San Vincenzo de' Paoli, Madonna del Lavoro and San Pio X) in prefabricated buildings specifically designed by Glauco Gresleri,[46] or even the "cappelle volanti"[47], the first complexes will actually reach completion and will be consecrated by Lercaro for the most part around the mid-sixties. The churches on which the Ufficio Nuove Chiese and the Centro Studi actively worked were 14, starting with San Vincenzo de' Paoli, whose national competition was won after two levels of judgement by the architect Filippo Monti **[Fig. 9, 10]**. The jury was composed of the "architects" Giacomo Lercaro (jury president), Giorgio Trebbi representing the Diocesan Commission for Sacred Art, Luigi Figini representing the Study and Information Centre for Sacred Architecture, Tiziano Guidotti representing the Ufficio Nuove Chiese, Giuseppe Vaccaro representing the Board of Architects, Vittorio Stanzani for the Board of Engineers and Franco Campanelli of the INU – Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica (National Institute of Urban Planning).[48] This, which can be considered the first parish center of Lercaro, was followed by the Immaculate Heart of Mary by the architect Giuseppe Vaccaro and the engineer Pier Luigi Nervi, the Beata Vergine Immacolata at the Certosa by the architect Glauco Gresleri, the San Giuseppe Lavoratore by the architects Carlo Bassi and

45 Luciano Gherardi, "Una comunità sotterranea ai margini della città," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 3-4-5 (October 1956): 35-37; Glauco Gresleri, "Quando un garage diventa chiesa," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 2 (June 1957), 67-70.

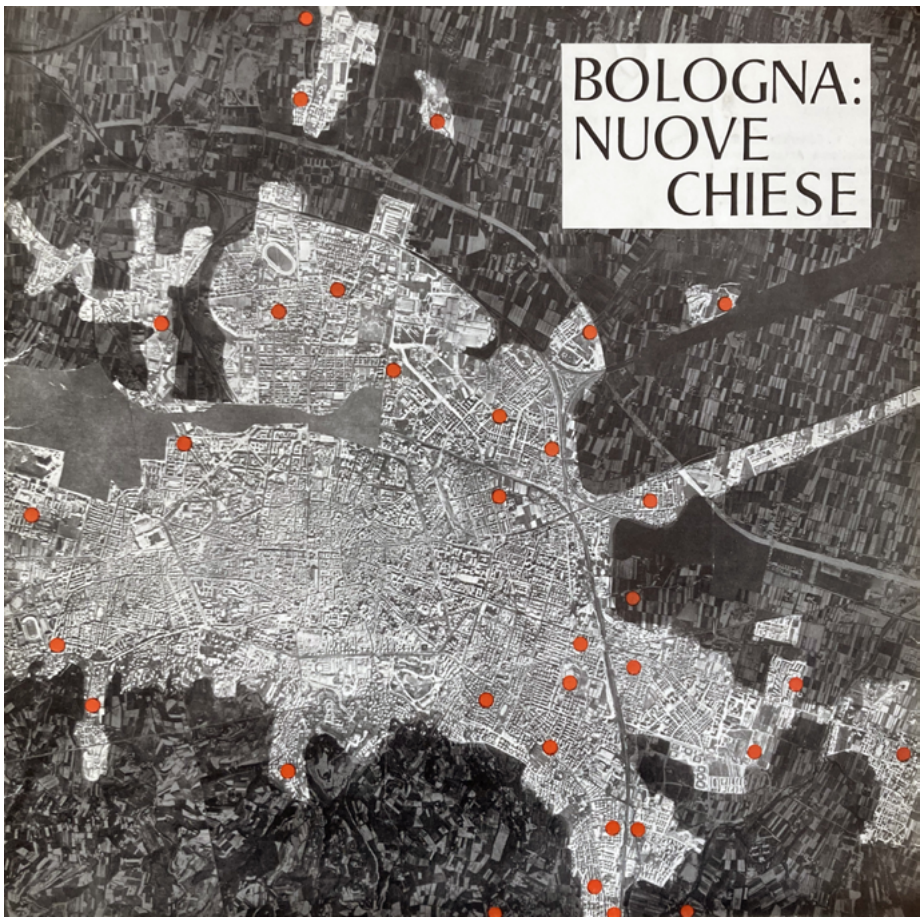
46 "Chiesa provvisoria a Bologna dell'architetto Glauco Gresleri," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 3-4-5 (October 1956): 16-24; Claudia Manenti, *Architettura delle chiese provvisorie* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2016), 53-62.

47 The "cappella volante" (wandering chapel) was a coach equipped on the inside with an altar, which through the opening of some specially made hatches, made itself visible on the outside to the assembled faithful, making it possible to celebrate religious services in any place reachable by the motor vehicle. More on this in: Claudia Manenti, *La campagna nuove chiese del cardinale Lercaro* (Bologna: Minerva, 2023), 42-53.

48 "Bando di concorso nazionale per la chiesa di S. Vincenzo de' Paoli in Bologna," *Chiesa e quartiere* (Gennaio-febbraio 1956): 23-26. More recently about this church see: Claudia Manenti, "Chiesa di San Vicenzo de' Paoli," in Manenti, *Il cardinale Lercaro e la città contemporanea*, 99-105.

Fig. 6
Cover of *L'Art Sacré*, no. 3-4 (November-December 1964) with Le Corbusier and the model of the church of Saint-Pierre in Firminy-Vert.

Fig. 7
Cover of *Chiesa e quartiere* no. 34 (June 1965) with sketches from a notebook by Le Corbusier for the church of Saint-Pierre in Firminy-Vert.



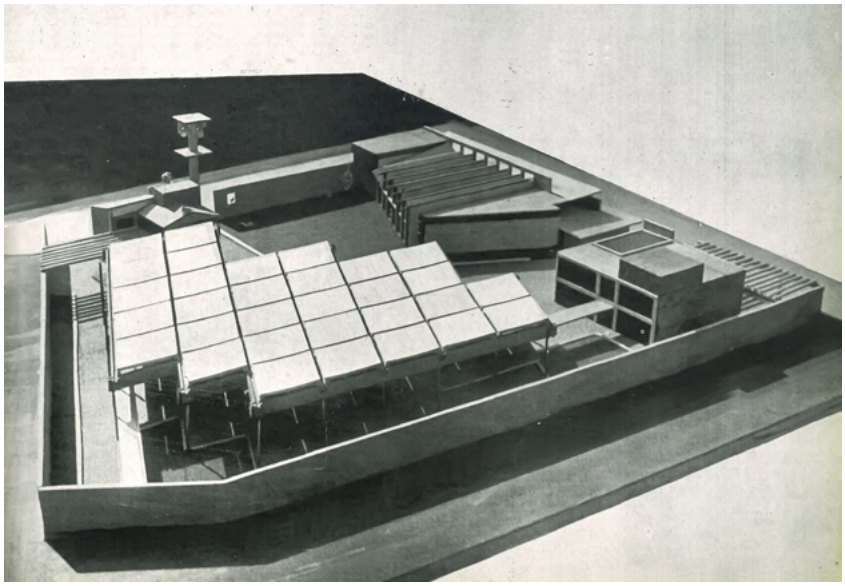

8

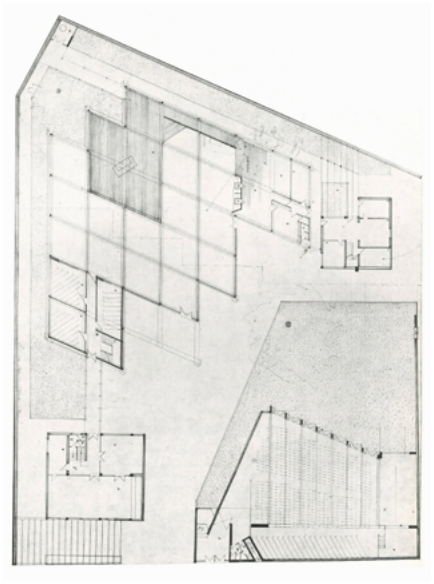
Goffredo Boschetti, the San Giuseppe al Cottolengo by the architect Mario Federico Roggero, Sant'Andrea della Barca by the architect Vittorio Gandolfi, San Pio X by the architect Giorgio Trebbi, San Giovanni Battista in Casalecchio di Reno by the architect Melchiorre Bega, San Giovanni Bosco by the architect Giuseppe Vaccaro, Santa Croce again in Casalecchio Di Reno by the architect Enzo Zacchiroli and again San Silverio di Chiesa Nuova, San Luigi di Reale, Sant'Eugenio Papa by the architect Luciano Lullini and the church of the Cavedone district by the engineer Federico Gorio in collaboration with the architect Marcello Vittorini which was then not built.

Among all, three exemplary cases can be isolated that summarize the chosen modes of action: the projects assigned following a competition, those assigned to professionals for direct assignment and those designed directly by the members of the New Churches Office. The church and the parish complex of San Vincenzo de' Paoli by the architect Filippo Monti, the Immaculate Heart of Mary by Vaccaro and Nervi and the Blessed Virgin Immaculate by Glauco Gresleri[49] can be taken respectively as paradigmatic examples of the categories mentioned above. Although the compositional results differed considerably, the designers started from common elements that, either in the call for tenders or in the direct awarding of commissions, Lercaro or the technicians of the Ufficio Nuove

49 On the Beata Vergine Immacolata see: "Chiesa della B. V. Immacolata in Bologna," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 3 (September 1957): 36-42; "Chiesa e complesso della Beata Vergine Immacolata sulla Via Certosa a Bologna," *L'industria italiana del cemento*, no. 12 (December 1963): 905-928; George Everard Kidder Smith, *Nuove chiese in Europa* (Rome: Edizioni di Comunità, 1964), 198-202.

Fig. 8
Cover of the booklet *Bologna: Nuove chiese*, published in 1968 by the Ufficio Nuove Chiese as a summary of the Lercaro experience.





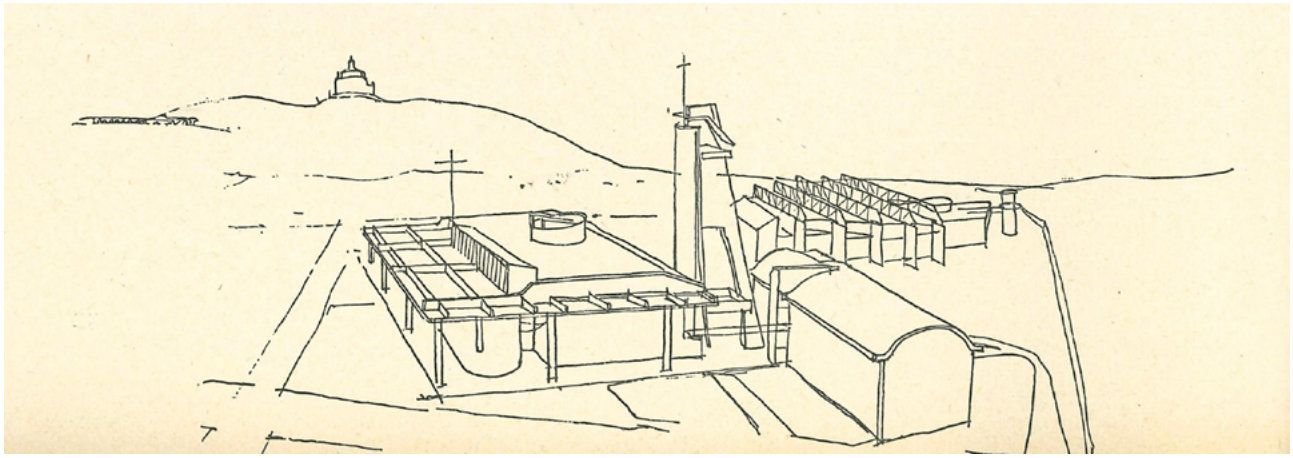
9 10

Chiese certainly somehow made clear to the individual architects. It is therefore possible to clearly verify what we could define as some invariants common to the three churches such as for example the need to include in the project, in addition to the church and the parish center, a third element similar to a theater, cinema or auditorium necessary to hold various types of social events other than religious functions. This last part is almost always temporarily omitted and then never realized as can be easily understood due to the economic issues mentioned above. Another element that had to characterize the projects in some way was the relationship between the prevalent horizontality of the buildings with respect to which the bell tower had to emerge forcefully [Fig. 11, 12]; also in this case, due to lack of funds, the belfries, almost always foreseen in the projects as sculptural gestures, will be missing or will be realized with methods that are very modest with respect to the project forecast. The third invariant on which Lercaro strongly focused was certainly that of the internal space, the definition of the liturgical hall and of all the elements that contributed to the performance of the liturgy and the ecumenical rites, in particular those of Holy Week. The arrangement of the elements (pulpit, altar, seat, etc.), the shape and position of the presbytery are all elements that, also in relation to what was being discussed in the meantime in Rome at the Second Vatican Council, undergo a profound revolution that Lercaro and some of the architects involved in the projects certainly anticipated. From this point of view, the choices of placing the altar in the most central position possible with respect to the plan of the church and what we could define as the development of the nave appear pioneering, both for the CIM (Cuore Immacolato di Maria) and even more so for the BIM (Beata Vergine Immacolata).[50]

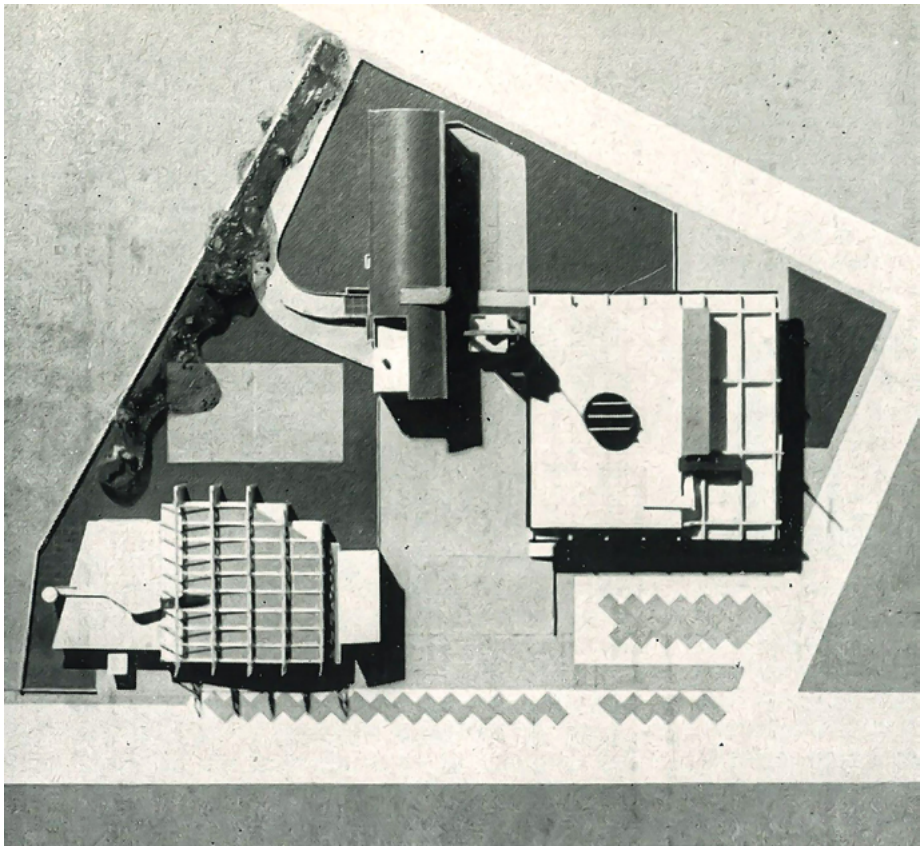
Fig. 9
Vincenzo Monti, San Vincenzo de' Paoli church and parish center, Bologna 1956, maquette (source: *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 2, June 1957: 35).

Fig. 10
Vincenzo Monti, San Vincenzo de' Paoli church and parish center, Bologna 1956, ground floor plan (source: *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 2, June 1957: 37).

50 The names of the churches were often indicated for simplicity by the technicians of the Ufficio Nuove Chiese with acronyms, a practice that the designers also followed to some extent, as the graphic tables and reports attached to the project show.



11



12

Other constants, besides the exposed concrete used in a measured manner to emphasise certain details or parts of the buildings **[Fig. 13]**, one of the themes that consistently distinguishes these three projects as much as most of the others is the relationship with natural light, which is filtered in from the outside in a carefully mediated manner in order to create particularly striking scenic effects. An example of this in the church of Gresleri is the skylight superimposed on the altar **[Fig. 14]**, a detail clearly inspired by Le Corbusier that the young architect from Bologna reinterprets with profound mastery. For the rest, the liturgical hall is lit only by narrow slits that run along the highest part of the walls, here too an evident analogy with the church of Vaccaro in which even the roof seems to detach itself from the rest of the volume. Always in the church of Gresleri, which upon careful observation appears in many details to be a tribute to the chapel of Notre-Dame du Haut in Ronchamp, the large

Fig. 11
Glauco Gresleri with Umberto Daini and Nevio Parmeggiani, Beata Vergine Immacolata church and parish center, Bologna 1956-1961, sketch. The separation into three buildings and the vertical sign of the bell tower are clearly visible (source: *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 3, September 1957: 36).

Fig. 12
Glauco Gresleri with Umberto Daini and Nevio Parmeggiani, Beata Vergine Immacolata church and parish center, Bologna 1956-1961, maquette (source: *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 3, September 1957: 37).

gargoyle certainly stands out, which allows one to appreciate the architecture from a sound point of view as well as the canonically visual one **[Fig. 15, 16]**. Finally, as regards the BVI, it should be underlined that alongside the paternity of Vaccaro and Nervi, the involvement in the project of two other charismatic names of twentieth-century Italian architecture and engineering such as Adalberto Libera and Sergio Musmeci should not be overlooked. As a direct consequence of this, the bibliography on this building is particularly rich and punctually documents the events that took place between 1952 and 1965.[51] In fact, being built in the INA-Casa district of Borgo Panigale, the project of which was coordinated by Vaccaro, the architect, already in the phase of developing the plan, worked between 1952 and 1953 on some basic ideas for the church. The turning point came in 1955 when Sergio Musmeci joined and was supposed to resolve the structural issues of the daring composition while Adalberto Libera was entrusted with the design of the bell tower **[Fig. 17]**. Musmeci's resignation was compensated by the call of Nervi while Libera's sudden death in 1963 left the bell tower unfinished, as already anticipated. The particular solution chosen for the roofing of this building still contributes today to fueling interest in this work in which the Nervi method is fully recognized: the use of modular components in "ferrocemento", the prefabrication technique, the choice of raw exposed concrete that distinguishes the four pillars that support the roofing, are also in this case well-known invariants of the modus operandi of the skilled Roman builder **[Fig. 18, 19]**. Finally, the contribution made by the companies that materially constructed these futuristic buildings is worth mentioning. In particular, both of the churches described here were built by the Donati construction company of Bologna (today Donati & Zanichelli), a historic company founded in 1926 that was among the first in the area to effectively experiment with reinforced concrete construction technology, a material with which it would continue to work in the decades to follow, constructing some of the most important works in Bologna after World War II, collaborating closely with important designers, including international ones such as Kenzo Tange (1913-2005).



13

Fig. 13
Glauco Gresleri with Umberto Daini and Nevio Parmeggiani, Beata Vergine Immacolata church, Bologna 1956-1961, entrance to the church (source: *L'industria italiana del cemento*, no. 12, December 1963: 927).

51 See: Adalberto Libera, "Chiesa di Borgo Panigale, architetto Giuseppe Vaccaro," *L'architettura. Cronache e storia*, no. 3 (September-October 1955): 368-371; Pier Luigi Nervi, "Soluzione tecnico costruttiva della copertura per la chiesa dell'architetto Vaccaro a Borgo Panigale," in *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 4 (dicembre 1957), 32-35; "Chiesa e complesso parrocchiale del Cuore Immacolato di Maria nel quartiere INA-Casa a Borgo Panigale, dell'architetto Giuseppe Vaccaro e Pierluigi Nervi ingegnere," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. (December 1961): 75-98.



The Japanese architect, to whom at the end of 1967 the municipality entrusted the project for the development of the northern area of the city and the Finanziaria Fiere company that for the Directional Centre, presented in February 1970 the well-known 'Bologna 1984' plan from which only the Fiera District, built in the late 1970s by the Donati company, would emerge. The well-known meeting between Lercaro and Tange in the archbishopric on 13 November 1966 after the Japanese architect's speech in the rectory on the study day organised for the closure of Giovanni Michelucci's academic activities, was the umpteenth contact the cardinal had with one of the masters of architecture of the second half of the 20th century, as well as an opportunity to ask the Japanese architect to design a religious centre and a cathedral in the area under study.[52] Also in this phase there is no lack of a series of congress events and exhibitions promoted by Lercaro such as the Diocesan Eucharistic Congress organized in Bologna between 22 and 29 September 1957 in the context of which there are still strong links with architecture. In particular, architect Raffaello Fagnoni is called upon to update the balance sheet on new contemporary churches, whose design effectiveness is to be investigated in the character, that is, a summation of factors including beauty, functionality, sobriety, refinement not an end in itself.[53] Between 3 and 18 October 1960 an important exhibition dedicated to the new churches in the city of Cologne was held in the convent at St. Dominic's Square. The occasion was propitious for a new meeting with Cardinal Frings, who returned

Fig. 14
Glauco Gresleri with Umberto Daini and Nevio Parmeggiani, Beata Vergine Immacolata church, Bologna 1956-1961, view of the interior with the skylight above the altar (source: *Nuove chiese in Europa*, Roma: Edizioni di Comunità, 1964, 201).

52 On Tange's activities in Bologna and a timely account of his meeting with Lercaro see in particular: Glauco Gresleri, "Il tempo dell'urbanistica e lo spazio dell'architettura," in *Kenzo Tange e l'utopia di Bologna* ed. Giuliano Gresleri and Glauco Gresleri (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2010), 91-108.

53 Raffaello Fagnoni, "Carattere dell nostre chiese nuove," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 3 (September 1957): 27-30.





15 16

the visit after Lercaro had travelled to Cologne in February 1959, where the exhibition on the new Italian churches was set up at the Cultural Italian Institute.[54] His return to Bologna on 8 December 1965 after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council marked the beginning of the last phase of Lercaro's episcopate, characterised at least initially by demonstrations of transversal consensus on his figure and his work and by a climate of general positivity.[55] Arriving by train from Rome at 9.10 pm, the cardinal was welcomed at the station by a vast procession led by the mayor Giuseppe Dozza with the entire council together with representatives of all the council groups and the highest local authorities.[56] The conferral of honorary citizenship to Lercaro on 26 November 1966, desired by the new mayor Guido Fanti (1925-2012) elected the previous 2 April following the sudden resignation of Dozza for health reasons, is further evidence of the climate of substantial conciliation existing in the city between the two historically antagonistic poles. The left represented by the city government and the

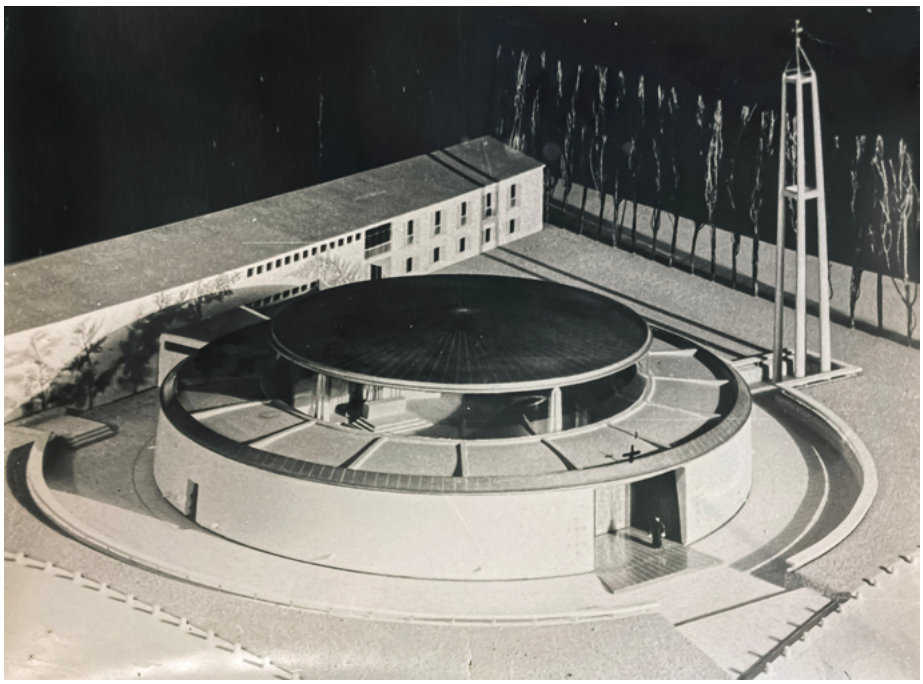
54 The event is remembered by Glauco Gresleri, who together with Giorgio Trebbi set up the exhibition with makeshift means in less than two days. The exhibition was a great success and in the following months it was dismantled and set up in the city of Würzburg in the newly reconstructed cathedral cloister. Certainly important from a diplomatic and organisational point of view was the contribution of Ambassador Pietro Quaroni (1898-1971), brother of the architect Ludovico. See: Giuliano Gresleri, "Within the European Movement – the Study Centre," in *Chiesa e quartiere. Storia di una rivista e di un movimento per l'architettura a Bologna*, ed. Glauco Gresleri, M. Beatrice Bettazzi and Giuliano Gresleri, (Bologna: Editrice Compositori, 2004), 169-170.

55 For a general overview of the events of those years see: Umberto Mazzone, "L'amministrazione della città, il Pci e la chiesa cattolica (1965-1968)," in *Giacomo Lercaro. Vescovo dei poveri, uomo di pace ed. Davide Dainese, Umberto Mazzone* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2020), 55-117; Giovanni Turbanti, "La Chiesa di Bologna dopo il Concilio," in *Bologna contemporanea (1915-2000)*, vol. 4, tome 2 ed. Angelo Varni (Bologna: Bologna University Press, 2013), 801-894.

56 Battelli, *Il Cardinale e la città*, 402.

Fig. 15
Glauco Gresleri, Umberto Daini and Nevio Parmeggiani, Beata Vergine Immacolata church, Bologna 1956-1961, the downpipe (source: *L'industria italiana del cemento*, no. 12, December 1963: 924).

Fig.16
Le Corbusier, cappella di Notre-Dame-du-Haut, Ronchamp 1950-1956, the downpipe (source: *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 15, September 1960, 91).



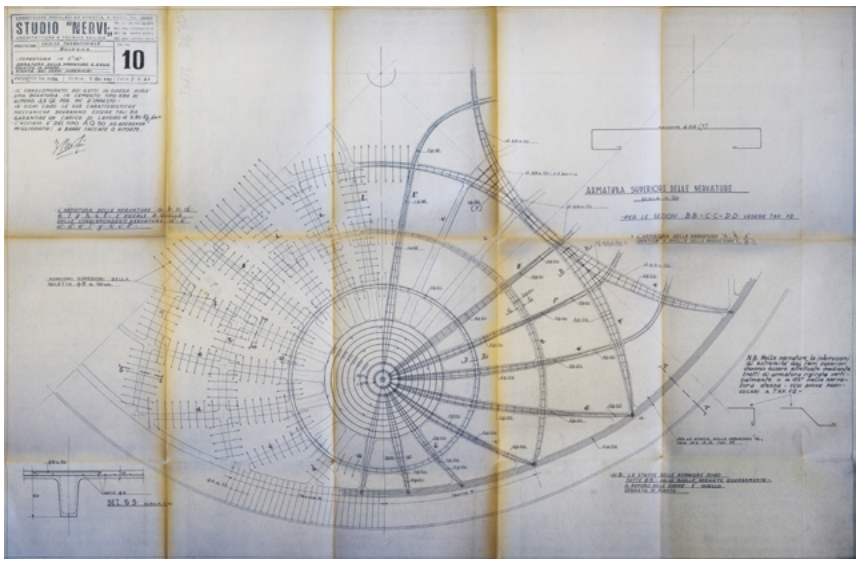
17

Catholic centrists close to Lercaro in those months found further unity of purpose in particular with respect to the complex international situation with particular reference to the worsening of the conflict in Vietnam following the direct entry of the United States into the battlefields in the spring of 1965 which would be followed from the beginning of 1966 by the operations "Search and Destroy".

Not secondary to the themes of this essay was the establishment of the conferenza permanent di Studi per le Attrezzature Religiose – SAR (Permanent Study Conference for Religious Equipment) formed between the planners of the Ufficio Nuove Chiese and those of the municipal technical offices and therefore coordinated as representatives of both parties by Glauco Gresleri and architect Romano Carrieri respectively. This collaborative and somewhat understanding approach between the two historically opposed parties, radically different from the one Lercaro had found in his early years in Bologna, can be somewhat explained by the active contribution made since the early 1960s by architect Giuseppe Campos Venuti (1926-2019). Appointed town planning councillor in 1961, Campos Venuti, after initiating a series of studies in particular on new urban districts that were of fundamental importance especially for future administrations, undertook an action of marked discontinuity with the past.[57] The decisive brake on urban expansion, the no-building restriction for the hill area, the reduction of building indexes both in the centre and for the new social housing areas seem to be reconciled with the human-scale planning theorised a few years earlier by Dossetti and Lercaro behind the scenes. In addition, Campos Venuti opened the doors of the municipal technical offices to a young generation of Bolognese architects who had graduated from Florence, starting with

57 See: Giuseppe Campos Venuti, "Politica urbanistica comunale a Bologna – Orientamenti programmatici," *Bologna. Rivista del Comune*, no. 1 (luglio 1961); Pier Luigi Cervellati, Ubaldo Pallotti, Franca Tarozzi, "Lo sviluppo della città," *Casabella continuità*, no. 262 (November 1962): 6-9; Giuseppe Campos Venuti, "Relazione 1962 sul Piano intercomunale," *Casabella continuità*, no. 262 (November 1962): 9-12.

Fig. 17
Giuseppe Vaccaro, Sergio Musmeci and Adalberto Libera, Cuore Immacolato di Maria church and parish center, Bologna – Borgo Panigale 1955, maquette (Parish Center Cuore Immacolato di Maria Archive).






18 19

Pier Luigi Cervellati (1936), which in some ways parallels what Lercaro had done a few years earlier with his young architects Gresleri and Trebbi, both Bolognese and both graduates from Florence.

The topic of Peace, already addressed on several occasions by Lercaro in public speeches and homilies in previous years and included (certainly not by chance) in the motivation for the granting of citizenship,[58] would quickly climb the order of concerns and above all of interests in the cardinal's agenda to the detriment of those interventions for the reform of the local church now hoped for and ratified also in the official documents emerging from the working tables of the Council.

In the autumn of 1967, Lercaro promoted the last major international meeting in Bologna on the occasion of the SIAC – Société Internationale des Artistes Chrétiens congress, which took place between 15 and 18 September in the monumental complex of the Benedict XV pontifical seminary.The location chosen for the important event had been inaugurated a few years earlier, immersed in the greenery in the area of San Michele in Bosco just beyond the southern edge of the historic centre and with a panoramic view of the entire city. Here, between 1961 and 1964, Glauco Gresleri and Giorgio Trebbi completed undoubtedly the most grandiose architectural work of the Lercaro period, which included a large church placed in a central position and bordered on three sides by buildings that allocated all the spaces for the seminary's activities. The sale of the entire building to the hospital company and the total alteration of the spaces used as facilities for training nurses can certainly be read as one of the many steps taken to try to erase the memory and contribution given by Lercaro to the city

Fig. 18
Pier Luigi Nervi, Cuore Immacolato di Maria church, Bologna – Borgo Panigale 1961, executive project of the roof (Donati e Zanichelli Archive, Bologna).

Fig. 19
Giuseppe Vaccaro and Pier Luigi Nervi, Cuore Immacolato di Maria church, Bologna – Borgo Panigale 1962, view of the construction site (Donati e Zanichelli Archive, Bologna). 020 Consecration ceremony of the Cuore Immacolato di Maria church, Bologna – Borgo Panigale 18 settembre 1971 (Parish Center Cuore Immacolato di Maria Archive).

58 The reasons for conferring honorary citizenship, unanimously approved by the City Council on 26 October 1966, were: "In solemn recognition of the high magisterium expressed at the Second Vatican Council in support of universal aspirations to peace, fraternal cooperation between peoples and civil progress; of the noble commitment to contribute solidly, at the head of the Bolognese Church, to the construction of a more advanced model of civilisation". See: "Il Cardinale Arcivescovo Giacomo Lercaro cittadino onorario di Bologna," *Bologna. Rivista del Comune*, special issue (June 1967): 11. The 40-page issue documents the most important events that saw Lercaro as a protagonist in Bologna between December 8, 1965 and November 26, 1966, the day he was awarded the honour.



20

of Bologna.[59] The aforementioned resignation of Lercaro in February 1968 was followed by months of frantic activity that led to a progressive decommissioning until the closure of all the apparatuses created by the cardinal and the end of the commitments of all the figures involved. The act that officially put an end to both the activities of the editorial staff of Chiesa e quartiere (the last issue was printed in autumn 1968) and of the technical section of the Ufficio Chiese Nuove took place on 6 December 1968 when, after having coordinated the work for 15 years, Giorgio Trebbi and Glauco Gresleri handed over their respective mandates to Lercaro's substitute, the archbishop and since 1969 cardinal Antonio Poma.

The exile at Villa San Giacomo where Lercaro retired following his dismissal was interrupted only by a few sporadic meetings that the cardinal did not fail to grant and by a few public outings such as those, certainly very heartfelt, for the consecration of some of the churches he had wanted.[60] The documentary fund of the Borgo Panigale parish centre preserves many images of the celebrations that made the Immaculate Heart of Mary church official, an event dated 18 September 1971. The elderly cardinal, followed by a plethora of young prelates and faithful perform the series of codified rites including the sprinkling with water blessed with the Isoppo branch of the church walls, the altar and the baptistery [Fig. 20].

The conclusions of this essay can in some way be sought by recalling the speech that Lercaro should have given at the annual symposium of artists in Cologne in the spring of 1968 and that instead his resignation a few weeks

59 See: Andrea Canevaro, "Seminario Benedetto XV in Bologna 1961-64," in Gresleri, Bettazzi and Gresleri, *Chiesa e Quartiere*, 242- 245.. See also: *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 44 (1967): 38.

60 On the dismissal, the last years of Cardinal Lercaro's life and the oblivion caused to fall on his figure in Bologna see: Nazario Sauro Onofri, *Le due anime del cardinale Lercaro* (Bologna: Cappelli editore, 1987), 157-211.

Fig. 20
Consecration ceremony of the Cuore Immacolato di Maria church, Bologna – Borgo Panigale 18 settembre 1971 (Parish Center Cuore Immacolato di Maria Archive).

earlier prevented.[61] The man who has accepted to passively live in today's city, Lercaro argues, is in constant struggle with a radiocentric and zoned urban model that in particular from a social point of view is totally unsatisfactory. Our cities, increasingly characterized by discrimination and classism, can no longer find benefit in the praiseworthy projects for parish centers brought to completion in recent years in Bologna, more generally in Italy and especially abroad. It is high time, argues Lercaro, to think of a new city that responds to changes that were unthinkable just a few years ago and are already underway, a city and by extension also churches that are no longer designed to last for centuries as in the past, but rather modest and functional constructions for us and that future generations will not feel obliged to maintain as we do today with regard to historic and monumental buildings. An apparently revolutionary thought but which in reality expresses the deep and most authentic meaning of Lercaro's plan in which the building is only the shelter (even ephemeral) for all those who gather there without the need for a physical separation imposed by the mighty walls that divide the gathered community from the rest of men. Once again Lercaro seems to think like an architect arriving, probably unconsciously, at conclusions very similar to those theorized in those same years in England by Archigram and Peter Cook (1936) for their utopian cities.

> May the city of tomorrow, of a not-so-distant tomorrow, be able to give itself a space for the encounter with the Lord where all men gather together around a single table and a single word.
>
> A space that, whether fixed or flexible, however articulated and wherever located, is above all recognisable as a holy place not only because of the divine sacrifice performed there, but by virtue of the holiness of those who gather there.[62]

61 Lercaro sent the full text which was read during the event and published in: Lercaro, *La chiesa nella città di domani*, 57-72.

62 Lercaro, *La chiesa nella città di domani*, 72.

## Bibliography


"256 Church Designs Enter Competition," *The Catholic Standard and Times 65*, no. 48, 19 August 1960.

Albertazzi, Vittorio. "Un piano economico-finanziario." *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 4 (December 1957): 44.

"Bando di concorso nazionale per la chiesa di S. Vincenzo de' Paoli in Bologna." *Chiesa e quartiere* no. 1-2 (January-February 1956): 23-26.

Battelli, Giuseppe. *Il cardinale e la città. Studi su Giacomo Lercaro e la chiesa di Bologna*. Bologna: il Mulino, 2022.

Battelli, Giuseppe. "La dimensione internazionale dell'episcopato bolognese di G. Lercaro." In *La chiesa di Bologna e la cultura europea*, Proceedings of the Conference, Bologna, December 1-2, 2000. Bologna: Giorgio Barghigiani Editore, 2002, 255-299.

Bedeschi, Lorenzo. *Il cardinale destituito. Documenti sul "caso" Lercaro*. Turin: Gribaudi, 1968.

"Bologna's Cardinal Lercaro To Address Liturgists at ND," *The Monitor CII*, no. 11 (June 1959).

Bucchi, Alberto, and Francesco Mazzotta, "Il corso di Strade nell'Università di Bologna." In *Nascita e sviluppo dell'ingegneria all'Università di Bologna*, edited by Ezio Messina, Domenico Mirri, and Paolo Macini. Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2019.

Campos Venuti, Giuseppe. "Politica urbanistica comunale a Bologna – Orientamenti programmatici." *Bologna. Rivista del Comune*, no. 1 (July 1961).

Campos Venuti, Giuseppe. "Relazione 1962 sul Piano intercomunale." *Casabella continuità*, no. 262 (November 1962): 9-12.

"Il Cardinale Arcivescovo Giacomo Lercaro cittadino onorario di Bologna." *Bologna. Rivista del Comune*, special issue (June 1967): 11.

Caussé, Françoise. "La critique architecturale dans la revue L'Art Sacré (1937-1968)." *Livraisons d'histoire de l'architecture*, no. 2 (2nd semester 2001): 27-36.

Caussé, Françoise. *La Revue «L'Art Sacré»: le débat en France sur l'art et la religion (1945-1954)*. Paris: Collection Cerf Histoire, 2010.

Cenerini, R. "Bologna giudizi e polemiche sul piano regolatore." *La Regione Emilia-Romagna*, no. 3 (May-June 1956): 11-19.

Cervellati, Pier Luigi. "L'intuizione urbanistica di Cardinale Lercaro: la Parrocchia, casa di Dio tra le case degli uomini." In *Ha edificato la città. Architettura sacra e urbanistica nell'intuizione di Giacomo Lercaro*, 21-31. Bologna: Edizioni Nautilus, 2002.

Cervellati, Pier Luigi, Ubaldo Pallotti, and Franca Tarozzi, "Lo sviluppo della città," *Casabella continuità*, no. 262 (November 1962): 6-9.

"Chiesa della B. V. Immacolata in Bologna." *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 3 (September 1957): 36-42.

"Chiesa e complesso della Beata Vergine Immacolata sulla Via Certosa a Bologna." *L'industria italiana del cemento*, no. 12 (December 1963): 905-928.

"Chiesa e complesso parrocchiale del Cuore Immacolato di Maria nel quartiere INA-Casa a Borgo Panigale, dell'architetto Giuseppe Vaccaro e Pierluigi Nervi ingegnere." *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 20, (December 1961): 75-98.

"Chiesa provvisoria a Bologna dell'architetto Glauco Gresleri." *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 3-4-5 (October 1956): 16-24.

"Colorful Cardinal To Speak At Liturgical Convention." *The Catholic Northwest Progress*, vol. 62, no. 31, July 31, 1959.

Della Longa, Giorgio, Antonio Marchesi, and Massimiliano Valdinoci, eds. *Architettura e liturgia nel Novecento. Esperienze europee a confronto*, Proceedings of the International Conference, Venice, October 7-8, 2004. Rovereto: Nicolodi, 2006, 19-112.

Della Longa, Giorgio, Antonio Marchesi, Massimiliano Valdinoci, and Walter Zahner, eds. *Architettura e Liturgia nel Novecento. Esperienze europee a confronto*, Proceedings of the International Conference, Venice, October 26-27, 2006.. Rovereto: Stella Edizioni, 2008, 23-83.

*Dieci anni di architettura sacra in Italia. 1945-1955*. Bologna: U.T.O.A. – Ufficio Tecnico Organizzativo Arcivescovile, 1956.

Fagnoni, Raffaello. "Carattere dell nostre chiese nuove." *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 3 (September 1957): 27-30.

Figini, Luigi. "Il tema del sacro nell'architettura minore delle isole del Mediterraneo." *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 1 (March 1957): 21-33.

Figini, Luigi. "Ricordo di Adriano Olivetti." *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 13 (1960): 98.

Galeotti, Enrico. "Dossetti, il libro bianco e il decentramento." In *Le orme di Dossetti,* edited by Davide Ferrari and Giuseppe Gilberti. Pesaro: Intra, 2024, 79-103.

Gherardi, Luciano. "Una comunità sotterranea ai margini della città." *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 3-4-5 (October 1956): 35-37.

Giorgi, Luigi. *Una vicenda politica: Giuseppe Dossetti (1945-1956)*. Cernusco sul Naviglio: Scriptorium, 2003.

Gresleri, Glauco. "Come nasce una nuova parrocchia." *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 3-4-5 (October 1956): 42-43.

Gresleri, Glauco. "Il tempo dell'urbanistica e lo spazio dell'architettura." In *Kenzo Tange e l'utopia di Bologna*, edited by Giuliano Gresleri and Glauco Gresleri. Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2010, 91-108.

Gresleri, Glauco. "Per un rinnovamento dell'architettura sacra (1955-1965)." In *Giacomo Lercaro. Vescovo della chiesa di Dio (1891-1976)*, edited by Angelina Alberigo. Genova: Marietti, 1991, 99-111.

Gresleri, Glauco. "Quando un garage diventa chiesa." *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 2 (June 1957): 67-70.

Gresleri, Glauco, M. Beatrice Bettazzi, and Giuliano Gresleri, eds. *Chiesa e Quartiere. Storia di una rivista e di un movimento per l'architettura a Bologna*. Bologna: Editrice Compositori, 2004.

Gutkind, Erwin Anton. *The Espanding Environment*. London: Freedom Press, 1953.

Gutkind, Erwin Anton. *L'ambiente in espansione.* Milano: Edizioni di comunità, 1955.

"Italian Prelate to See Spellman." *The New York Times*, August 3, 1959.

Kidder Smith, George Everard. *Nuove chiese in Europa*. Rome: Edizioni di Comunità, 1964.

Lercaro, Giacomo. "Chiesa e quartiere." *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 5 (March 1958): 25-34.

Lercaro, Giacomo. "Compiti, fini e limiti della Sociologia religiosa." *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 3-4-5 (October 1956): 9-11.

Lercaro, Giacomo. *La chiesa nella città. Discorsi e interventi sull'architettura sacra*. Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, 1996.

Lercaro, Giacomo. "Omelia del 1° gennaio 1968." *Bollettino dell'arcidiocesi di Bologna*, no. 58 (1967): 537-542.

Lercaro, Giacomo. "Posizione attuale dell'architetto di fronte al tema sacro." *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 2 (June 1957): 25-31.

Lercaro, Giacomo. , ed. "Sociologia religiosa e azione pastorale." In Discorsi, Cristianesimo e mondo contemporaneo. Roma: Herder, 1964, 201-211.

"Lezione del Cardinale Giacomo Lercaro a Torino." *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 5 (March 1958): 22-24.

Libera, Adalberto. "Chiesa di Borgo Panigale, architetto Giuseppe Vaccaro." *L'architettura. Cronache e storia*, no. 3 (September-October 1955): 368-371;

*Libro bianco su Bologna*. Bologna: Poligrafici «Il Resto del Carlino», 1956.

Longhi, Andrea, ed. *Architettura e liturgia. Autonomia e norma nel progetto*. Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2017.

Manenti, Claudia. *Architettura delle chiese provvisorie*. Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2016, 53-62.

Manenti Claudia, ed. *Il cardinale Lercaro e la città contemporanea*. Bologna: Editrice Compositori, 2010.

Manenti, Claudia. *La campagna nuove chiese del cardinale Lercaro*. Bologna: Minerva, 2023.

Manenti, Claudia. "Il laboratorio Bolognese durante l'episcopato del cardinale Lercaro: i rapporti con Colonia e la Germania." In *Arte Architettura Liturgia*. *Da Colonia a Rothenfelds. Alle radici del Movimento Liturgico*, edited by Katherin Bollenbeck, Giorgio Della Longa and Antonio Marchesi. Trento: Efferre Edizioni, 2012, 23-39.

Marconi, Plinio. "Lo sviluppo della città fino al nuovo piano." *Urbanistica*, no. 15-16 (1955): 69-70.

Martini, Luciano. "La destituzione del card. Lercaro." *Testimonianze. Quaderni mensili*, no. 101 (January-February 1968): 12-13.

Mazzoli, Aleardo. "Un anno dopo." *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 3-4-5 (October 1956): 41.

Mazzone, Umberto. "L'amministrazione della città, il Pci e la chiesa cattolica (1965-1968)." In *Giacomo Lercaro. Vescovo dei poveri, uomo di pace*, edited by Davide Dainese and Umberto Mazzone. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2020, 55-117.

Melloni, Alberto. *Rimozioni. Lercaro 1968*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2019.

Menduini, Enrico. *L'autostrada del sole*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1999.

Nerdinger, Winfried. *Walter Gropius*. Berlin: Bauhaus-Archiv, 1985.

Nervi, Pier Luigi. "Soluzione tecnico costruttiva della copertura per la chiesa dell'architetto Vaccaro a Borgo Panigale." in *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 4 (December 1957), 32-35.

Notre Dame Degree Is 'Popular Passport'." *The Catholic Advocate 8*, no. 36, September 3, 1959.

O'Donnell, Patrick. "Card. Lercaro International Architecture Awards Awarded to the University of Notre Dame, United States." *Church and Neighborhood*, no. 16 (December 1960): 5-8.

Papini, Roberto. "Ricetta per fare una chiesa." *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 1-2 (January-February 1956): 20.

Pedrazzini, Alberto. "Aspetti locali della vicenda post bellica bolognese. Dall'emergenza alla ricerca della costruzione di una città per l'uomo." *Mélanges de l'école française de Rome 115*, no. 2 (2003): 485-509.

Piovene, Guido. *Viaggio in Italia*. Milano: Mondadori, 1957.

Renzi, Renzo. *Bologna una città*. Bologna: Cappelli editore, 1964.

Renzi, Renzo. *Bologna una città*. Bologna: Cappelli editore, 1992.

Renzi, Renzo. *La città di Morandi*. Bologna: Cappelli editore, 1989.

Righetti, Luciano. *L'autostrada appenninica Bologna-Firenze*. Bologna: Costa, 2010.

Roggero, Mario. "Note e riflessioni su di una esperienza urbanistica." *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 3 (September 1957): 23-29.

Sapienza, Leonardo. *Paolo VI. Uno uno che tendeva le mani*.Cinisello Balsamo: Edizioni San Paolo, 2019.

"10 anni." *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 1 (March 1957): 3-4.

Tesini, Mario. *Oltre la città rossa. L'alternativa mancata di Dossetti a Bologna*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986.

Tortora, Vincent R. "Cardinal Lercaro of Bologna." *The Catholic Worker XXI*, no. 10 (May 1955): 5.

Toschi, Massimo. *Pace e Vangelo. La tradizione cristiana di fronte alla guerra*. Brescia: Queriniana, 1980. 304-310.

Vaccaro, Giuseppe, Plinio Marconi and Francesco Fantoni, eds. "Cenni illustrativi del nuovo piano regolatore." *Bologna. Rivista del Comune*, no. 14 (February 1955): 4-11.

Valenziano, Crispino. *Architetti di chiese*. Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1995.

Varni Angelo, ed., *Bologna contemporanea (1915-2000)*, vol. 4, tome 2. Bologna: Bologna University Press, 2013.

**Sofia Singler**

# Selective Participation: Alvar and Elissa Aalto's Sacred Architecture in Riola di Vergato

INVITED

*Aalto, Modern Architecture, Churches, Liturgical Renewal, Post-War Urbanisation*

**/Abstract**

**This paper interrogates the architecture of Santa Maria Assunta in Riola di Vergato (1965-1980) with respect to Bolognese twentieth-century religious discourse on urbanisation and the city. The paper discusses the key issues which framed the inception, development, construction and reception of Santa Maria Assunta, designed by Finnish modernists Alvar Aalto (1898-1976) and Elissa Aalto (1922-1994) and their associates. The practice's only Catholic church, Santa Maria Assunta was a direct product of Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro's (1891-1976) ambitious church-building program, implemented in response to the scarcity of religious space in rapidly urbanising Bologna.**

**The paper argues that Alvar and Elissa Aalto selectively accepted, adapted and appropriated ideas promoted by the Bolognese church-building program in their design of Santa Maria Assunta. On the one hand, working under the guidance of local figures, especially Cardinal Lercaro, the Aaltos sought to ensure that their design adhered to contemporaneous urban and religious ideals. On the other hand, the Aaltos remained fundamentally sceptical of the ambitions set out by post-war programs of religious renewal, especially those rooted in the ideal of 'participation', which manifest in reformed liturgical guidelines and the integration of church buildings into urban and suburban parochial complexes. The realised design of Santa Maria Assunta embodies the tension inherent in the Aaltos' selective adoption of Bolognese ideals: some elements of the design are products of the broader discourse on the city and the Church institution's role therein, whereas others communicate an opposition to reformist ideals which the Aaltos viewed with disfavour.**

**/Author**

**Sofia Singler**
**University of Cambridge**
**sas97@cam.ac.uk**

A native of Jyväskylä, Finland, Dr Sofia Singler trained as an architect at the University of Cambridge and the Yale School of Architecture. She practiced architecture in Boston, MA, with a focus on educational and industrial buildings, before returning to Cambridge to undertake a PhD in architectural history. At Yale, she held the Edward P. Bass Scholarship in Architecture, and at Cambridge, a Gates Cambridge PhD Scholarship.

Dr Singler's specialism is Aalto scholarship-the critical analysis of the architecture, urbanism, design and thought of Finnish modernists Alvar, Aino and Elissa Aalto and their associates. Her other research interests lie in the histories and theories of modern architecture, Indigenous architectures, architectural criticism, and architectural pedagogies for children. She is currently engaged in two main research projects, one on the post-construction 'afterlives' of Aalto buildings, and the other on contested notions of contemporaneity in Sámi public buildings.

Informing and informed by her academic research, Singler is also actively engaged in curating architecture. Major exhibitions include *Città dei Morti-City of the Dead* at the Alvar Aalto Museum (2015) and, most recently, *Alvar Aalto in Deutschland: Gezeichnete Moderne/Alvar Aalto in Germany: Drawing Modernism* at the Tchoban Foundation in Berlin (2023). She also served as academic advisor and presenter for the feature-length documentary film *AALTO* (dir. Virpi Suutari, 2020).

https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/20617
Copyright © 2024 Sofia Singler

## Introduction

The ostensibly "humane" genre of modernism that the Finnish modernist architect Alvar Aalto became – and remains – renowned for is often attributed to the significance accorded to nature in Finnish culture. Biomorphic readings view Aalto's curved formal language and natural material palette as literal transcriptions of the Finnish landscape of lakes and ridges, or as metaphors of biological forms such as forest flora from his motherland.[1] The "ghostwriter" of the Modern Movement, Sigfried Giedion – to quote Hilde Heynen's apt characterisation – influentially diagnosed Finnishness as a fundamental ingredient in Aalto's architectural project: "Finland is with Aalto wherever he goes."[2] Yet the other broadly acknowledged influence that animated Aalto's creative praxis alongside his native roots, and which Aalto himself lyrically described, was Italy. Ernesto Rogers memorably considered Aalto "not only the best Finnish architect […] but also the best Italian architect (because so far none of us [Italians] have penetrated so deeply into the roots of our ancient art): his aesthetic synthesises the spontaneous Finnish traditions and the rather more complex tradition he assimilated in Italy."[3]

It is this assimilation of "Italianness" that has been evoked as the key determinant to explain why the architecture of Santa Maria Assunta in Riola di Vergato (1965-1980), a commanding concrete church nestled in a valley some fifty kilometres southwest of central Bologna, appears to contrast with the rest of Aalto's sacred portfolio. The last of Aalto's seven churches to be realised, and the only Catholic exception to an otherwise Lutheran group of projects, "the church in Riola is unlike any of Aalto's previous religious buildings."[4] Its exceptional structural lucidity has been associated with the strong lineage of early 20th century Italian design culture – ostensibly more "streamlined" and technical in flavour than Nordic variants of modernism, which are characterised instead as being rooted in site sensitivity and responsiveness to context – more than the six realised churches that preceded it.[5] Its piazza and campanile, furthermore, have been seen as the fulfilment of Alvar Aalto's life-long yearning to build in Italy proper, having "practiced" Italianate design gestures in preceding decades in Finland, where his "vision of transforming Jyväskylä into a northern Florence" led to the application of Ancient Mediterranean architectural types such as the atrium and the amphitheatre into sub-Arctic geocultural environments.[6] **[Fig. 1]**

---

1 Teija Isohauta, "The Diversity of Timber in Alvar Aalto's Architecture: Forests, Shelter and Safety," *Architectural Research Quarterly 17*, no. 3-4 (2014): 269-280.

2 Hilde Heynen, "Modernity and Community. A Difficult Combination," in *Making a New World. Architecture & Communities in Interwar Europe*, ed. Rajesh Heynicx and Tom Avermaete (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012), 70; Sigfried Giedion, "Irrationalität und Standard," *Weltwoche*, May 2, 1941, quoted in Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen, "Alvar Aalto and the Geopolitics of Fame," *Perspecta*, no. 37 (2005): 86.

3 Ernesto Rogers, "Le responsabilità verso la tradizione," *Casabella-Continuità*, no. 202 (1954): 1.

4 Göran Schildt, *Alvar Aalto: The Mature Years* (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), 224.

5 William Charles Miller, *Nordic Modernism: Scandinavian Architecture 1890-2015* (Ramsbury: The Crowood Press, 2016).

6 Nils C. Finne, "The Workers' Club of Jyväskylä by Alvar Aalto: The Importance of Beginnings," *Perspecta 27* (1992): 53.



Making reference to archival research conducted between 2016 and 2021, this article seeks to enrich extant accounts of Santa Maria Assunta's inception and design.[7] It argues that, more than Alvar Aalto's "Italian Fever," the design of Santa Maria Assunta testifies to his and Elissa Aalto's selective, and pragmatic, engagement with Bolognese post-war religious discourse on the city and the role of the church therein.[8] Santa Maria Assunta, commissioned as part of greater Bologna's urban church-building program, is a product of the push-and-pull between local actors on the one hand, who were committed to the (sub)

7 For a comprehensive summary of recent research on Aalto's religious oeuvre, see Sofia Singler, *The Religious Architecture of Alvar, Aino and Elissa Aalto* (London: Lund Humphries, 2023).

8 Harry Charrington, "The Makings of a Surrounding World: The Public Spaces of the Aalto Atelier" (PhD diss., London School of Economics, 2008), 67.

Fig. 1
Alvar and Aino Aalto, Church of Muurame, 1926–9. Perspective, n.d. Signum 20-117 (source: © Alvar Aalto Foundation).

urbanisation of the Catholic church as an institution and to the popularisation of its architecture, and a famed Nordic architectural practice on the other hand, whose co-directors were unconvinced by both the social and architectural fruits of twentieth-century efforts to "update" religious life.

## Aalto's only Italian Church: Personal and Professional Fulfilment?

Alvar Aalto's unending admiration for Italy was sparked by his and Aino Aalto's honeymoon to Tuscany in October 1924. (The trip was Aino's second to Italy, but Aalto's first.) The young couple returned to their home and studio in Jyväskylä, Finland, wholly enamoured and inspired by what they had experienced. Subsequent projects, ranging from modest private villas and competition entries for churches and chapels, embodied lessons learned from the *architettura minore* of the Tuscan countryside as well as Florentine Renaissance jewels. Most famously, Alberti's Rucellai Sepulchre (1455-1460) was transposed by the Aaltos into secular form in their design for the Jyväskylä Workers' Club (1924-1925).[9] Thirty years after the honeymoon, and following countless more journeys to his favoured country, Aalto described the central role played by Italy in his imagination:

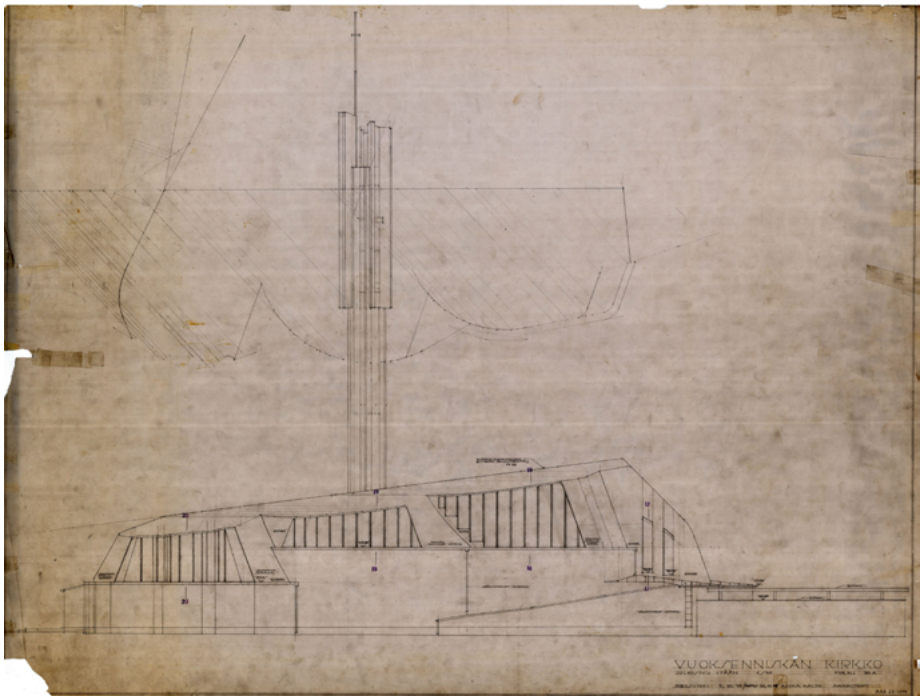
> I don't want to talk about a particular trip, because in my soul there always is a trip to Italy. Perhaps a trip made in the past that keeps coming back to my memory, a trip on which I am, or maybe a trip that I will take. Such a trip is perhaps a conditio sine qua non for my architectural work.[10]

Aalto's love affair with Italy remained one-sided for decades, however. Following its rapid ascent to international fame, sparked by breakthrough projects such as the Finnish Pavilion at the New York World Fair (1939), Alvar Aalto Architects Ltd. went on to complete a suite of projects outside Finland from the 1930s onward. Yet Italy remained conspicuously absent from the portfolio until the 1950s. Aalto's decades-long emotional engagement with his beloved Italy finally promised to assume architectural form in the project for an atelier for painter and designer Roberto Sambonet in Como (1954-1955). Left unrealised, the lakeside villa appears, in retrospect, a sorry omen for bad luck in Italy in the decade to come. Aalto's goal of building something on the "hallowed ground" of Italy turned out "quite difficult to accomplish […] time and again the fata morgana of shimmering palaces and dancing fountains loomed before him, only to vanish into thin air when he approached."[11] Under the co-directorship of Elissa Aalto (1922-1994), who in 1952 married Alvar Aalto and immediately took the wheel of the firm, eight projects were designed by the practice in Italy in the

9 Francesco Dal Co, "Aalto e Alberti," *Casabella*, no. 659 (1998): 66-75.

10 Alvar Aalto, "Viaggio in Italia," *Casabella-Continuità,* no. 200 (1954): 5.

11 Schildt, *Alvar Aalto: The Mature Years,* 220.




2

1950s and 1960s. Only two were ever realised: the Finnish Pavilion in Venice (1955-1956) and the church of Santa Maria Assunta in Riola di Vergato.[12]

Because the Venetian pavilion was intended to be temporary – it has since been both renovated and protected in several cycles – the church in Riola di Vergato is often characterised as the ultimate, and only, fulfilment of Aalto's lifelong dream to build in Italy.[13] After decades of inspiring trips to Italy, close relationships with Italian colleagues, and a flurry of unrealised projects in the Italian peninsula, Santa Maria Assunta has been cast as the gratifying conclusion to a string of frustrations, and the climax of a lifelong cultural passion, if not pathological obsession. For this reason, it has been common to assume that, despite his fame and confidence on the international architectural scheme, Alvar Aalto was unusually deferential to the local client and context, which in turn might explain the project's apparent unrelatedness to the rest of Aalto's sacred oeuvre. Effectively, the assumption has been that *Il Maestro* was willing to relinquish a degree of design control in order not to jeopardise the precious, and final, opportunity to build in what he considered the "Promised Land."[14]

The assumption of partial surrender, in design terms, has been suggested as the reason behind the sobriety, linearity and structural lucidity of Santa Maria Assunta, whose spatial character deviates from the more lyrical language of prior Aalto churches. Consider the way in which undulating walls and vaults meld together, like billowing sheets, in the Church of the Three Crosses in Imatra, Finland (1955-1958), the first of Aalto's post-war churches to be realised, which was hailed both in Finland and abroad as a singular achievement, "far

12 Esa Laaksonen and Silvia Micheli, eds., *Aalto Beyond Finland, Vol. 2: Projects, Buildings and Networks* (Helsinki: Alvar Aalto Academy and Alvar Aalto Foundation, 2018), 154-159.

13 Timo Keinänen, ed., *Alvar Aalto: The Finnish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale* (Milan: Electa, 1990).

14 Louna Lahti, *Alvar Aalto – Ex Intimo: Alvar Aalto through the Eyes of Family, Friends & Colleagues* (Helsinki: Rakennustieto, 2001), 54.

Fig. 2
Alvar and Elissa Aalto, Church of the Three Crosses, Imatra, 1955–8. East elevation, October 3, 1956. Signum 20-1099 (source: © Alvar Aalto Foundation).



3

from either historical or fashionable form, and completely impartial."[15] Known as Finland's "first free-form church," the nave of the Three Crosses is defined by "its lack of overall formal consistency; each view shows new detail, construction, and forms" and "unity is achieved not through the classical devices of symmetry, balance, repetition, and simple geometric ordering, but through the proliferation of many symbiotically linked individual events **[Fig. 2]**."[16] Or consider the haptic and visual warmth of the timber-panelled vault that bends over the Church of the Holy Ghost in Wolfsburg, Germany (1960-1962), much less alluring in terms of plastic ambiguity than the Three Crosses, yet still indicative of a "signature Aalto touch" in terms of textural richness.[17]

In contrast, the concrete ribs of Santa Maria Assunta are geometrically clean, visually lucid, and spatially dominant elements whose mathematical tenor establishes an unusually pure – if not almost purist or austere – legibility in the design. Scholars and critics have been puzzled by the fact that "at Riola, unusually for Aalto, the structural system dominates the interior. This is a clumsy affair of reinforced concrete frames, like over-sized bent-wood chair legs (Aalto's development of the chair-leg as 'the little sister of the column' was as felicitous as its reverse here is disastrous)".[18] **[Fig. 3]** Was Aalto willing to sacrifice his predilection for a softer, romantic register in favour of locals' insistence on a

15 Walter Moser, "Lutherische Kirche in Imatra, Finnland: 1956–1958, Architekt: Prof. Alvar Aalto, Helsinki," *Das Werk: Architektur und Kunst 46*, no. 8 (1959): 289-293.

16 Michael Trencher, *The Alvar Aalto Guide* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 166.

17 The client parish even advised Aalto against too much timber in the interior, fearing it may result in an ambiance too 'rustic' for a city as industrial in character as Wolfsburg. Sofia Singler and Maximilian Sternberg, "The Civic and the Sacred: Alvar Aalto's Churches and Parish Centres in Wolfsburg, 1960-68," *Architectural History 62* (2019): 226.

18 Richard Weston, *Alvar Aalto* (London: Phaidon, 1995), 213.

Fig. 3
Alvar and Elissa Aalto, Santa Maria Assunta, Riola di Vergato, 1965–80. Nave. Photographer unknown, n.d. (source: © Alvar Aalto Foundation).



4

more streamlined architectural language, perhaps indebted to the strong Italian tradition of industrial design and engineering?

Another factor pointed to as supplementary explanation for Santa Maria Assunta's unusual spatio-structural purity is professional opportunism. Aalto's personal lack of faith and conscious absence from religious discourse, as documented by his biographer Göran Schildt and others, has fuelled the assumption that he accepted sacral commissions mainly as opportunities to explore novel design solutions, which could then inform the rest of the practice's portfolio. His continued interest in ecclesiastical projects has been explained largely by the creative freedom, scale and programmatic complexity offered by such commissions, which allowed him to "manipulate both space and light to magical effect."[19] Schildt went as far as to characterise Aalto's personal relationship to religion as "an almost Voltairean antipathy," highlighting how both Aalto's upbringing and education, at the Jyväskylä Lyceum in central Finland, had emphasised the tradition of French scientific rationalism.[20] If the rest of Aalto's oeuvre is often analysed in relation to the philosophical and ethical principles he expounded in his speeches and writings – from his empathy for the "little man" to his theories of "flexible standardisation" – his denunciation of religion, at least in public, has limited analyses of Santa Maria Assunta and other churches to opportunistic and somewhat frivolous experimentation.

In short, it has been considered "somewhat of a paradox" that an unbelieving architect would design so many churches with such commitment and gusto.[21]

19 Weston, *Alvar Aalto*, 206.

20 Göran Schildt, *Alvar Aalto: The Complete Catalogue of Architecture, Design and Art* (New York: Rizzoli, 1994), 39.

21 Schildt, *Alvar Aalto: The Complete Catalogue of Architecture, Design and Art*, 81.

Fig. 4
Alvar and Elissa Aalto, Church of the Three Crosses, Imatra, 1955–8. East window and wall. Photograph by Heikki Havas, n.d. (source: © Alvar Aalto Foundation).



5

Efforts to read Aalto's religious oeuvre in terms other than artistic ambition have been limited to Schildt's argument that rather than religious dogma, Aalto's sacred projects express his conception of harmony, rooted in the Ancient Greek idea of the *kosmos* as well as a Goethean understanding of natural order.[22] In Schildt's reading, Aalto's conception of harmony was not unique to the religious context, although it found clearer expression there than in secular projects:

*[T]here was, after all, a tenable ideological reason for Aalto's involvement in sacred buildings. Not that he was moved by the mystique of suffering preached by Christian doctrine any more than by its transcendental ideas of the hereafter; instead, he had a deeply-held belief in the inherent harmony of existence […] in which everything must be in correct proportion to the totality of things.*[23]

As is often the case in the history and historiography of modern architecture, black and white photography has contributed to seminal interpretations made of the Aaltos' sacred spaces, reinforcing the assumption that the practice's churches were predominantly opportunistic endeavours. Images of Aalto churches are typically cropped and angled so as to emphasise the most lyrical aspects of their interiors. The photographic representation of Church of the Three Crosses, for instance, has served to highlight its perceived position as "the most convincing evidence of [Alvar Aalto's] ability to convert the plastic plan into a three-dimensional plasticity".[24] **[Fig. 4]**

22 Göran Schildt, *Näin puhui Alvar Aalto* (Helsinki: Otava, 1997), 28.

23 Schildt, *The Complete Catalogue,* 39.

24 Malcolm Quantrill, *Alvar Aalto: A Critical Study* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1983), 30.

Fig. 5
Alvar and Elissa Aalto, Santa Maria Assunta, Riola di Vergato, 1965–80. Sectional model, n.d. (source: © Alvar Aalto Foundation).

The photographic record of Santa Maria Assunta, in contrast, has served to highlight its structural bravado – and its relative sobriety compared to the practice's prior ecclesiastical projects. Widely circulated images of a sectional model of the nave draw focus on the accordion-like folds of skylights and the ribs that carry them as the protagonists of the design. [Fig. 5] The most famous photographs taken *in situ* reinforce the impressions made by the model: the spatial clarity of the nave is magnified by the generous light in which it bathes, the prefabricated concrete arches spotlighted literally and metaphorically by the skylights above. The near-mysticism communicated by photographs of Aalto's prior sacred projects in Finland and Germany – as epitomised by views from behind columns in the Church of the Three Crosses in Imatra, or the undulating, fabric-like altar wall of the Church of St Stephen in Wolfsburg (1963-1968) – seems to have been replaced by an exceptional degree of spatial perspicuity and structural legibility in Santa Maria Assunta. The fulfilment of personal and professional desires in Riola di Vergato appears to have resulted in a preternatural tranquillity whose essence is embodied in the clarity of the church itself – or so it has been assumed.

## Modulating Liturgical Modernity

New research on Santa Maria Assunta, as well as on Studio Aalto's religious oeuvre at large, suggests that prior narratives of the design are misleadingly uncomplicated, however. Santa Maria Assunta was not merely an outcome of Alvar Aalto uncritically appeasing the client in order to complete a long-desired commission on Italian soil. Neither was it the sole result of opportunistic structural and artistic experimentation, an anomalous late-career reinterpretation of the smoothness of Italian engineering and product design culture, produced as an unexpected conclusion to an oeuvre previously focused on organic romanticism. Instead, the architecture of Santa Maria Assunta embodies the way in which Alvar and Elissa Aalto selectively accepted, adapted and appropriated ideas drawn from Bolognese post-war religious discourse into their own ecclesiastical architecture. Although Alvar Aalto's personal appreciation for Italian culture and architecture was palpable, this love did not mean that he undiscerningly accepted everything demanded by his client or promoted in Italian religious or architectural discourses. Instead, his and Elissa Aalto's engagement with the sacred architecture of the twentieth century and *particularly* its relationship to the city was selective and, at times, even confrontational.

Key to the Aaltos' relationship with Bolognese discourse on the city and the sacred was their engagement with local figures who were directly involved, at the highest level, in programmes of liturgical renewal and parochial urbanisation. Of course, the 1950s and 1960s defined a pivotal era in the ecclesiastical architectural history of Bologna. Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro (1891-1976), Archbishop of Bologna, who had been actively engaged with the liturgical movement since the 1930s, established a church-building programme for the Red City. The programme was a response to the scarcity of religious space in rapidly urban-

ising Bologna: some sixty new churches were needed to ensure worship access to all parishioners, especially in the suburbs.[25] Lercaro strategically sought the services and collaboration of the most famed architects of the mid-century. He invited Alvar Aalto to the inaugural Congress on sacred architecture and art in 1955, along with the likes of Oscar Niemeyer and Le Corbusier. Although Aalto did not accept the invitation, Lercaro's interest in him remained – and likely only augmented – during the following years, when Alvar Aalto Architects Ltd. completed a quartet of churches to virtually unanimous acclaim in Finland and Germany: the aforementioned churches of the Three Crosses in Imatra and the Holy Ghost and St Stephen in Wolfsburg, as well as the Cross of the Plains (1958-1960) in Seinäjoki, Western Finland.

In the mid-1960s, a decade after the Congress, Lercaro presented Aalto with the invitation to design one of the new churches of Bologna. An initial, informal letter was delivered to Aalto by a Finnish diploma student in architecture, who served as an international correspondent for *Chiesa e Quartiere*. Lercaro submitted a formal request a few months later, in Florence in 1965, at the occasion of a major exhibition on Aalto's work at the Palazzo Strozzi, the first time the duo met in person. Aalto accepted immediately. The suggested site was just outside Bologna, in Riola di Vergato. The brief, translated into Finnish by an employee of the Aalto studio, made clear Lercaro's demand that the architecture be modern, the liturgy be modern, and the urban disposition be modern.[26] Given Lercaro's directorship of the commission responsible for the implementation of the Council's liturgical recommendations (*Consilium ad exsequendam Constitutionem de Sacra Liturgia*), the brief naturally aimed for the new building to epitomise the courageous changes brought about by Vatican II, especially its participatory ethos.

Liturgy was a key instrument which the Church institution employed to address its self-diagnosed need to encourage participation among the *fedeli*. The seeds for post-war liturgical reform had been sown between the late nineteenth century and the 1920s, when the Catholic Church underwent significant liturgical transformations animated by "Christ-centred" theology.[27] Architecturally, Christ-centredness was typically interpreted spatially as altar-centredness. The dominance of directional plans was questioned as a result of the will to highlight the altar as the central focus of ecclesiastical space: officiating clergy and laity were invited to worship together in the same space around the altar, thereby purportedly promoting of a sense of community among them.[28] The designs of architects such as Dominikus Böhm and Martin Weber materialised the altar's recasting from a cultic locus of the clergy to a site of congregational

25 Angelina Alberigo, ed., *Giacomo Lercaro. Vescovo della chiesa di Dio 1891-1978* (Genoa: Marietti, 1991); Claudia Manenti, ed., *Il Cardinale Lercaro e La Città Contemporanea* (Bologna: Editrici Compositori, 2010).

26 Marjatta Hietaniemi, "Alvar Aallon suunnitelma Riolan kirkoksi: sijoittuminen ja suhde maisemaan" (Master Thesis, University of Jyväskylä, 2003), 15-17.

27 Albert Gerhards, "Spaces for Active Participation. Theological and Liturgical Perspectives on Catholic Church Architecture," in *Europäischer Kirchenbau, 1950-2000 = European Church Architecture, 1950-2000,* ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock (Munich, London: Prestel, 2002), 19.

28 Romano Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* [1918], trans. Ada Lane (London: Sheed & Ward, 1930).

activity, informed by the principle of *circumstantes*, gathering around the altar.

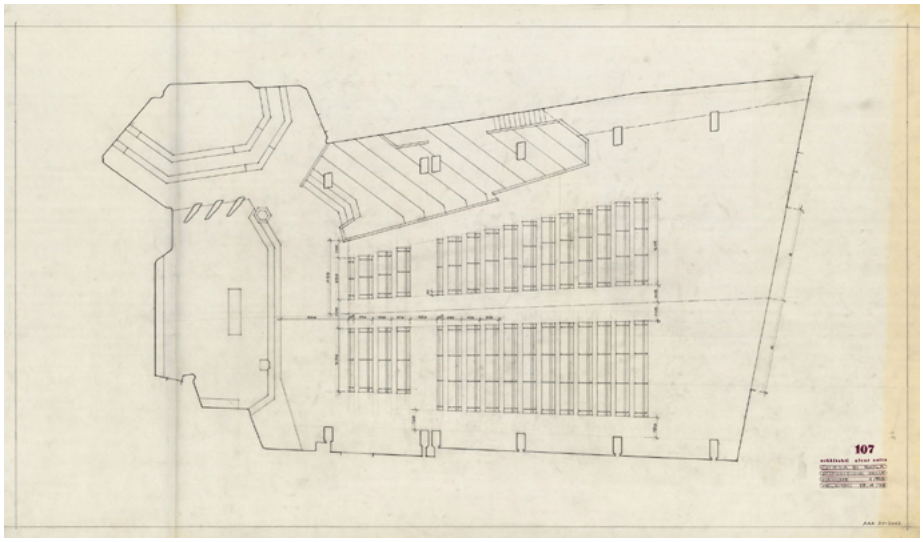
Post-war, the Catholic campaign for *aggiornamento* – updating – climaxed in the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), whose promotion of free-standing altars solidified worship *versus populum* as the new norm. Officiating clergy would celebrate the Eucharist facing the congregation rather than the apse (*versus apsidem* or *versus orientem*).[29] Other recommend reforms, rooted in earlier renewal movements, included a new model of communion procession and placing the baptismal font closer to the altar. Architecturally, these reforms were manifest in the apse no longer being separated from the nave, the altar area being set only marginally higher or at the same level as the congregation space, and the pulpit – indeed even accusation – among liturgists, exemplified by seminal texts such as Peter Hammond's *Liturgy and Architecture* (1960) – was that the basilical plan had distanced the congregation from the altar and clergy, and hindered participation in worship. *Versus populum,* in contrast, would engage believers "in a corporate liturgical act in which everyone celebrates."[30]

The evolution of the plans of Santa Maria Assunta illustrates not just how post-war liturgical ideals shaped the Aaltos' design, but also how they were moderated and manipulated iteratively by the architects during its development. In each successive version, the project became wider, shorter, and boxier. Alvar Aalto personally preferred a traditional basilical plan, but Cardinal Lercaro pushed for a wider space in light with his Vatican II -fuelled ambition to bring the faithful to Mass in a participatory way. Rather dramatically, an entire bay of the church was ultimately removed, to make it even shorter and thus more "participatory".[31] [Fig. 6] Although the *parti* of Santa Maria Assunta nonetheless remained predominantly long in the – whose basic template for a church is a wedged plan that is clearly longer than wider, – the concrete ribs established a transverse pull across the space, visually foreshortening the main longitudinal axis and thereby satisfying the liturgical reformist impulse to encourage "active participation" by decreasing the distance between the congregation and the altar. The perspective drawings of the church similarly illustrate how mechanisms of renewal, as promoted by Cardinal Lercaro, took architectural shape, and were adapted by the Aaltos piecemeal as the project developed. Santa Maria Assunta ended up the only church in which the Aaltos agreed to omit an altar rail entirely, no doubt a consequence of Cardinal Lercaro's liturgical insistence. [Fig. 7] It would not have been a frictionless compromise, as the altar accorded special meaning in Alvar Aalto's understanding of sacred architecture. He steadfastly held that, despite the pressures to allow for maximum flexibility, which shaped the design of his Finnish – and which prefigured the conclusions eventually

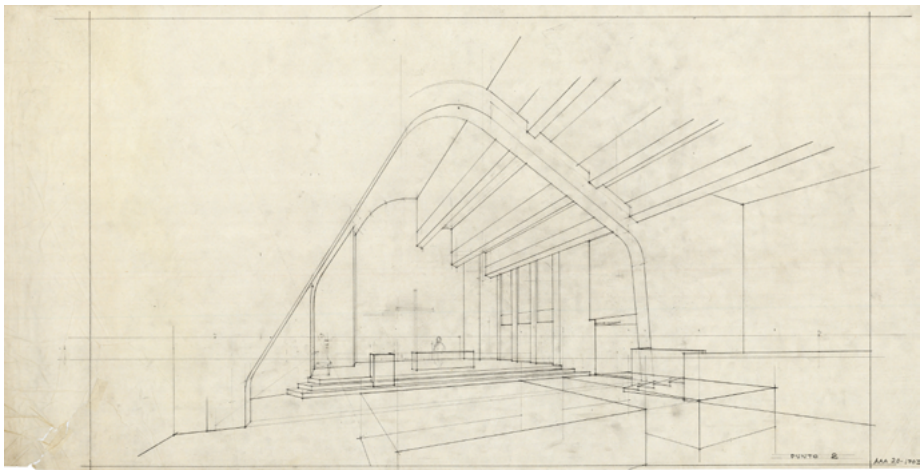
29 Gerhards, "Spaces for Active Participation," 25.

30 Stephen Hackett, "Postconciliar Church Design," in *Vatican Council II: Reforming Liturgy*, ed. Carmel Pilcher, David Orr and Elizabeth Harrington (Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2013), 239; Peter Hammond, *Liturgy and Architecture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960); Peter Hammond, *Towards a Church Architecture* (London: Architectural Press, 1962).

31 Alvar Aalto Museum Archives, Santa Maria Assunta, "Riolan kirkko," 492 drawings.




6



7

reached at Vatican II – the altar remain unmoveable, commanding, and heavy.[32] Even in parishes that explicitly asked Alvar and Elissa Aalto to design for liturgy *versus populum*, altars were never set on the same level as the congregation, and altar areas' dignity never curtailed in material quality or detailing. In terms of its express allowance for worship *versus populum*, Santa Maria Assunta thus stands as the most liturgically modern of Aalto's religious works.

The maturation of the project from a relatively traditionalist basilical plan to an increasingly wide nave which would support *versus populum* liturgy was unsteady. Rather than immediately acceding to Lercaro's wishes and thus to the recommendations set out by Vatican II, Alvar and Elissa Aalto pushed for a more traditional liturgy than what the Catholic Church envisioned. Liturgically, the final construction is an illustration of the tensions that arose between designer and client, rather than a straightforward translation of Lercaro's – or the Second Vatican Council's – ideals into built form.[33]

Fig. 6
Alvar and Elissa Aalto, Santa Maria Assunta, Riola di Vergato, 1965–80. Schematic ground floor plan showing the arrangement of the pews, scale 1:50, April 19, 1978. Signum 20-2022 (source: © Alvar Aalto Foundation).

Fig. 7
Alvar and Elissa Aalto, Santa Maria Assunta, Riola di Vergato, 1965–80. Perspective, altar area, n.d. Signum 20-1703 (source: © Alvar Aalto Foundation).

32 Letter from Ernst Korritter to Alvar Aalto, August 12, 1968, Alvar Aalto Museum Archives, "Wolfsburg. Detmerode."

33 Arto Kuorikoski and Sofia Singler, "Building for Change: Liturgy and Architecture in Alvar and Elissa Aalto's Chiesa di Santa Maria Assunta, Riola di Vergato," in peer review (expected publication 2025).

## Urban Participation Versus Sacred Seclusion

In addition to conforming to the new liturgy, Cardinal Lercaro asked that the new church in Riola di Vergato be modern – that is, participatory – in its urban disposition. After all, the commission was for one of many new churches to be built in urban and suburban Bologna, and liturgy was not the only facet of churchly modernisation. "In order to become a pastoral and social project, [Lercaro's program of participation] must also become an architectural and urban project."[34] The bureau *Ufficio nuove chiese di periferia* specifically addressed how architecture could be employed to support pastoral life and welfare provisions in the ever-expanding outskirts of metropolitan Bologna.[35] Other than via modern liturgy, how could new-build sacral architecture speak meaningfully to modern urban contexts?

The Cardinal explicitly acknowledged the need for sacred space to have and retain a "spirit of its own" – a sentiment with which Alvar Aalto would have readily agreed – yet envisioned this spirit being nestled in the rest of the city, "set in the world of the secular buildings that surround it, with which it divides the space and creates the city."[36] Aalto, in contrast, believed that in order to establish its own identity in an increasingly commercial age, sacred space necessitated a degree of seclusion rather than urban integration. Therefore, Aalto was not convinced about the Catholic Church's self-diagnosed need to build more worship space in urban and suburban – a strategy that Protestant Churches took up in parallel, including in Aalto's native Finland, just as straightforwardly as they had adopted the Catholic Church's liturgical reforms to their own agendas.[37]

As much as Alvar Aalto admired how churches had traditionally marked the centre of town in Italian villages as in Finnish ones, his conviction was that in a modern age, a degree of separation was needed instead. Urban contexts were developing so densely, so commercially and so homogenously that setting the church building into urban or suburban loci without enough mediation risked downplaying its hierarchical importance over secular buildings. Aalto considered "all cultic sites and sacred areas, churches, and so on" worthy of special emphasis in the cityscape, their treatment distinct from secular counterparts.[38] Yet the dominance of commercial building had, in Aalto's words, "grown to such proportions that governmental and other public buildings can no longer compete with it," ruining the traditional hierarchy in which the sacred trumped the civic, and the civic the commercial.[39] In effect, the assertive position accorded

---

34 Gaetano Adolfo Comiati, "Giacomo Lercaro in Bologna. An Influential and Paradigmatic Event between 'Experiences, Hopes, Defeats,'" *Actas de Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporánea*, no. 7 (2020): 55.

35 Claudia Manenti, *La Campagna Nuove Chiese del Cardinale Lercaro* (Bologna: Minerva Soluzioni Editoriali, 2023).

36 Giacomo Lercaro, *La chiesa nella città: discorsi e interventi sull'architettura sacra* (San Paolo: Cinisello Balsamo, 1996), 17.

37 Sven Sterken and Eva Weyns, eds., *Territories of Faith: Religion, Urban Planning and Demographic Change in Post-War Europe* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022).

38 Alvar Aalto, "Julkisten rakennusten dekadenssi," *Arkkitehti*, no. 9–10 (1953): 144-148.

39 Aalto, "Julkisten rakennusten dekadenssi", 144-148.

to religious buildings in the past was no longer a *fait accompli*, due to which hierarchy had to be attained through alternate means – typically, separation. Aalto's preference for dissociating a church from the city-centre was not due to an aversion to religious elements in the cityscape, but a mechanism to guard a sense of the sacred.

Hence, in instances where the firm was able to choose a site for a church building, the preferred option was the least urban possible. For instance, in Imatra, a new town on Finland's border with the USSR, for which Alvar Aalto Architects Ltd. had drawn up the master plan some years earlier, Aalto and his associates chose a plot removed from the urban spine of the municipality. Their chosen site was closer to industrial lands and forests than residential or civic neighbourhoods. Its relative isolation was underscored further by the architects' decision not to set the church even in the new "centre of town" designed as a detailed addendum to the master plan, which, if realised, would have comprised a theatre, gallery, town hall, library, and various other civic functions. The chosen plot, instead, sat in a peripheral area zoned as "forest" – a marker of his decision to build a forest church for a forest town. Initial sketches for the church explore the possibility of a piazza mediating between the church and street; the idea was discarded almost immediately in favour of setting the church deep into the forest, with only winding paths leading up to the building concealed among the trees.[40]

When a choice of site was not granted and a plot in a decidedly urban environ came predetermined – usually cases in which the client parish or competition brief mandated a plot in the city-centre – members of the Aalto studio submitted to the task, albeit somewhat reluctantly. The focus then became on ensuring a due degree of separation between the city and the sacred through architectural means. The plot of the Church of the Cross in Lahti (1969-1979), the penultimate church completed by the studio, is not only urban, but monumentally so: it sits at the northern end of a grand street that cuts through the city, facing Eliel Saarinen's Town Hall (1910-1912) at the southern end. Together, the two monuments form an *axis mundi* for the town, with sacred and secular poles at either end.[41] Because of the monumentality of the site, urbanity was not as distasteful for the Aaltos as elsewhere. The hierarchical significance of the plot was undeniable, thanks to which the resultant church did not risk being conflated with other functions. Still, as if to pre-empt future developments that might decrease the due degree of valorisation accorded to the church, its exterior is somewhat defensive in tone. A mute brick crust guards the light interior from the world beyond with the impervious solemnity of a fortress wall: the façades do not invite the city in as much as guard the nave from the world beyond.

In Wolfsburg, Germany, the plot presented to the studio for their design of St. Stephen's Church was suburban, and, to the Aaltos' chagrin, set into the heart of a shopping centre. The inescapability of the commercial context led the architects

40 Singler, *The Religious Architecture of Alvar, Aino and Elissa Aalto*, 37-38.

41 Mauri Malkavaara, *Ristinkirkko* (Lahti: Lahden seurakuntayhtymä, 1998).

to opt for a strong gesture of denial, where "the marble-clad façade of the nave presents a closed front to the adjacent shopping mall."[42] Although they reluctantly agreed to "integrate" the church into the shopping precinct in line with the parish's wishes, throughout different design iterations the Aaltos held on to the ambition "to valorise the church" by establishing an architectural sense of separation between the sacred interior and profane exterior.[43]

In contrast, the little valley in Riola di Vergato, at a distance from the urban core and suburban peripheries of Bologna, must have been a relief. Notwithstanding the fact that the commission for the church arose from an urban church-building scheme, the site, at least compared to many others selected for the same initiative, was relatively isolated in the manner he would have desired. Reportedly, Alvar Aalto specifically "requested a rural rather than urban setting" when he accepted Lercaro's commission.[44]

Lercaro's understanding of an urban disposition was not just about the location of the site, of course. Another aspect was reaching out to the city by means of quasi-secular programming, a pastoral strategy epitomised by the construction of parish centres and parochial complexes (the former a standalone building that combined, under one roof, secular functions with sacred space – a genre of "multifunction church" – and the latter a collection of sacred and secular buildings bunched together, including a church alongside spaces such as sports halls or daycare centres). Meek and unassuming, parish complexes embodied the Church's attempt to react to decreased membership and to dismantle the public perception of its ostentatiousness during post-war austerity. Its "voluntary relinquishment of self-representation" led to the promotion of multipurpose architectures, whose massing, elevations and interiors were hardly distinguished from those of other public buildings.[45] Parochial complexes were deemed material expressions of the theological ambition to extend outreach particularly in urban settings, and of the decreasing dominance of Mass as the most critical ecclesiastic ritual.[46] Since the wars had "demanded heavy sacrifices from parishes,"Finnish architect Rafael Blomstedt acknowledged, a due sense of architectural humility was now necessary to reflect the "cultural, practical and aesthetic values" appropriate to the post-war context.[47] The rationing of building materials had already subjected monumentality to intense questioning in European ecclesiastical architectural debate. Furthermore, the construction of complexes devoted to spaces of socialisation and learning triggered less opposition than the erection of new-build churches proper.[48]

---

42 Trencher, *The Alvar Aalto Guide*, 205.

43 Singler and Sternberg, "The Civic and the Sacred," 228.

44 Trencher, *The Alvar Aalto Guide*, 206.

45 Horst Schwebel, "An Aversion to Grand Gestures: Theological and Liturgical Perspectives on Protestant Church Architecture," in *Europäischer Kirchenbau, 1950-2000 = European Church Architecture, 1950-2000,* ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock (Munich: Prestel, 2002), 219.

46 Schwebel, "An Aversion to Grand Gestures: Theological and Liturgical Perspectives on Protestant Church Architecture", 219.

47 Rafael Blomstedt, "Seurakunta ja rakennuskulttuuri," *Arkkitehti*, no.1 (1944): 20-21.

48 Schwebel, "An Aversion to Grand Gestures," 219.

In line with contemporaneous ideals of multipurpose sacred spaces, in Riola di Vergato, Cardinal Lercaro envisioned an entire parochial complex rather than a singular church. In Lercaro's vision, the complex was to include, in addition to the church proper, a church clergy house, parochial club spaces, a nursing home, a kindergarten and, in a manner typical of Catholic youth work, a football field and other subsidiary functions.[49] The trouble was that, mirroring his scepticism toward liturgical renewal, Alvar Aalto was hesitant to "modernise" the urban disposition of churches via the inclusion of participatory functions within or around them. For him, parochial complexes were unsatisfactory hybrids, neither sacred nor secular enough. Rather than "update" or enrich religious life in a meaningful way, in Aalto's mind, parochial complexes had robbed "from church buildings their character as public buildings."[50]

Alvar Aalto was not a lone critic. In fact, throughout Europe, architects appeared more "conservative" than clergy with regard to the new building types. In Finland, the national Lutheran Church's cultural affairs committee organised a joint conference with the Finnish Association of Architects to address the problem of the "form and content" of parish centres in 1957.[51] Architects expressed dismay at the clergy's unbridled enthusiasm for parish centres, arguing that the dignity of churches was still needed in modern times – a position attributed in part to a modernist insistence on the functional separation of spaces.[52] Clergy, in turn, countered that the only architectural way for the Church to communicate its ambition to meet people in their everyday lives, was to build more humbly, to create an "ordinary" version of an architecture that had for centuries sought to be "extraordinary." Nonetheless, even in Bologna, the prime "laboratory" for the Catholic Church's architectural (sub)urbanisation project, ideals of simplicity and "evangelical poverty" were not always straightforward qualities to translate into built form. Giuseppe Vaccaro, for instance, chose to incorporate rather than downplay the "orienting quality" of older churches into his design of San Giovanni Bosco (1963-1968), consciously seeking to counterpoise the contemporary language of the church with clear, and ostensibly more traditionalist, urban legibility.[53]

Alvar Aalto's distaste for parochial centres was apparent from the earliest sketches for the *complesso parrocchiale* in Riola di Vergato, which make the clear the hierarchical terms in which studio members treated the various components of the complex. The buildings were laid out along "a gradient of sacredness," where the parish centre, encompassing at least some religious functions, was allowed nearest the church, whereas the school and retirement home were

49 Alvar Aalto Museum Archives, *Riolan kirkko- ja tilaohjelma* [The brief for the church and parochial complex in Riola], signum 20A-196, n.d., "Riolan kirkko."

50 Alvar Aalto, "Vuoksenniskan kirkko," *Arkkitehti*, no. 12 (1959): 194-207.

51 Keijo Petäjä, "Seurakuntatyön ja arkkitehtuurin vaatimukset seurakuntataloja suunniteltaessa," *Arkkitehti*, no. 9-10 (1957): 159–60.

52 Oscar Ortiz-Nieminen, "Kaikenlaiselle toiminnalle tilaa riittää, kaikenlaisille seurakuntalaisille paikkoja on: monitoimikirkkoarkkitehtuuri Helsingin seudulla 1900–1960-luvuilla" (PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2021).

53 Claudia Manenti, *Luoghi di Identità e Spazi del Sacro nella Città Europea Contemporanea* (Franco Angeli, 2012), 117.

set decidedly further away. It would be tempting to interpret the radiating lines drawn from the heart of the nave in one standout sketch as indications of such a gradient: hierarchical importance emanates from the sacredmost interior. [Fig. 8] Tellingly, napkin sketches of the required football field and swimming pool were produced, but never seriously incorporated into the site plan; the fact that nothing came of them would have presumably been a relief to the design team.[54]

As the project progressed, studio members had to accede to a tighter site plan, with the different buildings bundled up closer to one another. In response to the uncomfortable proximity of subsidiary functions to the church, a sinuous wall was laid out to separate the *edifici sociali* from the ecclesiastical spaces. [Fig. 9] It was as though the architects agreed to include in the project buildings which they viewed with disfavour, but then childishly or even petulantly underlined their dissatisfaction with the requirement. The push-and-pull between architect and client continued: in response to Lercaro's feedback, in a revised scheme, the parish centre was moved next to the church, to frame the long edge of the church piazza in front. The final version of the complex was "conceived not with the character of a perched citadel, but as a service open to the whole Riolese community," Lercaro noted with gratitude.[55] It embodied the "concept of the church as a place of community convocation of the people of God around the altar; a church that opens onto the city and extends into it, that participates in the flow of life of the city, not that isolates itself, but that is tied to the knot of the neighbourhood with works of fraternal mediation."[56]

In the site plan, the sole component which was granted direct connection to the church proper was the vicarage, the *casa canonica*. The parish building committee had specifically asked for the vicarage to be melded together with a parish centre, and for the combined spaces to be accessible by car.[57] Defying the request, Aalto studio members separated the parish spaces from the vicarage, and set the garage apart from both. Most significantly, the vicarage was attached to the church proper, exploiting the sacristy as a bridging element between the altar area and the *casa canonica*. [Fig. 10] The vicarage of Santa Maria Assunta is the only of Aalto's directly connected to a church. The solution may well have been a respectful nod to the Catholic context, and the role of Fathers therein – both a touching tribute by an Italophile to the culture he loved, and a gesture to underscore the unsatisfactoriness of parish centres. Whereas parochial complexes, in Aalto's mind, were driven by the misguided and somewhat populist ethos of "updating" the Church's outreach to twentieth-century paradigms of urbanised life, vicarages held in themselves a positively nostalgic vestige of the past, where village communities were steered not by bureaucratic entities but by local individuals and families, perhaps explaining Aalto's favourable attitude towards them.

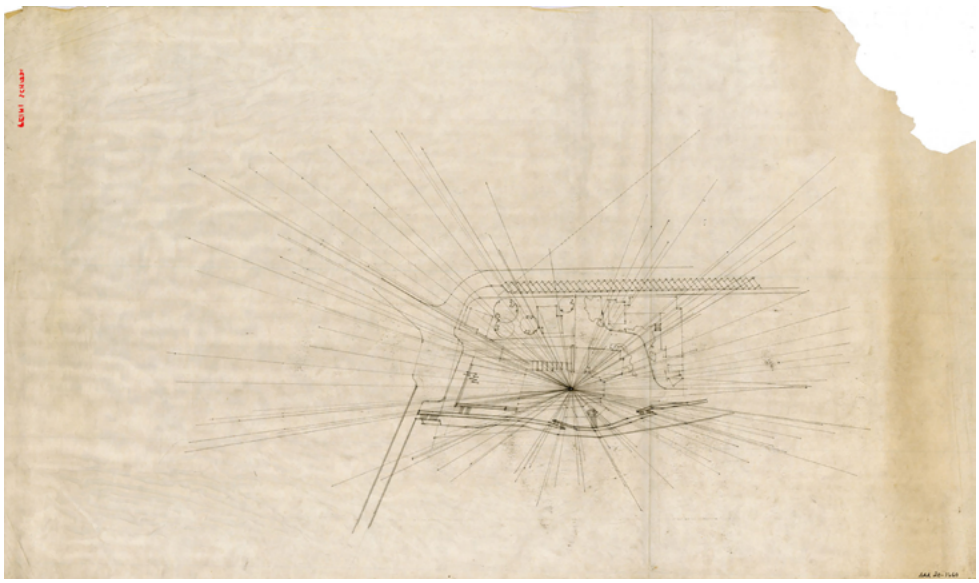
---

54 Hietaniemi, "Alvar Aallon suunnitelma Riolan kirkoksi," 142.

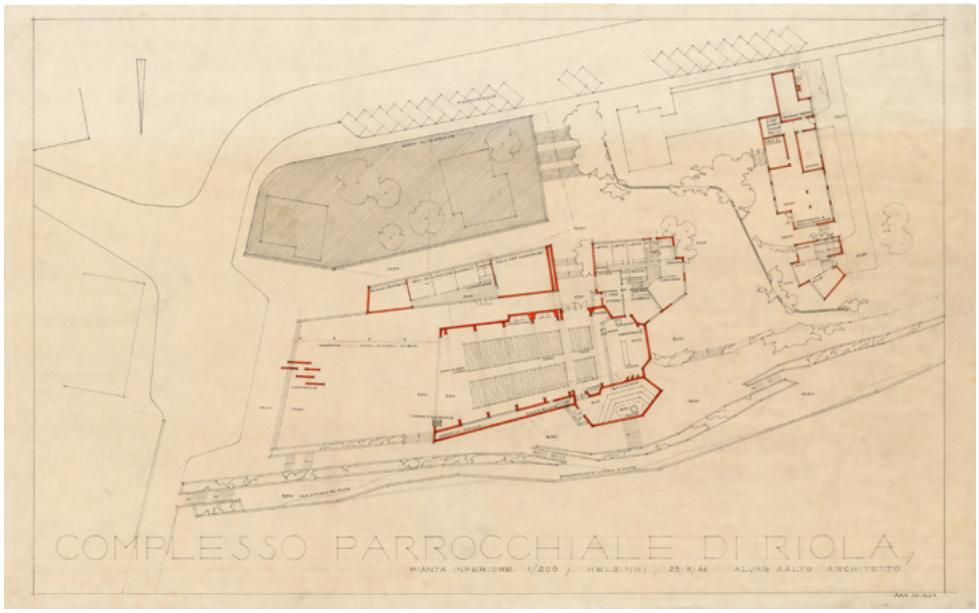
55 Giacomo Lercaro, "… Voi Tutti, Uomini di Buona Volontà," *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 40 (1966): 8-9.

56 Lercaro, "… Voi Tutti, Uomini di Buona Volontà", 8-9.

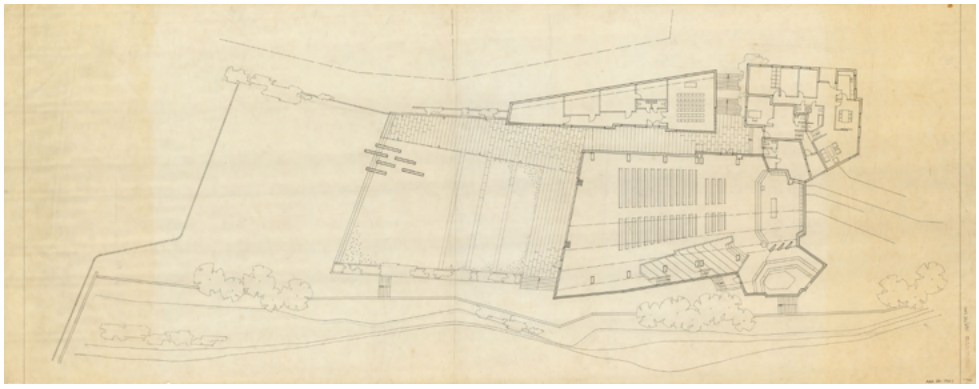
57 Hietaniemi, "Alvar Aallon suunnitelma Riolan kirkoksi," 131-134.



8




9



10

Fig. 8
Alvar and Elissa Aalto, Santa Maria Assunta, Riola di Vergato, 1965–80. Sketch, site plan. Signum 20-1660 (source: © Alvar Aalto Foundation).

Fig. 9
Alvar and Elissa Aalto, Santa Maria Assunta, Riola di Vergato, 1965–80. Ground floor plan, scale 1:200, May 25, 1966. Signum 20-1667 (source: © Alvar Aalto Foundation).

Fig. 10
Alvar and Elissa Aalto, Santa Maria Assunta, Riola di Vergato, 1965–80. Ground floor plan, scale 1:100, n.d. Signum 20-1723 (source: © Alvar Aalto Foundation).



The exterior form and massing of Santa Maria Assunta pose interesting conclusions when interrogated in light of its hoped-for urbanity. Its stepped profile, which nestles into the mountain, might be considered a reformist gesture insofar as it departs from ecclesiastical tradition. On the one hand, its departure from the singular, monumental symmetries of traditionalist churches might be seen to conform with Cardinal Lercaro's vision of a *chiesa dei poveri*, where monumentality was downplayed and softened. (Similarly, in Eastern Finland some years earlier, Aalto's client priests had asked for the design of the Church of the Three Crosses to be, in architectural expression, "as obliging as God's grace."[58]) On the other hand, the stepped exterior may also be read as a snub to the urbanity underscored by Cardinal Lercaro and other "urban-minded" shepherds of churchly renewal programs. The massing of Santa Maria Assunta echoes the form of the surrounding topography, seeking to meld itself more with terrain than town: "Like the heavily-eroded profiles of the surrounding mountain ranges, the church appears as if part of the earth, fitting completely into the natural terrain, its interior a great primal cavern."[59] **[Fig. 11]** The design thus appears to communicate Aalto's view that, in a modern age, church buildings demanded a degree of separation from, rather than seamless integration with, urban life. A return to quasi-primitive cave typologies was more preferable than an open-doors sacral architecture woven into the commercial and civic quarters of the modern city.

Fig. 11
Alvar and Elissa Aalto, Santa Maria Assunta, Riola di Vergato, 1965–80. Exterior view looking northeast. Photograph by Maija Holma, n.d. (source: © Alvar Aalto Foundation).

58 Singler, *The Religious Architecture of Alvar, Aino and Elissa Aalto*, 71.

59 Trencher, *The Alvar Aalto Guide*, 206.

## Conclusion: Tensions between Timeliness and Timelessness

Scholarship interested primarily or solely in Alvar Aalto's biography, portfolio or personality have typically accorded insufficient significance to the extra-personal factors that shaped the making of the eponymous firm's religious architecture. Hence the historiographical stalemate in which evocations of Aalto's personal lack of faith have impeded enquiry into the churches designed by the atelier, and limited their analysis predominantly to questions of form, material, and lighting. In contrast, scholarship that approaches liturgical renewal as the *primus motor* of twentieth-century sacral architecture has, at times, overemphasised liturgical matters as generators of architectural form, and paid insufficient attention to designers' personal convictions – not just religious views but architectural opinions concerning sacredness, ambiance, hierarchy, and appropriateness.

The design of Santa Maria Assunta testifies to the manners in which modern sacred architecture was shaped by the dialogue and debate between the Church and the designers hired to give form to its twentieth-century mission. Neither Alvar Aalto's personal ethos nor liturgical renewal alone explain the tensions inherent in its design. The story of Santa Maria Assunta is not one of a modern Cardinal commissioning a modern architect to produce a liturgically, urbanistically and socially progressive project together. It is a story of a reformist Cardinal engaging in a tug of war with an architect whose views on sacred architecture were arguably more conservative than the Cardinal's. [Fig. 12] Alvar Aalto's relative ecclesiastical traditionalism was rooted in an appreciation of religion as a set of unchanging customs and heritage, and an appreciation of religious rites and rituals as constituent ingredients of "cultural memory."[60] He therefore defied programmes of renewal, whose aims to modernise, popularise and "update" religious life he considered superficial or even antithetical to the very purpose of faith.[61] In effect, Aalto's commitment to seeking the timeless in sacral architecture conflicted with the Church's self-mandated program of timeliness.

Alvar Aalto was not alone in his scepticism. For example, his insistence on longitudinal, basilical plans – which framed the design even of Santa Maria Assunta, commissioned explicitly for the new liturgy – was not unrelated to a similar position held by modernists Gillespie, Kidd & Coia in Scotland, who also insisted on longer "traditional plans" in their churches, and an emphasis on the ceremonial gravitas of the journey from entrance to altar.[62] Further research into the views of the other architects involved in Bologna's post-war church-building boom, and how those views shaped and were shaped by the requirements and desires of the Second Vatican Council, Cardinal Lercaro, *Officio Nuove Chiese*, and local parish officials, would enrich our understanding of the complex

60 Aino Niskanen, "Alvar Aalto and Cultural Memory," *JOELHO Journal of Architectural Culture*, no. 13 (2022): 45-66.

61 Singler, *The Religious Architecture of Alvar, Aino and Elissa Aalto*, 95.

62 Robert Proctor, "Churches for a Changing Liturgy: Gillespie, Kidd & Coia and the Second Vatican Council," *Architectural History 48* (2005): 302-306.



dynamics of collaboration and compromise which affected the resultant buildings. Were local (Catholic) architects more supportive of the recommendations set out by Vatican II? Were the tensions inherent in the design of Santa Maria Assunta exceptional or illustrative of the *status quo*?

The debate between Cardinal Lercaro and the Aaltos was not always easy. In the end, however, Lercaro explicitly thanked the Aaltos for interpreting the brief "in the spirit of plenary participation of the people in the liturgical celebration," suggesting the final result was pleasing at least to him.[63] Cases such as Santa Maria Assunta suggest that the conclusions reached at Vatican II were not directly or straightforwardly applied to architecture, as much as mediated through the relationships that grew between the Church and modern architects. Historiographically speaking, the Second Vatican Council is typically narrated as a watershed moment that profoundly and permanently altered Christian art and architecture. Recently, attention has been called to the need to consider more critically what happened in the run-up to Vatican II, particularly in the preparatory period between the Second World War and the Council, a period during which many of the nascent changes were moulded and re-shaped iteratively before being codified into their final form.[64] Similarly, what happened immediately *after* the Council, in the design of churches such as Santa Maria Assunta, warrants continued critical interrogation.

Furthermore, the complex to-and-fro which shaped the evolution of the liturgical, urban and architectural orientation of Santa Maria Assunta was not limited solely to Lercaro and the Aaltos as the sole actors. In addition to Alvar and

63 Letter from Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro to Alvar Aalto, December 3, 1966, Alvar Aalto Museum Archives, "Riolan kirkko."

64 See, for instance, 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.

Fig. 12
Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro and Alvar Aalto discussing the design of Santa Maria Assunta in 1966. Photographer unknown (source: © Alvar Aalto Foundation).



Elissa Aalto's direct correspondence with Lercaro, other members of the Aalto studio received assistance via letters from Bolognese architects tasked to assist with the project locally. A particularly pivotal figure was Luciano Gherardi, who became the liturgical consultant for the project, patiently guiding the Nordic architects on how best to materialise Lercaro's ideals in the design. After each major design iteration, studio members sent drawings for review to Bologna, and revised them back in Helsinki according to the suggestions of Monsignor Gherardi. Further research, especially on the other urban and suburban churches built under the auspices of Lercaro's program, would help elucidate the cast of actors and their respective roles and responsibilities in the shaping of Bolognese modern sacred space. Architect Glauco Gresleri, one of the architects most intimately involved in Lercaro's program, tellingly described the context in which Bologna's new churches were designed as "an integrated system of progress. The exchange between liturgists and architects is an everyday operational practice."[65] Further research would shed light on the motivations, mechanisms and outcomes of such "everyday operational practice" and thus contribute a more balanced view of how liturgical ideals were translated into architectural form.

Another noteworthy topic for further research is the contribution of Elissa Aalto to the design of Santa Maria Assunta. It is an inescapable and tremendously relevant fact that the construction of Santa Maria Assunta drew to a close under the sole direction of Elissa Aalto; the church was consecrated two years and fully completed four years after her husband's death. Although most of the project development was led by Alvar Aalto in his final years, and although Elissa Aalto "remained, or often purposely chose to remain, an anonymous behind-the-scenes orchestrator" in the designs she co-directed, her contribu-

65 Glauco Gresleri, "Per un rinnovamento dell'architettura sacra (1955–1965)," in *Giacomo Lercaro. Vescovo della chiesa di Dio (1891-1978)*, ed. Angelina Alberigo (Genova: Marietti, 1991), 109.

Fig. 13
Elissa Aalto directing works at the construction site of Santa Maria Assunta in Riola di Vergato. Photographer unknown, n.d. (source: © Alvar Aalto Foundation).

tions were monumental in nuance, complexity, and scale.[66] [Fig. 13] Recent and ongoing research suggests that "Elissa's hand was less classical and less typological than Alvar's. It was more topological instead. Her emphasis on clarity of formal intent jostled with his insistence on reprising historic structural vocabularies (albeit in the abstract), and her predilection for perspicuous spatial choreographies established a productive tension with his proclivity for ambiguity."[67] Did Elissa's more mathematical register meld with Lercaro's conceptions of architectural poverty, amplifying the effects of liturgical renewal on Santa Maria Assunta, and thus explaining its unusual lucidity, unique among Aalto churches?

The extent to which Alvar Aalto's ecclesiastical conservatism melded with Elissa Aalto's predilection for clarity, and how they mixed with "Lercarian liturgical thought" is impossible to determine before further research is carried out.[68] What is clear, however, is that the Aaltos remained fundamentally sceptical of the ambitions set out by various post-war religious and urban renewal programs. The realised design of Santa Maria Assunta embodies the tension inherent in the Aaltos' selective adoption of 20th century ideals concerning the sacred and its role in the modern city: some elements of the design are direct products of the broader discourse on the city and the church institution's role therein, whereas others communicate an opposition to ideals the Aaltos viewed with disfavour.

On the one hand, the Aaltos relied heavily on local figures, ranging from Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro to liturgical consultant Luciano Gherardi, to ensure their design adhered to contemporaneous urban-religious ideals. In this respect, they did participate in the participatory paradigm set out at Vatican II. On the other hand, they remained fundamentally sceptical of the ambitions set out by various post-war religious and urban renewal programs, and insisted on a degree of tradition in liturgical, urban, and social terms. In this regard, their participation was partial and selective, if not somewhat defiant.

66 Sofia Singler, "Review: Arkkitehti Elissa Aalto / Architect Elissa Aalto," *Architecture Research Quarterly 27*, no. 1 (2023): 73-78.

67 Singler, "Review: Arkkitehti Elissa Aalto / Architect Elissa Aalto", 73-78.

68 Comiati, "Giacomo Lercaro in Bologna," 54.

## Bibliography


Aalto, Alvar. "Julkisten rakennusten dekadenssi." *Arkkitehti*, no. 9-10 (1953): 144-148.

Aalto, Alvar. "Viaggio in Italia." *Casabella-Continuità,* no. 200 (1954): 4-5.

Aalto, Alvar. "Vuoksenniskan kirkko." *Arkkitehti*, no. 12 (1959): 194-207.

Alberigo, Angelina, ed. *Giacomo Lercaro. Vescovo della chiesa di Dio 1891-1978.* Genova: Marietti, 1991.

Blomstedt, Rafael. "Seurakunta ja rakennuskulttuuri." *Arkkitehti*, no.1 (1944): 20-21.

Charrington, Harry. "The Makings of a Surrounding World: The Public Spaces of the Aalto Atelier." PhD Diss., London School of Economics, 2008.

Comiati, Gaetano Adolfo. "Giacomo Lercaro in Bologna. An Influential and Paradigmatic Event between 'Experiences, Hopes, Defeats.'" *Actas de Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporánea*, no. 7 (2020): 52-63.

Dal Co, Francesco. "Aalto e Alberti." *Casabella*, no. 62 (1998): 66-75.

Finne, Nils C. "The Workers' Club of Jyväskylä by Alvar Aalto: The Importance of Beginnings." *Perspecta 27* (1992): 52-75.

Gerhards, Albert. "Spaces for Active Participation. Theological and Liturgical Perspectives on Catholic Church Architecture." In *Europäischer Kirchenbau, 1950-2000 = European Church Architecture, 1950-2000,* edited by Wolfgang Jean Stock, Munich, London: Prestel, 2002, 16-33.

Gresleri, Glauco. "Per un rinnovamento dell'architettura sacra (1955–1965)." In *Giacomo Lercaro. Vescovo della chiesa di Dio (1891-1978)*, edited by Angelina Alberigo, Genova: Marietti, 1991, 99-111.

Guardini, Romano. *The Spirit of the Liturgy* [1918]. Translated by Ada Lane. London: Sheed & Ward, 1930.

Hackett, Stephen. "Postconciliar Church Design." In *Vatican Council II: Reforming Liturgy*, edited by Carmel Pilcher, David Orr, and Elizabeth Harrington, Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2013, 233–52.

Hammond, Peter. *Liturgy and Architecture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960.

Hammond, Peter. *Towards a Church Architecture*. London: Architectural Press, 1962.

Heynen, Hilde. "Modernity and Community. A Difficult Combination." In *Making a New World. Architecture & Communities in Interwar Europe*, edited by Rajesh Heynicx and Tom Avermaete, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012, 69-77.

Hietaniemi, Marjatta. "Alvar Aallon suunnitelma Riolan kirkoksi: sijoittuminen ja suhde maisemaan." Master Thesis, University of Jyväskylä, 2003.

Isohauta, Teija. "The Diversity of Timber in Alvar Aalto's Architecture: Forests, Shelter and Safety." *Architectural Research Quarterly 17*, no. 3-4 (2014): 269-280.

Keinänen, Timo, ed. *Alvar Aalto: The Finnish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale*. Milan: Electa, 1990.

Laaksonen, Esa, and Silvia Micheli, eds. *Aalto Beyond Finland, Vol. 2: Projects, Buildings and Networks*. Helsinki: Alvar Aalto Academy and Alvar Aalto Foundation, 2018.

Lahti, Louna. *Alvar Aalto – Ex Intimo: Alvar Aalto through the Eyes of Family, Friends & Colleagues.* Helsinki: Rakennustieto, 2001.

Lercaro, Giacomo. "… Voi Tutti, Uomini di Buona Volontà." *Chiesa e Quartiere,* no. 40 (1966): 8-9.

Lercaro, Giacomo. *La chiesa nella città: discorsi e interventi sull'architettura sacra*. San Paolo: Cinisello Balsamo, 1996.

Malkavaara, Mauri. *Ristinkirkko*. Lahti: Lahden seurakuntayhtymä, 1998.

Manenti, Claudia, ed. *Il Cardinale Lercaro e La Città Contemporanea.* Bologna: Editrici Compositori, 2010.

Manenti, Claudia. *Luoghi di Identità e Spazi del Sacro nella Città Europea Contemporanea*. Milan: Franco Angeli, 2012.

Manenti, Claudia. *La Campagna Nuove Chiese del Cardinale Lercaro.* Bologna: Minerva Soluzioni Editoriali, 2023.

Miller, William C. *Nordic Modernism: Scandinavian Architecture 1890-2015*. Ramsbury: The Crowood Press, 2016.

Moser, Walter. "Lutherische Kirche in Imatra, Finnland: 1956–1958, Architekt: Prof. Alvar Aalto, Helsinki." *Das Werk: Architektur und Kunst* 46, no. 8 (1959): 289-293.

Niskanen, Aino. "Alvar Aalto and Cultural Memory." *JOELHO Journal of Architectural Culture*, no. 13 (2022): 45-66.

Ortiz-Nieminen, Oscar. "Kaikenlaiselle toiminnalle tilaa riittää, kaikenlaisille seurakuntalaisille paikkoja on: monitoimikirkkoarkkitehtuuri Helsingin seudulla 1900-1960-luvuilla." PhD Diss., University of Helsinki, 2021.

Pelkonen, Eeva-Liisa. "Alvar Aalto and the Geopolitics of Fame." *Perspecta 37* (2005): 86-97.

Petäjä, Keijo. "Seurakuntatyön ja arkkitehtuurin vaatimukset seurakuntataloja suunniteltaessa." *Arkkitehti*, no. 9-10 (1957): 159-160.

Pirro, Michela. "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.

Proctor, Robert. "Churches for a Changing Liturgy: Gillespie, Kidd & Coia and the Second Vatican Council." *Architectural History 48* (2005): 291-322.

Quantrill, Malcolm. *Alvar Aalto: A Critical Study*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1983.

Rogers, Ernesto. "Le responsabilità verso la tradizione." *Casabella-Continuità*, no. 202 (1954): 1-3.

Schildt, Göran. *Alvar Aalto: The Mature Years*. New York: Rizzoli, 1989.

Schildt, Göran. *Alvar Aalto: The Complete Catalogue of Architecture, Design and Art*. New York: Rizzoli, 1994.

Schildt, Göran. *Näin puhui Alvar Aalto*. Helsinki: Otava, 1997.

Schwebel, Horst. "An Aversion to Grand Gestures: Theological and Liturgical Perspectives on Protestant Church Architecture." In *Europäischer Kirchenbau, 1950-2000 = European Church Architecture, 1950-2000,* edited by Wolfgang Jean Stock, Munich, London: Prestel, 2002, 212-223.

Singler, Sofia. *The Religious Architecture of Alvar, Aino and Elissa Aalto.* London: Lund Humphries, 2023.

Singler, Sofia, and Maximilian Sternberg. "The Civic and the Sacred: Alvar Aalto's Churches and Parish Centres in Wolfsburg, 1960-68." *Architectural History*, no. 62 (2019): 205-236.

Singler, Sofia. "Review: Arkkitehti Elissa Aalto / Architect Elissa Aalto." *Architecture Research Quarterly 27*, no. 1 (2023): 73-78.

Sterken, Sven, and Eva Weyns, eds. *Territories of Faith: Religion, Urban Planning and Demographic Change in Post-War Europe.* Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022.

Trencher, Michael. *The Alvar Aalto Guide.* New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996.

Weston, Richard. *Alvar Aalto*. London: Phaidon, 1995.

## Archival sources

Letter from Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro to Alvar Aalto, December 3, 1966, Alvar Aalto Museum Archives, "Riolan kirkko."

Letter from Ernst Korritter to Alvar Aalto, August 12, 1968, Alvar Aalto Museum Archives, "Wolfsburg. Detmerode."

Santa Maria Assunta, Riola di Vergato. 492 drawings. Alvar Aalto Museum Archives, "Riolan kirkko."

*Riolan kirkko- ja tilaohjelma* [The brief for the church and parochial complex in Riola], signum 20A-196, n.d. Alvar Aalto Museum Archives, "Riolan kirkko."

**Giorgio Nepote Vesin, Martina Ulbar**

# Adriano, the Church, and the City. Olivetti and the Religious Architectural Patronage between 1950s and 1960s in Ivrea

ARTICLE

*Olivetti Architectural Patronage, Ivrea, Modernism, Form and Structure, Religious Pluralism*

**/Abstract**

**The study aims to investigate the relation between the Olivetti company and its patronage in religious architecture which constitutes a rarity that has still to be read within Olivetti's social commitment. Described by Bruno Zevi as a "cocktail" of Judaism, Waldism, and Catholicism, the Olivetti represented the synthesis of these three spiritualities, with consequences in terms of architectural project.**

**Since its 1908 foundation in Ivrea (Turin), especially under the presidency of Adriano Olivetti (1938-1960), the company adopted a holistic approach regarding the themes of production and work. Starting from the ideal of Comunità theorized by Adriano, the company committed itself with the synergic promotion of the factory's growth, territory and society. In this framework, the planning of new settlements – whose realization is wanted by the company – becomes relevant.**

**The study analyzes the changes of the role of religious architecture from a relative centrality in the 1930s to a progressive marginalization in the first two decades after the World War II. This change is considered within the progressive loss of sense of community in the 1960s, when the Olivetti company lost its main guide – Adriano suddenly died in 1960 – and the Church faced a crucial crisis after the Concilio Vaticano II (1962-1965).**

**This critical moment is described through the analysis of the Canton Vesco district in Ivrea: here, between the 1950s and the 1960s, the Sacro Cuore (Nizzoli - Oliveri studio, Favini), and the San Francesco (Boschetti, De Carlo, Giovannini, Livadiotti) Catholic churches, and the Waldensian Evangelical Temple (Koenig - Messina) were designed and built.**

**The essay aims at highlighting the relation between these architectures and the urban context, also considering the influence they had – or did not have – on the contextual planning of the Canavese area, which was particularly subjected to religious reformism.**

**/Author**

**Martina Ulbar**
**Dipartimento di Architettura e Design Politecnico di Torino**
**martina.ulbar@polito.it**

**Giorgio Nepote Vesin**
**Dipartimento di Architettura Università degli Studi Roma Tre**
**giorgio.nepotevesin@uniroma3.it**

Martina Ulbar graduated in Architecture at the University of Ferrara in 2021. She is a PhD student in the XXXVIII cycle in the "Architectural and Landscape Heritage" course at the Polytechnic University of Turin. Her research field is the History of Architecture (ICAR-18): starting from Eduardo Vittoria, she is investigating the development of industrialisation between architecture and design. Supervisor prof. Elena Dellapiana (DAD, Politecnico di Torino).

Giorgio Nepote Vesin graduated at Politecnico di Torino in 2021. He is currently a PhD student in the XXXVII cylcle of the "Architettura: innovazione e patrimonio" curriculum (PON scholarship) at the Università degli Studi Roma Tre in Roma, with an original research project titled "Olivetti digitale: architetture sperimentali e paesaggi industriali (1960-1974)/ Digital Olivetti: experimental architectures and industrial landscapes (1960-1974)", Supervisor prof. Maddalena Scimemi (DARC, Università degli Studi Roma Tre).



CC 4.0

https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/19637
Copyright © 2024 Giorgio Nepote Vesin, Martina Ulbar

## Introduction

Among the various industrial families that have shaped the Italian landscape throughout the 20th century, Olivetti stands out as a highly atypical model. Established in 1908 in Ivrea for the production of typewriters, Olivetti is characterized not only by its extraordinary commitment to graphic design and industrial design but also by a pronounced sensitivity towards political, economic, and social issues. In the company's vision, architecture and urban planning become the privileged tools aimed at restoring – from the Canavese region to overseas territories – the "social image"[1] of a company that, by proposing an enlightened intervention, seeks to build a system of certainties for a society undergoing rapid transformation in the post-World War II era. In this regard, the topic of ecclesiastical buildings – both realized and unrealized – in the city of Ivrea between the 1950s and 1970s aims to serve as a lens for exploring the broader discourse concerning architectural commissioning as managed by a unique industrial enterprise. Additionally, it seeks to open up a reflection on the relationship – simultaneously abstract and factual – with the religious sphere, an indispensable authority in the Italian context.

The Olivetti world stands at a singular confluence of three religious' creeds, with consequent implications for the complex spirituality of Adriano, the company's president from 1938 until he died in 1960 – a period during which he also theorised its unique development model. Adriano's father, Camillo, grew up in a Jewish family but adopted an agnostic and anticlerical stance in adulthood, which was also imparted to his son during his formative years. On the other hand, Adriano's mother was Waldensian as well as the daughter of Jean Daniel Revel, the pastor who founded the Waldensian community in the Ivrea area. Alongside the Catholicism Adriano embraced in 1950 when he received baptism, these diverse religious influences "alternately influenced his conceptions [...] [and] nourished his moral and intellectual world"[2]. The Olivetti development model – a 'third way' between state socialism and liberalism – is indeed rooted in the complex spirituality of its leader: the idea of Community, the cornerstone of a new territorial order for Ivrea and its satellite realities, is openly inspired by Christian principles. However, Adriano's inclusive attitude towards non-believers and his political and social reformism – two aspects divergent from Catholicism – furthered the gap between the individual and the Church.[3]

---

1 Manfredo Tafuri, "Aufklarung I. Adriano Olivetti e la *communitas* dell'intelletto," in *Storia dell'architettura italiana. 1944-1985*, ed. Manfredo Tafuri (Torino: Einaudi, 1998), 47. The literature on the Olivetti company history is extensive, an important witness of Olivetti approach to production, territory, and Communitiy is in: Marcello Fabbri, and Antonella Greco, eds., *La comunità concreta: progetto e immagine. Il pensiero e le iniziative di Adriano Olivetti nella formazione della cultura urbanistica ed architettonica italiana* (Milano/Roma: Edizioni di Comunità, 1988).

2 Ernesto Nathan Rogers, "L'unità di Adriano Olivetti," *Casabella-continuità*, no. 270 (December 1962). The religious influences on the complex personality of Adriano Olivetti are thoroughly examined in: Beatrice Nuti, "Adriano Olivetti. Un cristianesimo politico ed economico" (post-graduate's thesis, Scuola Normale Superiore, 2018), https://ricerca.sns.it/handle/11384/86058 (last accessed November 2024); Marco Maffioletti, ed., "La famiglia" and "Tra religione e misticismo," in *L'impresa ideale tra fabbrica e Comunità. Una biografia intellettuale di Adriano Olivetti* (Roma: Fondazione Adriano Olivetti, 2016).

3 The fundamental works in which Adriano Olivetti articulate his political, economic and social project are *L'ordine politico delle Comunità* (Ivrea: Nuove Edizioni Ivrea, 1945) and *Società, Stato, Comunità: per un'economia politica e comunitaria* (Milano/Roma: Edizioni di Comunità, 1952).

The resulting relationship between the company and moral authority is thus characterized by a profound underlying ambiguity that, besides constituting a unique phenomenon in the national context,[4] has evident repercussions on the architectural and urban planning level within the city, especially in the urban quadrant chosen as a case study, the Canton Vesco neighbourhood.

## The Ambiguity of Adriano Olivetti, the Cumbersome Presence in the Diocese of Ivrea

It is February 7, 1955, when Don Luigi Gioga – in charge of Sacro Cuore di Gesù Church in Canton Vesco – addresses Adriano Olivetti for the first time: the situation in the suburb "is delicate and serious" and, invoking the centuries-old experience of San Giovanni Bosco, he requests from the engineer the donation of an oratory in order to carry out "a work of moral and social re-education"[5] for the residents.

Nearly twenty years after the elaboration of the initial urban plans for the *Eporediese* area, Canton Vesco – a satellite to the south of the city planned to create a community for employees of the Olivetti company – has over three thousand inhabitants still lacking the collective facilities that were initially planned. On the eve of the agreement between the parish priest and Adriano regarding the construction of the place of worship, only the residential buildings have been completed – designed by Ugo Sissa and Italo Lauro, and later by Marcello Nizzoli with Mario Oliveri – while the construction process for a kindergarten and an elementary school combined with commercial spaces is yet to be undertaken.[6] The only gathering place for residents turns out to be a tool shed owned by Olivetti, which – following the decree "De erectione Paroeciae SS.mi Cordis Jesu in Civitate Eporediensi"[7] granted by Monsignor Paolo Rostagno, Bishop of Ivrea – is adapted to fulfil religious functions, thus accommodating both the spiritual needs of the community and a catechetical plan developed by the ecclesiastical hierarchies for the entire national territory.[8] The 'shack' – as it is nicknamed by the faithful of Canton Vesco – thus aligns with the experiences of Catho-

4 In post-World War II Italy, albeit with due differences, there were essentially two companies comparable to Olivetti in terms of scale and approach to corporate welfare: ENI and FIAT. In both cases, unlike the ambiguous Olivetti story, there is an overt closeness between the industrial leadership, the Church and the Christian Democrats Party. See: Dorothea Deschermeier, "Il ruolo della religione e le chiese dell'Eni," in *Impero ENI: l'architettura aziendale e l'urbanistica di Enrico Mattei*, ed. Dorothea Deschermeier (Brescia: Damiani, 2008), 98-105. Marta Margotti, *La fabbrica dei cattolici. Chiesa, industria e organizzazioni operaie a Torino (1948-1965)*. (Torino: Edizioni Angolo Manzoni, 2012).

5 AASO, SO, DS, Corr. Pres., Parrocchia S. Cuore – Ivrea, 2357. Letter from Don Luigi Gioga to Adriano Olivetti, February 7, 1955. This need is also stressed in the correspondence between the Bishopric of Ivrea and the Holy See: AAV, Archivio Campane, Capo I, 694, f. 1. Letter from Monsignor Paolo Rostagno to Pontifical Commission, June 28, 1954.

6 Giorgio Ciucci, "Ivrea ou la communauté des clercs," *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'Hui*, no. 188 (December 1976): 37; Enrico Giacopelli, "Scuola elementare di Canton Vesco. Ivrea 1956-1963. Ludovico Quaroni, Adolfo De Carlo," *DOCOMOMO Italia Giornale*, no. 29 (November 2011): 5.

7 The decree was signed by the Bishop of Ivrea on 25 June 1954 and marked the separation from the main church located in the Borghetto neighbourhood of Ivrea. See: Tiziano Passera, "Cinquant'anni di storia," in *I primi cinquant'anni di vita e di cammino*, ed. Parrocchia del Sacro Cuore di Gesù in Ivrea (Ivrea: 2004): 11-12.

8 AAV, Archivio Campane, Capo I, 694, f. 3. Letter from Monsignor Paolo Rostagno to Ministry of Public Works, May 15, 1956.

lic mobilization carried out in the suburbs, where, even before monumental works, a series of temporary chapels are erected. Moreover, on a formal level, the initial nucleus of the Sacro Cuore Church seems to fully integrate into this programmatic operation, which results in small constructions of a strongly provisional nature that recall the work of Giorgio Trebbi – one of the leading interpreters in the same years of this approach within the Bolognese diocese[9] **[Fig. 1]**.

Faced with the ongoing transformations in society, however, the mere celebration of the liturgy is no longer sufficient to stem the political 'deviations' of the resident workers: throughout the 1950s, in Piedmont – and particularly in the Canavese area – there is a widespread migration from rural areas to industrial centres, where Marxist and socialist ideologies circulate vigorously. In Ivrea, as in the rest of Italy, efforts are made to "halt the advance of the Bolshevik class struggle"[10] by leveraging interclass and intergenerational Catholic associationism and creating new spaces for activism among the population. In this context, the pervasive presence of the Olivetti company in the territory has profound implications for the epochal transition process.[11] Despite the core ambiguity that hovers around the idea of Community, the divergence of views regarding the ecclesiastical environment never escalates into open conflict but rather into an underlying tension that manifests as apparent mutual indifference. Although religious fervour is central within the Olivetti project – demonstrated by the fact that the Gospel is embraced as "the supreme law of the Community"[12] and the churches are consistently included in urban plans since the 1930s – Adriano openly rejects the value system advocated by the Christian Democracy and



1

Fig. 1
The prefabricated shack where the ritual was held until the inauguration of the Sacred Heart Church in 1961 (source: *I primi cinquant'anni di vita e di cammino*, edited by Parrocchia del Sacro Cuore di Gesù in Ivrea, Ivrea, 2004, 13).

9 Giulia Veronesi, "Chiese nuove: la situazione a Milano," *Comunità*, no. 68 (1959): 48-65. The author notes how the city peripheries are dotted with these prefabricated chapels, which almost become symbols of the "human fragility" of the new era.

10 Andrea Longhi, "Cultura architettonica, vita ecclesiale e associazionismo cattolico dal dopoguerra al Concilio Vaticano II," in *Architettura Chiesa e Società in Italia 1948-1978*, ed. Andrea Longhi and Carlo Tosco (Roma: Edizioni Studium, 2010), 130.

11 For a more in-depth analysis of the transformations that occurred in the post-World War II period in a region where the Olivetti Company was predominant – and the consequent impacts on the religious sphere – see: Marta Margotti, "L'equivoco 'olivettiano'. Il mondo cattolico canavesano e l'Olivetti attraverso 'Il risveglio popolare' (1945-1965)," in *Olivetti è ancora una sfida. Lavoro, personale, territorio in un'impresa responsabile*, ed. Diocesi di Ivrea (Ivrea: 2010), 227-242; Mario Rey, "Adriano Olivetti e il mondo cattolico eporediese: contrapposizioni e continuità," in *Olivetti è ancora una sfida*, ed. Diocesi di Ivrea (Ivrea: 2010), 243-258; Marta Margotti, "Una scelta di campo. L'Azione cattolica di Ivrea alla prova del Concilio," in *Il Concilio in azione. La recezione dell'Azione cattolica nelle chiese d'Italia*, ed. Raffaele Cananzi and Paolo Trionfini (Roma: AVE, 2019), 89-90.

12 Olivetti, *Società, Stato, Comunità: per un'economia politica e comunitaria*. For an overview of the urban planning in Ivrea promoted by Adriano Olivetti, see: Paolo Scrivano, "La comunità e la sua difficile realizzazione. Adriano Olivetti e l'urbanistica nel Canavese," in *Costruire la città dell'uomo. Adriano Olivetti e l'urbanistica*, ed. Carlo Olmo (Torino: Einaudi, 2001), 83-112.

ecclesiastical authorities, deeming them excessively regressive compared to his model. This ambiguity – exacerbated by the plurality of actors within the Olivetti world, including Adriano, his family, and the company, each having their own position and decision-making power – seems to disorient the clergy, which cannot openly oppose the Olivetti "third way" as it does with communist and socialist policies [Fig. 2].




This is the framework in which agreements are reached for the realization of one of the rare examples of religious architecture under Olivetti management: a context marked by an ideological distance between the two poles, which becomes even deeper in the months immediately following the request made by Don Luigi Gioga. On the union front, in fact, in May 1955, the Comunità di Fabbrica union was established, which reduced adherence to the CISL, while on the political front, in 1956, Adriano himself – along with other members of Movimento di Comunità – joined the administration of the Municipality of Ivrea, leading to a significant erosion of support for the Christian Democracy[13]. On both fronts, there emerges not an open opposition to ecclesiastical authority but rather a complete indifference, and consequently, a total autonomy of action directly reflected in the design process of Sacro Cuore. While the Diocesan Ordinary requests financial assistance for a gathering space that could be built by the community itself – so that "the work would also rise with their contribution and, in addition to being more heartfelt, it would be an excellent morale boost for its effectiveness"[14] – Adriano bypasses the request by deciding to provide both the land and the project free of charge.[15] Until 1960 – the year of his death – in the Canavese territory, in that ideal triangle that sees the community, the designer, and the client at its vertices,[16] the latter is no longer represented either by the Diocese – enlightened cases being those of the Curia of Bologna or Milan – nor by a consortium with an industrial authority – as is the case, for example, with the Comitato Nuove Chiese directed by Enrico Mattei. Olivetti disengages from the approval of the Church, leaving it on the sidelines

13 Margotti, "L'equivoco 'olivettiano'," 237-238.

14 AASO, SO, DS, Corr. Pres., Parrocchia S. Cuore – Ivrea, 2357. Letter from Don Luigi Gioga to Adriano Olivetti, Febraury 7, 1955.

15 AAV, Archivio Campane, Capo I, 694, f. 2. Notary deed for the Sacro Cuore Church, December 30, 1955; AASO, SO, DS, Corr. Pres., Parrocchia S. Cuore – Ivrea, 2357. Letter from Don Luigi Gioga to Adriano Olivetti, October 13, 1955; AASO, SO, DS, Corr. Pres., Parrocchia S. Cuore – Ivrea, 2357. Letter from prof. Umberto Rossi to dr. Giuseppe Motta, March 2, 1965.

16 Carlo Tosco, "Architettura di chiese: un percorso italiano," in *Architettura Chiesa e Società in Italia 1948-1978*, eds. Andrea Longhi and Carlo Tosco (Roma: Studium, 2010), 3.

Fig. 2
A 1956 manifesto that shows the ambiguity of Adriano Olivetti's position (source: Archivio Diocesano, Ivrea).

of decision-making processes, and appropriates the initiative: the request turns out to be an opportunity to add another piece to Adriano's collection, as well as to experiment with the engagement of new professionals.

## Between the Church and the Social Centre: the "Heart of the City" in the 1950s

The strong political tension between Adriano and the Church described above is also made explicit in the different interpretation given to the 'Heart of the City', the subject of the VIII CIAM in Hoddesdon (London) in 1951.[17] This difference can be clearly read in the titles of two newly founded magazines "Centro sociale" ("Social centre") and "Ch&Q - Chiesa e Quartiere" ("Church and Neighbourhood").[18] [Fig. 3, 4]

Founded in 1954 and funded by Adriano Olivetti through the First Council of UNRRA-Casas – of which he was vice-president[19] –, "Centro sociale" was set up with the aim of giving "impetus to world-wide critical exchange of ideas and experiences in the field of community development [...] program of meetings, conferences and seminars in which lay community leaders, sociologists and professionally trained community workers from every country"[20]. It is important to point out that the Italian edition of the VIII CIAM's proceedings saw the light right in 1954.[21] On the initiative of Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro of Bologna, the publication of "Ch&Q" began in November 1955. It was created to collect the results of the debate that emerged at the First National Congress of Sacred Architecture held in Bologna that same year, and in which the disciplinary boundaries and the role of the architect within the new institution were discussed.[22] Other important initiatives linked to the figures of Lercaro in Bologna and Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini in Milan followed in the very next years – respectively the "Study and Information Centre for Sacred Architecture" and the "Study Centre for Architecture for the Christian Community", alongside the "New Churches Committee" –, aiming at the spatial, spiritual and also political definition of the relationship between church and city in post-World War II Italy.[23]

---

17 Josep Lluís Sert, Ernesto Nathan Rogers and Jacqueline Tyrwhitt, eds., *The heart of the city: towards the humanisation of urban life* (New York/London-Bradford, Pellegrini and Cudahy/Lund Humphries, 1952).

18 For a critical reconstruction of the history of the two magazines see respectively: Michela Maguolo, "La comunità e il suo centro. Una rivista, un tema, un dibattito," *Engramma*, no. 166 (2019): 241-266; 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).

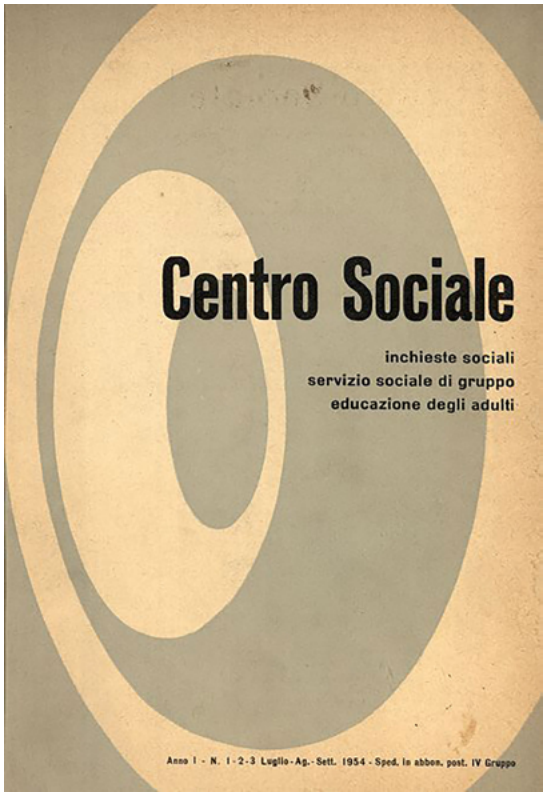
19 Marida Talamona, "Dieci anni di politica dell'Unrra Casas: dalle case dei senzatetto ai borghi rurali nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia (1945-1955). Il ruolo di Adriano Olivetti," in *Costruire la città dell'uomo: Adriano Olivetti e l'urbanistica*, ed. Carlo Olmo (Torino: Einaudi, 2001), 173-204.

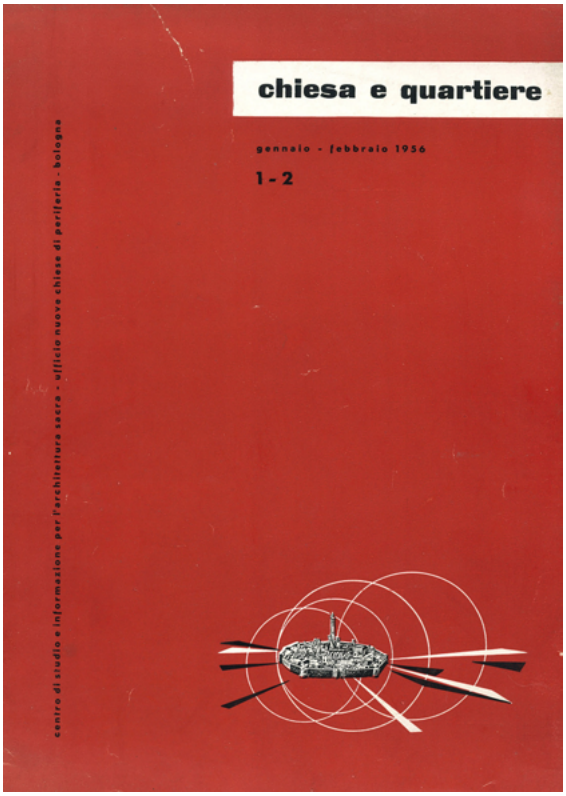
20 "Presentazione," *Centro sociale*, no. 32-33 (1960): 4. The magazine was edited by the Olivettian Paolo Volponi, while Adriano became a member, as a representative of the Community Movement, of the editorial board of the international edition from its foundation in 1957. See: Paolo Volponi, "L'UNRRA CASAS e i Centri Sociali," *Centro sociale,* no. 1-3 (1954): 7-16.

21 Josep Lluís Sert, Ernesto Nathan Rogers and Jacqueline Tyrwhitt, eds.,, *Il cuore della città: per una vita più umana delle comunità*, trans. Julia Banfi Bertolotti (Milano: Hoepli, 1954). See also Enzo Paci, "Il cuore della città," *Casabella Continuità*, no. 202 (1954): VII-X.

22 See the "Statuto del Centro Studi," dated 1956 and published in *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 19 (September 1961): 43-49.

23 Andrea Longhi, "Il ruolo del vescovo e l'azione dei centri di studio diocesani," in *Architettura Chiesa e Società*




3

4

It is worth underlining that some of the architects involved by Lercaro, including Ludovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso, Ignazio Gardella and Ludovico Quaroni, are by all accounts includable among 'Olivetti's architects', to whom Adriano turned to entrust the company's architecture (and image) since the 1930s.[24] First among them is Luigi Figini, "tireless animator" of the "considerable Milanese group [of architects]"[25] of the editorial board of "Ch&Q", and one of the eldest collaborators of Adriano.[26] To Figini is owed Olivetti's financial intervention in support of the magazine through products and Edizioni di Comunità advertising from 1959 – when the architect officially joined the editorial board – to 1968.[27] Moreover, Adriano Olivetti is one of the few people, if not the only one, outside the purely Catholic world of art and architecture whose death is commemorated within the magazine.[28]

*in Italia 1948-1978,* eds., Andrea Longhi and Carlo Tosco (Roma: Edizioni Studium, 2010), 170-174.

24 See: Rossano Astarita, *Gli architetti di Olivetti: una storia di committenza industriale* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2012); see also Daniele Boltri, Giovanni Maggia, Enrico Papa, Pier Paride Vidari, eds.,, *Architetture olivettiane a Ivrea: i luoghi del lavoro e i servizi socio-assistenziali di fabbrica* (Roma, Gangemi, 1998); Patrizia Bonifazio and Paolo Scrivano, eds.,, *Olivetti costruisce: architettura moderna a Ivrea: guida al museo a cielo aperto* (Milano: Skira, 2001); Olmo, *Costruire la città dell'uomo: Adriano Olivetti e l'urbanistica*.

25 "Editoriale," *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 1 (March 1957): 2. Translation by the authors.

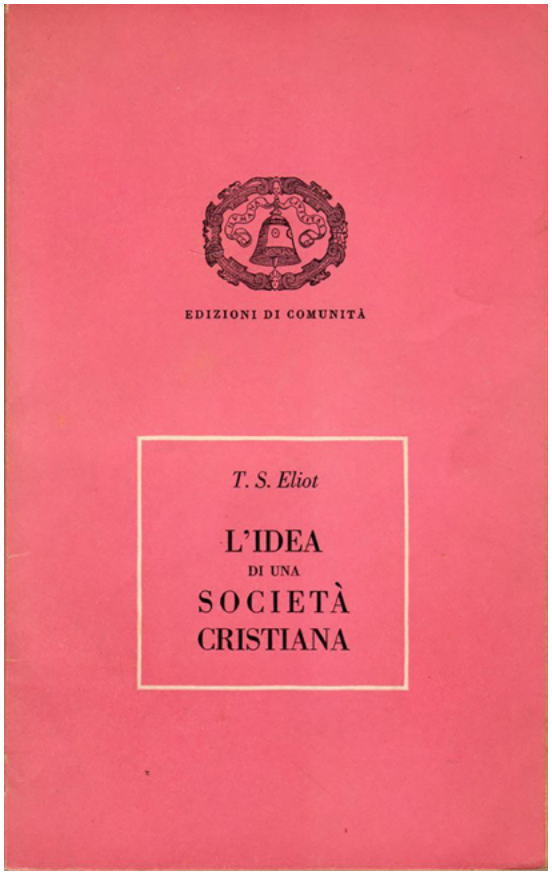
26 In 1934 Luigi Figini (with Gino Pollini) was entrusted for the study of the Aosta Valley Master Plan (*Piano Regolatore della Valle d'Aosta*), financed by Adriano, along with Antonio Banfi, Ludovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso, Piero Bottoni, Enrico Peressutti, and Ernesto Nathan Rogers, with Renato Zveteremich and Italo Lauro. Luigi Figini and Gino Pollini, "Piano regolatore della città di Ivrea (architetti Figini e Pollini)," and Adriano Olivetti, "Architettura al servizio sociale," *Casabella*, no. 101 (May 1936): 6-11; Giorgio Ciucci, "Le premesse del Piano Regolatore della Valle d'Aosta," in Olmo, *Costruire la città dell'uomo: Adriano Olivetti e l'urbanistica*, 55-82, and Paolo Scrivano, "La comunità e la sua difficile realizzazione. Adriano Olivetti e l'urbanistica nel Canavese".

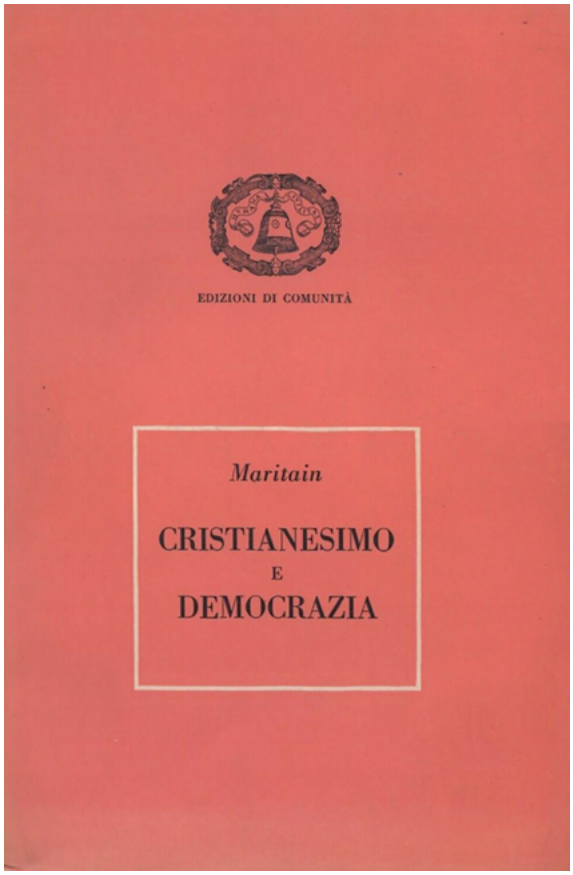
27 See Mariano Apa, "La questione dell'arte in 'Ch&Q," in *Chiesa e Quartiere: storia di una rivista e di un movimento per l'architettura a Bologna*, eds. Giuliano Gresleri and Beatrice Bettazzi (Bologna: Compositori, 2004), 134-159.

28 Luigi Figini, "Ricordo di Adriano Olivetti," *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 13 (1960): 98.

Fig. 3
Egidio Bonfante, cover of the first number of the review *Centro sociale*, no. 1-2-3 (July-August-September 1954).

Fig. 4
The cover of the first number of the review "Chiesa e Quartiere". "Chiesa e Quartiere," no. 1-2 (January-February 1956).




5

6

The real *trait d'union* between Olivetti and the Church was Ludovico Quaroni, actively involved in Adriano's Movimento di Comunità since its very beginning, and very active in the debate around the Congress of Sacred Architecture in 1955, promoted by cardinal Lercaro. Crucial was also his presence in both the reviews "Ch&Q" and "Centro sociale" since their foundation. In the article *Il Centro sociale come edificio* published in the first issue of "Centro sociale" in 1954, Quaroni defended the dignity of this new institution as "the *social position* of these buildings, if I may be allowed the phrase, is such that it gives us absolute certainty of the cultural validity of social centres and related buildings."[29]. The Social Centre is also chosen as an experimental model to "be particularly taken into consideration by those who are concerned with architecture, to see if it might not be possible, through it, to better trace the origins and forms of the current crisis in architecture".[30] It was aimed at "removing everyone, and young people in a special way, from the brutishness of bar lights and the partisan polemics of confessional organisations, whether religious or just party", but at the same time "it will not have an easy life [...] being easily prey, through funding and administrative, political and police controls [...] of those same confessional organisations it claimed to fight".[31]

Fig. 5
The cover of the first Italian edition of Thomas Stearns Eliot *The idea of a Christian society* (London: Faber and Faber, 1939), edited by the Edizioni di Comunità in 1948. Thomas Stearns Eliot, *L'idea di una società cristiana* (Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, 1948), transl. edited by Luciano Foà and Arrigo Linder.

Fig. 6
The cover of the first Italian edition of Jacques Maritain *Christianisme et democratie* (Paris: Hartmann, 1943) edited by the Edizioni di Comunità in 1953. Jacques Maritain, *Cristianesimo e democrazia* (Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, 1953) transl. by Luciana Frapiselli.

29 Ludovico Quaroni, "Il Centro sociale come edificio," *Centro sociale*, no. 1-3 (1954): 27. Translation by the authors.

30 Quaroni, "Il centro sociale come edificio," 28. Translation by the authors.

31 Ludovico Quaroni, "Città e quartiere nell'attuale fase critica di cultura," *La Casa. Quaderno a cura dell'Incis*, no.

Harsher is Angela Zucconi, "historian, linguist, writer, passionate experimenter of community projects"[32], who denounced the difficulties that "in many cases illusory the most characteristic element of the social centre, "namely openness to all regardless of membership of a religious denomination or political party'".[33] The increasingly less veiled hostility of the Catholic side towards the first experiments on Social Centres is perhaps to be found precisely in the irreconcilability between the need for control by the Church institution over the services provided to the community through the actions of the parishes, and this need for intellectual - and operational - independence mentioned by Zucconi. Almost in a critical and polemical response to the instances advocated in "Centro sociale", through "Ch&Q" Lercaro defended the absolute centrality – also on a spatial level – of the parish (and therefore of the church building) in the new neighbourhoods: "The neighbourhood [...] cannot be just an agglomeration of buildings" but "has to be the foundation of human coexistence, which cannot do without creating social relations", while the church "already works to give the neighbourhood its soul".[34]

Although there are no direct references to Olivetti's experiences, such an initiative – widespread in much of continental Europe (and tending to be Protestant) – is strongly opposed by Lercaro, who in 1958 accused "agnostic social centres" of playing a role in "cementing spirits [but] not going so far as to create a soul".[35] Lercaro also demonstrated an in-depth knowledge of the articles published in 'Urbanistica', the journal of INU – Istituto Nazionale Urbanistica's, a national institute chaired by Adriano Olivetti from 1950 to 1960[36]. Actually, the theoretical structure underlying the urban planning model proposed by Adriano and shared by his collaborators – among whom, alongside Quaroni, are Nello Renacco, Giovanni Astengo, Carlo Doglio and Luigi Piccinato – was rooted in the thought of Jacques Maritain, Simone Weil and Lewis Mumford, in particular through their Italian translations first published by Olivetti's publishing house Edizioni di Comunità, which in turn constituted a reference even for the Catholic world.[37] **[Fig. 5, 6]**. Moreover, the parish-market system is identified as the heart of the new city, in which the church embodies the true "cuore del cuore del

3 (October 1956). Translation by the authors.

32 Maguolo, "La comunità e il suo centro. Una rivista, un tema, un dibattito," 242. Cf. Angela Zucconi, *Cinquant'anni nell'utopia, il resto nell'aldilà* (Roma: L'Ancora, 2000).

33 Angela Zucconi, "Centri sociali in Italia," *Centro sociale*, no. 1-3 (1954): 5. Translation and italic by the authors.

34 From a Lercaro's lesson (Turin, 1958). Giacomo Lercaro, "Chiesa e Quartiere," *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 5 (March 1958): 27. Translation by the authors. A similar topic was discussed few months earlier by Antonio Savioli, "Aspetti del problema dei rapporti fra chiesa e collettività," *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 1 (March 1957): 47-50.

35 Lercaro, "Chiesa e Quartiere," 27. Lercaro continued by citing the centre of Vällingby near Stockholm, which in 1958 still lacked a church and which "in the abundance of everything, lacked a soul.". Despite Lercaro's words, two churches have been built in Vällingby in those same years, the St. Thomas church design by Peter Celsing, and the Västerortskyrkan by Carl Nyrén, respectevely opened in 1956 and 1959. The 'lack of soul' was highlighted also by Mario Roggero in "Problemi di organizzazione parrocchiale di una città industriale," *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 6 (June 1958): 45-49.

36 See: Mario Piccinini ed., *Adriano Olivetti: il lascito* (Roma: INU, 2014).

37 Aleardo Mazzoli, "Elementi e criteri informatori di un 'planning' parrocchiale," *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 19 (September 1961): 69-89.

quartiere",[38] an urban model that will be very widespread in the new neighbourhoods of the "great reconstruction". This model was adopted in almost all the new residential districts in Turin, Milan and Bologna, respectively influenced by the strong personalities of the Cardinals Michele Pellegrino, Giovanni Montini and Giacomo Lercaro.[39]

When Quaroni was invited as a lecturer to the Bologna Congress in 1955, he pointed out how, in the construction of new churches, there was a need for "a modern cultural action that is both spirituality, moral charity and modern consistency and modern mysticism leading, as has already been done for so many other things, to the revival of the values of Christian civilisation from the beginning"[40]. If this is still lacking in Italy, it is because "there is a lack of a modern civilisation, in Italy at least, of the Catholic religion", and because of "the spiritual poverty of the world in which we live".[41] A few months earlier, in "Centro sociale" he had denounced a widespread separation "in time and space, namely in architecture" between material and spiritual functions, "as if such a separation existed in the life of man outside the patterns and limits towards which a misuse of the brain has led man himself".[42] The unity between spiritual and material is the same unity that Quaroni sought in the plan for La Martella in Southern Italy a few years earlier (1951-1954), a project entrusted by Adriano Olivetti as vice-president of UNRRA-Casas.[43] In La Martella urban plan, the church and community facilities occupied not only the geographical centre of the new settlement but also its morphologically highest position.[44] The case of Matera turns out to be a significant case of the ambiguity of Adriano's religious position: "In the 'Eco di Matera' (a monthly periodical of Lucanian Catholics), the parish priest Don Giovanni Mele wrote: 'From whom will the rule for this community come, from Togliatti, from Nenni, from Lauro, from Covelli, or from the Jew Olivetti?'".[45]

---

38 Lercaro, "Chiesa e Quartiere," 30.

39 See: Paola Di Biagi ed., *La grande ricostruzione: il piano Ina-Casa e l'Italia degli anni cinquanta* (Roma: Donzelli, 2001), in part. the "Parte Terza. Itinerari": 263-478. See for Milan, Red., "Dieci nuove chiese a Milano," *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 9-10 (1958): 30-88; for Turin, Carla Zito, *Casa tra le case: architettura di chiese a Torino durante l'episcopato del cardinale Michele Pellegrino (1965-1977)* (Torino: Effatà, 2013). See also Luca Tedesco, "Chiesa cattolica e Unrra Casas," *Studium*, no. 2 (2010), 233-246.

40 Ludovico Quaroni, "La Chiesa, lo spazio interno," Official Report to the Congress of Sacred Architecture, Bologna, 23-25 September 1955, published in *Casabella-continuità,* no. 208 (1955): 31-34. Translation by the authors. See: Manfredo Tafuri, *Ludovico Quaroni e lo sviluppo dell'architettura moderna in Italia* (Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, 1964), 82-84.

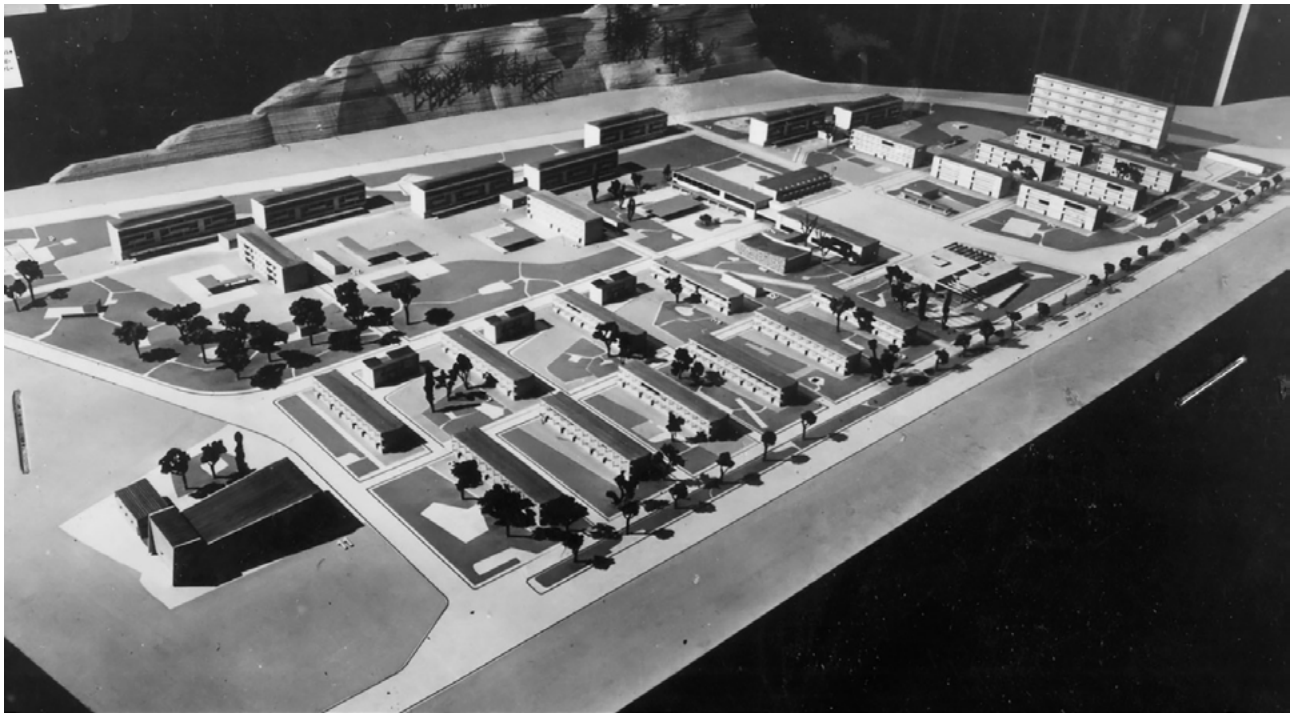
41 Tafuri, *Ludovico Quaroni e lo sviluppo dell'architettura moderna in Italia*, 84, inner quotation by Quaroni, "La Chiesa, lo spazio interno", 33. Translation by the authors.

42 Quaroni, "Il Centro sociale come edificio," 28.

43 Federico Bilò and Ettore Vadini, eds.,, *Matera e Adriano Olivetti: testimonianze su un'idea per il riscatto del Mezzogiorno* (Roma/Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, 2016); Lindsay Harris, "The Human Face of Big Business: American Documentary Photography in Matera (1948-1954)," *rivista di studi di fotografia rsf*, no. 9 (2019): 30-53.

44 Ludovico Quaroni, "La chiesa del villaggio La Martella," *Casabella-continuità*, no. 208 (1955): 30-39. See also: Manfredo Tafuri, "L'esperienza di La Martella," in *Ludovico Quaroni e lo sviluppo dell'architettura moderna in Italia*, ed. Manfredo Tafuri (Milano: Edizioni di comunità, 1964), 105-116.

45 Angela Zucconi, "La Martella: l'assistenza sociale al servizio della pianificazione urbanistica," in *Matera e Adriano Olivetti: testimonianze su un'idea per il riscatto del Mezzogiorno*, eds. Federico Bilò and Ettore Vadini (Roma/Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, 2016), 83. Inner quotation from Don Giovanni Mele, parish priest of La Martella, "Ombre e luci nella polemica su La Martella, i giudici sono gli imputati," *L'eco di Matera*, (March 1995): 3.





In the mystical dimension in which Quaroni places himself, Tafuri identified a clear "'secular' conception of the religious spirit"[46], a conception that, together with the search for unity, brings the architect closer to Adriano's thought and places him further at a hinge with the Church-held positions. In Ivrea, the spatial dynamics are reversed. Submitted in 1954, the proposal of the GTCUC - Gruppo Tecnico per il Coordinamento Urbanistico del Canavese (Technical Group for the Urban Coordination of the Canavese) – a team formed on Adriano's initiative in 1952 (collaborators Nello Renacco, Ludovico Quaroni, Annibale Fiocchi, Luciano Giovannini, Adolfo Ronco and Carlo Doglio)[47] – was finally rejected in 1955 by a Christian Democrats assembly.[48] The plan for Canton Vesco region was developed following previous studies by Fiocchi and Nizzoli dated back to the late 1940s. **[Fig. 7]** Even if still at the conceptual stage, the church occupied an eccentric position with respect to the built-up area. Such a layout confirms a settlement model promoted by Adriano since the first plan proposals for the city of Ivrea in 1934[49] and perpetrated – for instance -up to Luigi Piccinato and Vittoria Girardi's proposals for the Bellavista Quarter (1956-1958)[50]. In all these

46 Tafuri, *Ludovico Quaroni e lo sviluppo dell'architettura moderna in Italia*, 84.

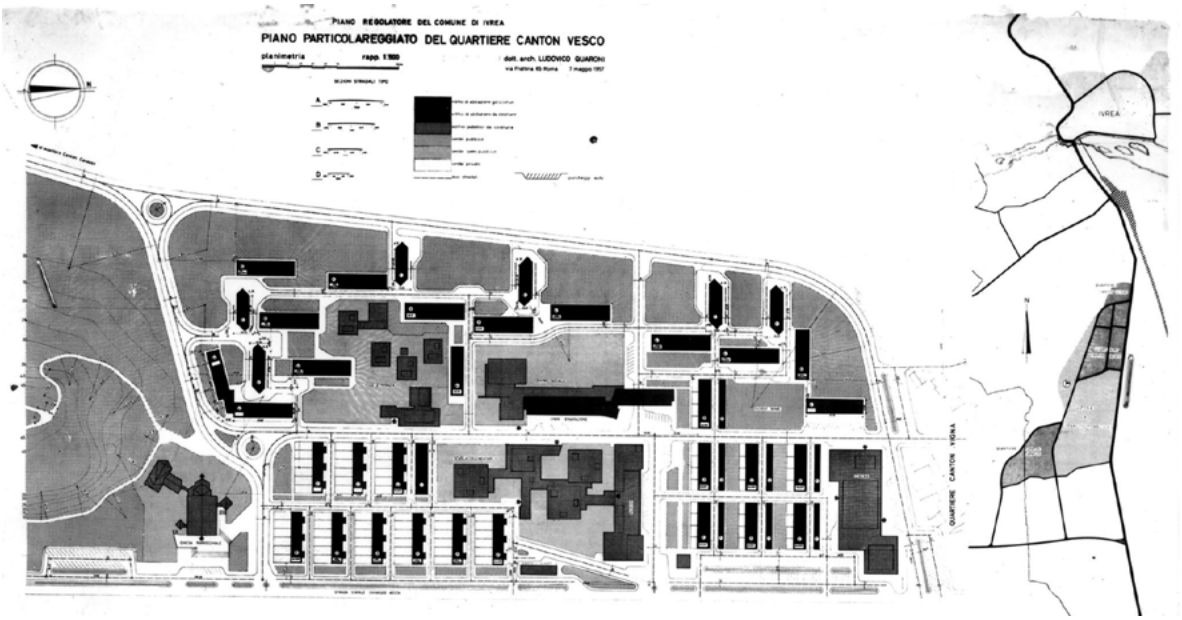
47 Fabrizio Brunetti and Paolo Milani, *Perché si pianifica? I lavori del gruppo tecnico per il coordinamento urbanistico del Canavese. Una cronaca ragionata (1951-1954)* (Ivrea: Fondazione Adriano Olivetti, 1995). See also: Carlo Olmo, *Urbanistica e società civile* (Roma/Ivrea: Edizioni di Comunità, 1992), in part. chapter "Le strategie tentate di una diversità".

48 A very unfavourable opinions were also expressed by the union CISL. See: Carlo Doglio, "Ragioni, stranezze e incognite del voto sul piano regolatore," *La Sentinella del Canavese*, April 8, 1955; "Respinto dal Consiglio di Ivrea il progetto di Piano regolatore. Era destinato a favorire la Olivetti," *L'Unità* (Piedmontese edition), March 24, 1955. The first critical analysis of the outcomes of the plan and its contextualisation in the Italian landscape was conducted by Manfredo Tafuri, "L'urbanistica italiana negli anni '50: il piano di Ivrea," in *Ludovico Quaroni e lo sviluppo dell'architettura moderna in Italia* (Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, 1964), 116-125.

49 The plan for Ivrea was part of the larger Aosta Valley Master Plan (*Piano Regolatore della Valle d'Aosta*), financed by Adriano in 1934. Cf. note 24.

50 For Bellavista's plan cf. Luigi Piccinato and Vittoria Girardi, *Quartiere Bellavista a Ivrea*, 1956-1958, held in ALP,

Fig. 7
Annibale Fiocchi, Marcello Nizzoli, Canton Vesco district urban plan, *maquette*, 1951. the church building, isolated from the residential context and still in the first axial configuration, stands in the foreground (bottom left), while the social services right in the centre of the neighbourhood (source: AASO, CO, FO, FMO-Cde, *planimetria. Coll: V-C-A-4-5)*.




plan designs, the ever-present church building tended to be scenically located at the far end of the main road axis, but in a peripheral position, generally close to a ridge, a topography that effectively prevents the building's later incorporation into the urban tissue. The social facilities are the hinge around which the other buildings are arranged. Following the rejection of the GTCUC's plan proposal by the municipality, in 1955 Ludovico Quaroni was commissioned to complete the Canton Vesco district plan. In a letter dated 1957, the client pointed out the urgent need of a place where to host the social services, seen as "a natural meeting place for these people, and thus be open to the flow of people and their ideas."[51]. Confirming the previous general concept, he "placed a 'heart' composed of a series of services converging on the primary schools, shops and the Social centre located in the centre of the complex"[52]. [Fig. 8] The project would have been realized – simplified and reduced – only in the second half of the 1960s through the construction of the elementary school (with Adolfo De Carlo), and completed by Mario Ridolfi and Wolfgang Frankl's kindergarten – respectively inaugurated in 1963 and 1964 –, placed again in the centre of the housing development.

It is worth noting the words used by Bruno Zevi to reject the political commitment to the Movimento di Comunità:

> Dear engineer, you epitomise three religions: paternal Jewish messianism; puritanism coming from your Waldensian mother; and, to season the dish, double Catholic truth […]. This cocktail reverberates in your vision of

Fig. 8
Ludovico Quaroni, Canton Vesco district urban plan, May 1957. The church building maintains its excentric position (bottom left), while the centre of the residential neighbourhood (in black) is occupied by the two schools, the social services, and shops (in grey) (source: AASO, CO, FO, FMO-Cde, *planimetria. Coll: V-C-A-4-5*).

01.02_174, and AASO, CO, FO, FMO-Cde, *planimetria. Coll: V-C-A-4-5*.

51 Letter from Paolo Volponi to Ludovico Quaroni, June, 4 1957. In AASO, SO, D, DSSS-C, "Alloggi dipendenti e strutture connesse. Prestiti, Quartiere Bellavista," issue 766, *Quartiere Bellavista. Centro Sociale,* 1957-1962. Translation by the authors. The studies on the Social Centre and the Civic Centre had an important reverberation in the papers published by Olivetti; among them, a 1958 study by Koenig is of particular interest. See: Giovanni K. Koenig, "Origine e forme del centro civico," *Comunità*, no. 64 (November 1958): 58.

52 Tafuri, *Ludovico Quaroni e lo sviluppo dell'architettura moderna in Italia*, 135-137.

> town planning. You believe in garden cities, but wish to build them not with the money of enlightened industrialists, yours for example, but with those of the state, UNRRA-Casa, Gescal, Cassa per il Mezzogiorno, and so on. Perfect crime, so much so that it doesn't work.[53]

Maintaining – and perhaps amplifying – its aggregative and community values, in the equation parish=heart Adriano replaced the church building with the Social Services Centre, which morally and physically constitutes the true lay soul of the neighbourhood. Regarding the position of the church in the borough, the distance found between the outcomes achieved in La Martella and the slightly later proposals for the Canton Vesco urban plan in Ivrea tend to confirm the role of absolute prominence and control exercised by Adriano in the Canavese reality. The city becomes an experimental 1:1 scale model of the urban and social theories that mature within the experience of the Movimento di Comunità, and which has in Canton Vesco an emblematic case study, the only one that sees the realization of the religious center according to the settlement principles described.

## The Church of the Sacro Cuore: Patronage, Spaces, Structure

By the end of November 1955, agreements between Don Luigi Gioga and Olivetti were firmly established: in addition to the donation of the land and the project, the latter committed to supporting the construction according to a financing model already tested with the new hospital in Ivrea, whereby the company would contribute twice the amount donated by parishioners. For this reason, a campaign "pro erigenda Chiesa Sacro Cuore" is considered initially to be spread through local newspapers[54] – *Il Risveglio Popolare* and *La Sentinella del Canavese* – followed by the proposal from the priest to "exhibit a small model of the project [...] in the place where [...] Mass is celebrated"[55] in order to stimulate a broader response from the Canton Vesco community, by a centuries-old tradition of displaying the architectural model to the faithful **[Fig. 9]**.

At the time of the request, January 31, 1956, the name Marcello Nizzoli – as the appointed designer of the work – emerged in the company's internal correspondence. Together with Giuseppe Mario Oliveri – his collaborator since 1947 –, Nizzoli played a central role in shaping the company's image through his contributions spanning both architecture and design: at the time of the construction of the Sacro Cuore, projects from his studio encompass the Divisumma 14, the Lexicon 80, the famous Lettera 22, as well as various housing units for Olivetti employees, including those in Canton Vesco itself.[56] Being familiar with a ration-

53 Bruno Zevi, *Zevi su Zevi: architettura come profezia* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1993), 68. Translation by the authors.

54 AASO, SO, DS, Corr. Pres., Parrocchia S. Cuore – Ivrea, 2357. Letter from Don Luigi Gioga to Adriano Olivetti, November 21, 1955. A testimony of the campaign can also be found in: Parrocchia del Sacro Cuore – Ivrea, *La voce del Sacro Cuore*, no. 5 (October 1956): 3-5.

55 AASO, SO, DS, Corr. Pres., Parrocchia S. Cuore – Ivrea, 2357. Letter from Umberto Rossi to Geno Pampaloni, January 31, 1956.

56 For an overview on the careers of Nizzoli and Oliveri and to delve into the interdisciplinary contributions

alist urban layout still under construction, the two professionals were involved as 'internal' figures in the area's development and, more generally, of the company. In the meantime, Aldo Favini – a young engineer at the forefront of concrete precompression experimentation in Italy – was called upon to collaborate from the external architectural landscape with the Olivetti community. The path to the Church project's approval proves that Nizzoli and Oliveri had already drawn up a draft in 1954, probably due to their proximity to the company and the neighbourhood. However, that proposal generated doubts regarding the "statics of the roof" and "the general proportions of the Church [that] do not give a genuine religious spirit to the building"[57] – aspects for which Favini's contribution may have been considered necessary.




Fig. 9
The cover of the parish bulletin *La voce del Sacro Cuore* showing the model of the Church (source: AASO, SO, DS, Corr. Pres., Parrocchia S. Cuore – Ivrea, 2357).

Favini, who graduated in Civil-Structural Engineering from Rome in 1942, was part of Gustavo Colonnetti's entourage at the Vevey University Campus in Lausanne, where he sought refuge between 1943 and 1945. That was a dynamic environment where some of the most brilliant minds – later playing critical roles in Italy's reconstruction period – converged, fostering interdisciplinary debate between engineering and architecture disciplines. Among the group sharing this sort of cultural experiment – including Ernesto Nathan Rogers, Vito Latis, Angelo Mangiarotti, Vico Magistretti, Giulio Minoletti, Alberto Rosselli, and Silvano Zorzi – Favini is involved in technical experiments while also developing his sensitivity towards the theme of form and learning to apply to structural design the same precision that belongs to the world of design – an approach to which he was already introduced during his apprenticeship years in Mario Ridolfi's studio.[58] The various research conducted within this framework converges in the *Bollettino Centro Studi per l'Edilizia* where alongside Favini's technical studies – "Volte sottili in cemento armato" and "Lezioni di cemento armato" – there is also space for the first political formulations by Adriano Olivetti on the theme of Community.[59] The latter, who had also spent



between architecture and design within the Olivetti company, see: Benedetto Gravagnuolo, *Gli studi Nizzoli: architettura e design. 1948-1983* (Milano: Electa, 1983); Arturo C. Quintavalle, *Marcello Nizzoli* (Milano: Electa, 1990); Luigi Spinelli, *G. Mario Oliveri e gli studi Nizzoli* (Milano: Editoriale Domus, 2001).

57 AAV, Archivio Campane, Capo I, 694, f. 1. Extract from the record of the meeting held by the Pontifical Commission in the Chancellery Palace, July 1, 1954.

58 A comprehensive dissertation on the biography and works of Aldo Favini is contained in: Andrea Alpini, "Aldo Favini. Architettura e costruzione" (master's thesis, Politecnico di Milano, 2010), https://www.calameo.com/books/0011435017330a9c313f8 (last accessed November 2024); Giulio Barazzetta, ed., *Aldo Favini. Architettura e ingegneria in opera* (Milano: CLUP, 2004). As outilined in the two monographs, the experience in the Vevey University Campus was undoubtedly a pivotal moment for the development of his project conception. For further insights into the exile experience in Switzerland of significant Italian figures, see: Tullia Iori, "Angelo Mangiarotti e la Scuola di Vevey," in *Angelo Mangiarotti. Quando le strutture prendono forma*, ed. Fulvio Irace (Milano: Electa, 2023), 162-169.

59 The journal – directed by Ernesto Nathan Rogers – aimed at compiling studies conducted by architects, engineers, and intellectuals during the exile. See: Pier Paolo Peruccio, "Il design della Ricostruzione: Italiani a

between 1944 and 1955 a long period of exile in Switzerland, had experienced firsthand the characteristic dynamism of university campuses and closely followed the rising career of this auspicious group of young professionals in the immediate post-war period.

The initial grounding of the engineer's studies occurred in 1949 with the project of the Aquila service station in Sesto San Giovanni (Milan) – a wavy reinforced concrete roof just 5 cm thick leaning on two fork supports with which he earned the final approval of Rogers – opening the way for an intense period of experimentation.[60] In 1950, together with Silvano Zorzi, he visited the Freyssinet laboratories – where the precompression techniques were first invented – and in less than three years, he put his own patent on the market, thus positioning himself among the founders of the precompressed culture alongside Zorzi himself and Riccardo Morandi.[61] The resonance of Favini's name in the 1950s is further enhanced by his fruitful collaborations with essential architects in the Milanese scene: in 1955, he designed, together with Giovanni Muzio, the covering of the canteen in the Bocconi University dormitory[62] – whose structure of hollow prisms with triangular section seems to anticipate the more elaborate study for the church in Ivrea – and, at the same time, with the project of an office building in Genoa, he started a long-lasting partnership with Angelo Mangiarotti and Bruno Morassutti. Aware of the Swiss lesson on the relationship between engineering and architecture, he overcame the impasse between figuration and structure by designing "forme dall'apparenza nuda"[63]: his capability led him to occupy the pages of the main architectural magazines of those years, marking, in 1956, his definitive consecration with the project for the Mater Misericordiae Church in Baranzate (Milan), considered "the boldest" in the diocese of Milan.[64]

When, in the first half of 1956, Adriano Olivetti decides to convene him to Ivrea to confer the task of the Sacro Cuore project, he presumably did so in light of these two crucial biographical facts that have marked Favini's career: his experience in Switzerland under the guidance of Colonnetti – and in this regard, he reminds him of their first meeting that took place precisely in that context – and his fervent collaboration with the world of architecture, also learned beyond the Alps and then successfully applied in the Lombardy region. At the time of the

Losanna (1944-1950)," *Ais/Design*, no. 2 (2013): 105-111.

60 Andrea Alpini, "Conversazione con Aldo Favini. 30 settembre 2010" in Alpini, "Aldo Favini. Architettura e costruzione," 310. For pictures and more detailed information of the project, see: AL.FA. Fondazione Aldo Favini e Anna Gatta, "Stazione di servizio carburanti," https://www.fondazionefavini.it/opere/stazione-di-servizio-carburanti/ (last accessed November 2024).

61 With the "Sistema Favini," the engineer patented special anchoring systems for pre-stressed concrete cables, which enabled him to design structures with spans exceeding 30 meters. The experiments began as early as the late 1950s, but the certificate of originality and authenticity for the work was only issued on June 25, 1953. This is just the first of the nine patents invented by Aldo Favini between 1953 and 1969. Alpini, "Aldo Favini. Architettura e costruzione," 20-43.

62 For pictures and more detailed information of the project, see: AL.FA. Fondazione Aldo Favini e Anna Gatta, "Mensa pensionato Università Bocconi," https://www.fondazionefavini.it/opere/mensa-pensionato-universita-bocconi/ (last accessed November 2024).

63 Giulio Barazzetta, "Forme dall'apparenza nuda" in Barazzetta, *Aldo Favini. Architettura e ingegneria in opera*, 8.

64 Veronesi, "Chiese nuove: la situazione a Milano," 57. Despite the Mater Misericordiae Church is the most well-known, it is not the only building for which the three designers have collaborated. Aldo Favini worked with both Mangiarotti and Morassutti on more than ten projects, demonstrating the prolific nature of their partnership.

interview, the designs for the Baranzate Church had not yet been made public, but nonetheless, the reputation of his previous experiments with concrete preceded him. Adriano, indeed, chose him to have a structure in Canton Vesco "like the ones [Favini] makes"[65] – a more fitting decision when considering the modernism of the already built portion of the neighbourhood. Furthermore, it is worth noting the echoes that Milanese professionals – many of whom were already involved in the world of Olivetti, such as Ignazio Gardella or Luigi Figini and Gino Pollini – were having in the rest of Italy regarding the design of ecclesiastical spaces. Under the auspices of Cardinal Schuster first, and then Cardinal Montini, exploring the new possibilities offered by technique seems to emerge as a trend, seen symbolically as a sign of a "living religion […] [that] demands novelty"[66]. Based on these premises, the exceptional nature of the case of the Sacro Cuore – in addition to the almost total absence of religious buildings among those commissioned by the Ivrea-based company – lies in the deliberate collaboration with an engineer who was external to the company's technical office: the aim is sparking a dialogue open to the most contemporary researches that both the 'Olivettians' and external professionals – who, like meteors, make their fleeting appearance in Ivrea – are called to respond to. This modus operandi is reiterated, for example, with the 1957 project for a bridge over the Dora river – where Adolfo De Carlo, Ludovico Quaroni, and Bruno Zevi are joined by Sergio Musmeci – and in 1962 with the initial proposal for the Scarmagno factory – which sees Eduardo Vittoria and Marco Zanuso working alongside Silvano Zorzi.

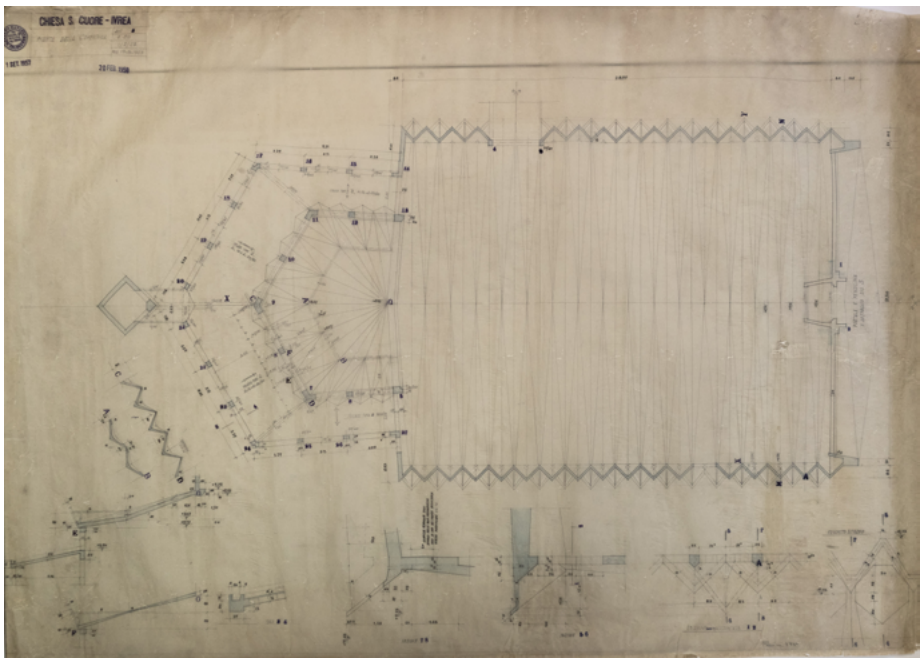
The first outcome of the collaboration between Favini and Nizzoli – the engineer mentions in his memoirs that he met Oliveri only once – occurs in October 1956 when the photo of the model of the new parish complex appears on the cover of *La Voce del Sacro Cuore*, the church bulletin. Although the general configuration would undergo modifications during the four years of construction (1957-1961) – the rectory would take on a different layout and the project for a glass facade, as well as the external arrangement of the area with three large water tanks, would be downsized – it is already possible to observe the corrugated envelope that characterizes the main hall of the church and reflects into the surrounding spaces through the use of a polygonal form.[67] Having learned the basic dimensions of the area, Favini works on defining "Disegno 1": following his operational practice, the first step is defining the standard bay –

---

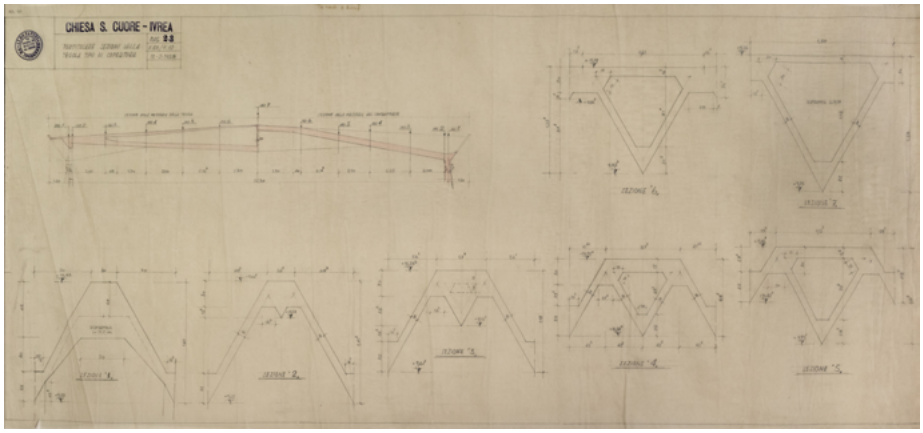
65 Servizio Archivi Storici e Attività Museali, Politecnico di Milano, ACL. Fondo "Aldo Favini". Chiesa del Sacro Cuore, Ivrea. Folder 6. Lettera da opere scelte [2004]; Andrea Alpini, "Conversazione con Aldo Favini. 30 settembre 2010" in "Aldo Favini. Architettura e costruzione," 305. In particular, the work on the Mater Misericordiae Church began in 1956, when Favini had already been called to Ivrea and this is an important aspect that demonstrates there is no connection between the commissions for the two church projects. Adriano Olivetti wanted to involve Favini not merely as the designer of the Church of Baranzate, but as a skilled structural designer. For the events related to the church in Baranzate, see: Giulio Barazzetta, "Milano anni '50: tecnica e architettura. Morassutti, Mangiarotti, Favini," *Casabella*, no. 721 (April 2004): 82-93.

66 Carlo Tosco, "Architettura di chiese: un percorso italiano" in *Architettura Chiesa e Società in Italia 1948-1978*, 33. See also: Maria A. Crippa, "Architettura sacra a Milano," and Gillo Dorfles, "A proposito di dieci recenti chiese lombarde," in *Chiesa e Quartiere: storia di una rivista e di un movimento per l'architettura a Bologna*, eds. Giuliano Gresleri and Beatrice Bettazzi (Bologna: Compositori, 2004).

67 For the first layout of the Church, see: AASO, Coll. V-C-A-4-5, photos of the Church model; Parrocchia del Sacro Cuore – Ivrea, *La voce del Sacro Cuore*, cover; Quintavalle, *Marcello Nizzoli*, 352.




10




11

repeated 17 times to compose the unique nave – consisting of a hollow beam resting on a tapered pier shaped like a V at the base. Thanks to the use of the 'Favini System' for precompression of concrete, the two construction elements acquire a certain degree of engineering complexity, with thin thicknesses such as 15 cm for the side walls and 8 to 15 cm for the roof. The beams, covering a span of 22.30 m with a spacing of 1.7 m, have a variable but symmetrical section relative to the median line of the hall: from the support point with a hollow V-shaped section, it transitions to an M-shaped section, and in the middle, it reaches a triangle with the vertex at the bottom[68]. The geometry formed at the intersection between the roof and the side walls allows for a series of octagonal openings, through which filtered light accentuates the tension created by the embroidery of the upper shell **[Fig. 10, 11]**. The distance between formal exploration and structural principle vanishes as the two aspects become intertwined

68 Servizio Archivi Storici e Attività Museali, Politecnico di Milano, ACL. Fondo "Aldo Favini". [Chiesa del Sacro Cuore, Ivrea. Disegni] s.d. [1957-1958], T146. See also: "Chiesa del 'Sacro Cuore' ad Ivrea (Torino)" in *IV Congresso Internazionale del Precompresso. Realizzazioni italiane in cemento armato precompresso*, ed. AITEC (Roma: AITEC, 1962), 313-315.

Fig. 10, 11
Sacro Cuore church, Ivrea
s.d. [1957-1958], draws, T146 (source: Servizio Archivi Storici e Attività Museali, Politecnico di Milano, ACL. Fondo "Aldo Favini").







12 13 14

to the extent that the creative process seems to find its *raison d'être* in structural calculation. For this reason, in addition to recalling some notable experiences in the Milanese area, such as the Santa Maria Nascente Church by Vico Magistretti and Mario Tedeschi (1947-1955), the Madonna dei Poveri Church by Figini and Pollini (1952-1956), or the San Francesco Church by Gardella (1954-1959), Favini's design can also be linked to contemporaneous experiments on contoured surfaces by Morandi – the San Luca Evangelista Church of in Rome in collaboration with Studio Passarelli (1955-1958) – or on corrugated membranes by Musmeci – the Chapel for the Railwaymen in Vicenza (1957) **[Fig. 12]**. By the end of 1956, after establishing the main volumes, the design process for the complex continued for another two years, at least until late 1959, when the residents began to see "the first pilasters, then one sidewall, then another, then the roof, the bell tower, and the apse. The structure was standing […] less than a year after the start of construction"[69]. Alongside Favini's work on the main hall, Nizzoli and Oliveri contributed to the design of the apse, the remaining bodies of the parish complex – for which the engineer's contribution was limited to structural calculations – and the entire liturgical furnishings, thus bringing the transdisciplinary approach typical of post-war architect-designers into the Sacro Cuore project.[70] **[Fig. 13, 14]**

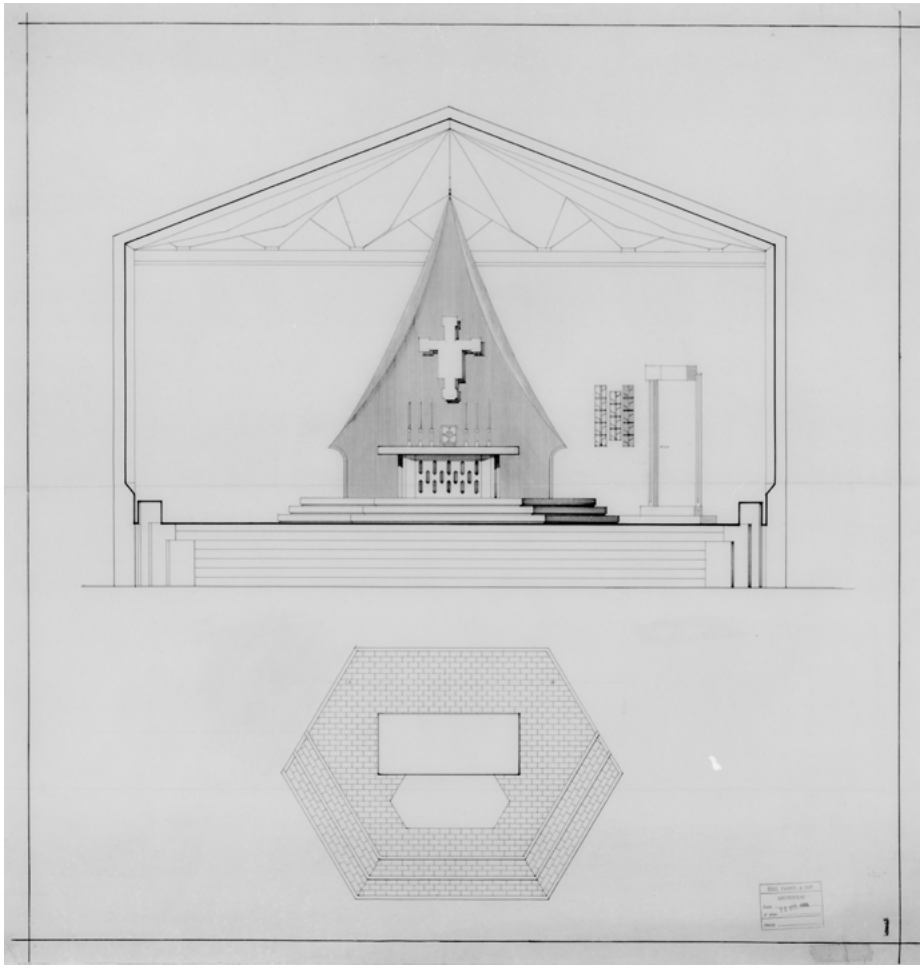
A first moment of celebration was organized at the time of the building's completion: on Pentecost day in 1959, the bells were blessed in the presence of both Adriano Olivetti and Monsignor Rostagno. However, to celebrate the rite inside

69 Passera, "Cinquant'anni di storia," 24.

70 AASO, SO-D, MDIO, UTO-PP, 42, 1, *Comune di Ivrea - Stab. di Ivrea – Settore Chiesa del Sacro Cuore*. The entire series of drawings testifies to the work done by Nizzoli and Oliveri between design and architecture to complete Favini's concept. The transcalar approach to the project is typical of the designers belonging to the Milanese area, see: Fiorella Bulegato and Elena Dellapiana, *Il design degli architetti italiani. 1920-200* (Milano: Electa, 2014). Furthermore, important artworks were commissioned for the Sacro Cuore Church: the *Via Crucis* and the candelabra sculpted by Giò Pomodoro and the crucifix made by Roberto Crippa. A more in-depth analysis of the furnishings and the liturgical objects inside has yet to be carried out.

Fig. 12
The interior of Sacro Cuore Church (Photo by the authors, 2024).

Fig. 13, 14
The *Via Crucis* by Giò Pomodoro and the pulpit, designed by Nizzoli and Oliveri (Photo by the authors, 2024).



the Church, two more years were needed – the first Mass was celebrated at Easter in 1961 – during which interventions at a smaller scale were fine-tuned.[71] In its final configuration, the single nave – the focal point of Favini's design – culminates in an elevated pentagonal apse, closed on the outside by a larger structure housing the sacristy rooms. The roofing of the terminal portion reprises the theme of the corrugated surface but opens up into a broader drapery, leaving room for interpretation that the building symbolizes the tent of the people of Israel, where the breath of the Holy Spirit would have inflated the side towards the tabernacle. Supporting this thesis is also the design of the metal partition – with a draped cloth – placed at the posterior limit of the presbytery as a scenic backdrop for the altar. This arrangement, together with the presence of the steps, marks a separation between the celebrant and the assembly and suggests that he still performed the rite with his back to the people – a characteristic also found in the side chapel and the crypt beneath the apse area [Fig. 15].

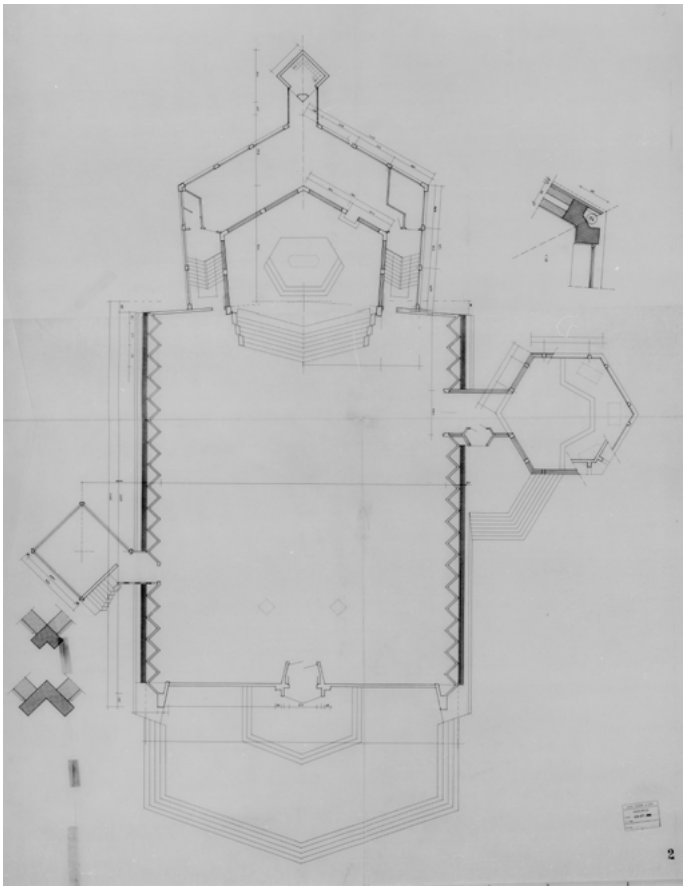
Contrary to what is stated in the literature, despite the origin of the designers from the Milan area, there is no 'Ambrosian' influence in the celebration at the parish of Canton Vesco[72], a characteristic instead found in the presence of the pul-

Fig. 15
First configuration of the apse with the curtain serving as a backdrop (source: AASO, SO-D, MDIO, UTO-PP, 42, 1, *Comune di Ivrea - Stab. di Ivrea - Settore Chiesa del Sacro Cuore*).

71 Passera, "Cinquant'anni di storia," 21-27.

72 While the volume Quintavalle, *Marcello Nizzoli*, 351 claims that the rite followed the Ambrosian tradition, historical photos and archive documents show a different modality of celebration. See: AASO, SO-D, MDIO, UTO-PP,

pit in a pivotal area between the nave and the presbytery. A sculptural element in reinforced concrete, present already in the early stages of the Church's construction, serves as a reference to medieval traditions, as well as reaffirming a dual polarity of the liturgy. Four autonomous volumes, harmonizing with the central space through the repetition of triangular geometry, connect to the central area. On the North side is the chapel, reserved for special devotions: three altars set against the sides of the octagon would have allowed for the simultaneous performance of multiple rites. On the opposite side, the baptistery is positioned – a square plan rotated 45° relative to the axis of the Church – which can also be accessed from the outside, recalling a secular tradition that conceives it as a passage space for the community. Both the baptismal font and the wrought iron gate – on the passage towards the main hall – are designed by the two architects. The theme of the rotated square also animates the structure of the bell tower, which occupies the central outer corner of the apse. On the South side, there are the parish house and the oratory [Fig. 16].



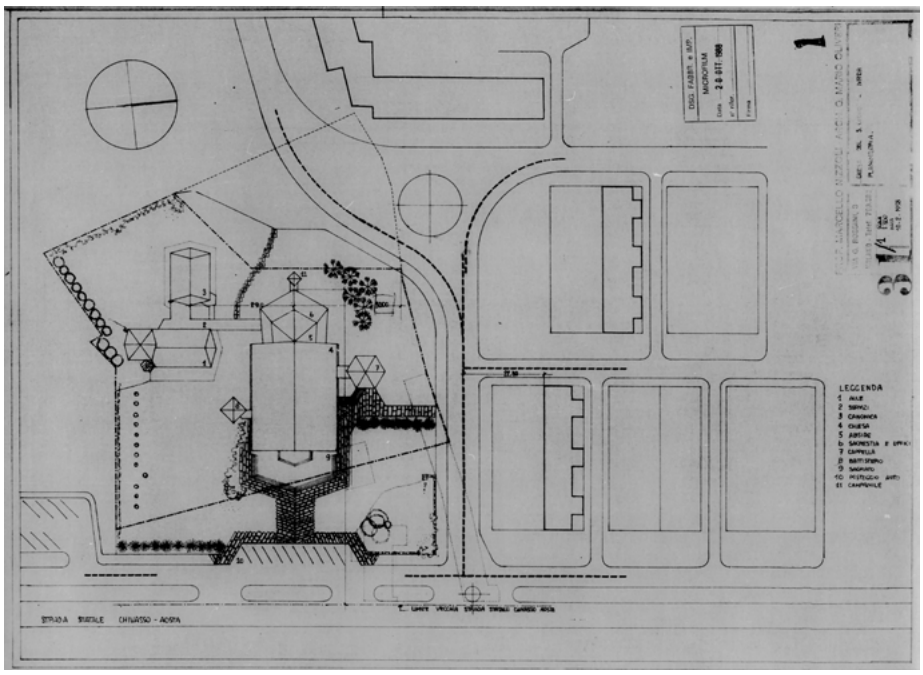
16

At the inauguration of the entire complex on June 29, 1961, neither the Bishop, who passed away on December 8, 1959, nor Adriano, who died in the following months, were present, and this aspect appears to have influenced the completion of the project in its envisioned form five years earlier. The entrance vestibule – the final detail to be resolved – was supposed to, according to Annibale Fiocchi's 1948 plan, align with the current Viale Monthey to serve as the neighbourhood's closing element. However, due to issues with Olivetti company's land acquisition for construction, the designers were compelled in 1956 to reconsider its configuration, favouring the space facing the Turin State Road for the entrance, thereby compromising the overall perception of the work. The design of the external arrangements by Nizzoli and Oliveri was also predicated on the assumption of future acquisition of the last remaining trapezoid of land for private use.[73] [Fig. 17] This process extended for fifty years and culminated in the construction of the churchyard in 2010 through the economic initiative of the residents, suggesting that the prolonged timeline is symptomatic of the collapse of the Olivetti community project and the religious crisis that afflicted the Church after the Second Vatican Council – two events that marked the history of Ivrea in the 1960s.

Fig. 16
Ground floor plan of the Sacro Cuore Church (source: AASO, SO-D, MDIO, UTO-PP, 42, 1, *Comune di Ivrea - Stab. di Ivrea - Settore Chiesa del Sacro Cuore*).

42, 1, *Comune di Ivrea – Stab. di Ivrea – Settore Chiesa del Sacro Cuore*; Passera, "Cinquant'anni di storia," 25-27.

73 Montanari, "L'architettura sacra nella diocesi di Ivrea nel Novecento," 495-496; Diego Ferrero-Aprato, "La Chiesa del Sacro Cuore di Gesù," in *I primi cinquant'anni di vita e di cammino*, ed. Parrocchia del Sacro Cuore di Gesù in Ivrea, (Ivrea, 2004), 89-93.



## Realignments. Church and Neighbourhood in Ivrea in the 1960s

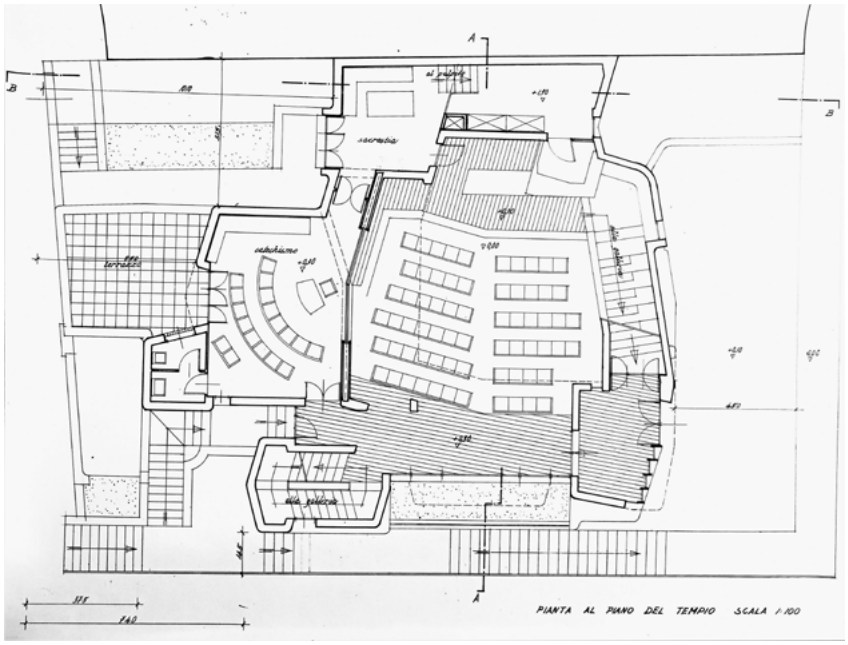
Adriano's death in 1960 marked a moment of crisis and the end of a very personal way of understanding and managing the district/church relation.

The difficulties – especially bureaucratic – faced by the implementation of the master plan approved in 1959 are also evident in the continuous migration of the church building within the new quarters: in the 1960s and 1970s there was a general inversion of their spatial relationship. Constant, however, is the barycentric position of the building: in the various projects, the church tended to occupy the spaces left free by the houses and other social services already built (or planned) according to the previous plans, no longer on the periphery but in the heart of the new residential area. At the beginning of the decade, in the aftermath of the inauguration of Sacro Cuore church, there were as many as two church projects promoted by communities in the neighbourhood of La Sacca, adjacent to Canton Vesco: on the one hand, the Waldensian Temple, and on the other, the Catholic Church of San Francesco.

The Waldensian Temple constitutes the first of its kind in Ivrea and was designed and built between 1963 and 1970 at the behest of the Waldensian community, founded by Pastor Daniele Revel, Adriano's maternal grandfather, in 1875. The relationship between the Olivetti family and the Waldensian community would always be very strong, especially with regard to the Torre Pellice Table, to which Adriano addressed the Community Movement's political elections, reaping a fair success in that area.[74] As the number of worshippers increased, in the early 1960s, the Waldensian community decided to

Fig. 17
Final urban configuration of the Church in relation to the rest of Canton Vesco (source: AASO, SO-D, MDIO, UTO-PP, 42, 1, *Comune di Ivrea - Stab. di Ivrea - Settore Chiesa del Sacro Cuore*).

74 See the correspondence between Adriano and the Moderators, in AASO, SO, P, CP, 22.310, issue 95, "Enrico Geymet."






18 19

equip itself with a Temple for worship, which previously took place in makeshift buildings, for a time freely rented in Olivetti-owned premises.[75] The episode of the Temple's construction helps to highlight a distinct type of Olivetti's influence from the previous "Adrianian period". Indeed, the client fully realized that he could not ignore the extreme architectural quality of the context.[76] The architectural design is therefore entrusted to the firm of Giovanni Klaus Koenig and Claudio Messina, both Waldensians, precisely because of their great ability to read the context and design architectures of extraordinary spatial quality.[77] The choice is also driven by the firm's well-established relationship with the Tavola, thanks to Koenig's collaboration with Leonardo Ricci, with whom he graduated, a Waldensian architect who was the author of the ecumenical centre in Prali, Piedmont, and on the other hand by family connections.[78] The project that consecrated the firm Koenig-Messina was the San Secondo di Pinerolo temple, inaugurated in 1958, which was followed by the competition for the Prali temple in 1959, for which they won first prize *ex equo*. The Ivrea's building constitutes the first application of a "spatial" Temple model, designed by Koenig to make up for the lack of references for Waldensian worship.[79] **[Fig. 18, 19]**

75 See the correspondence between the Pastor of Ivrea and the Moderators, in AUPI-TV, 066B, and in AASO, SO, P, CP, 119, issue 1156, *Chiesa Evangelica Valdese – Comunita' di Ivrea*, 1961-1970.

76 Letter of Alberto Ribet to Ermanno Rostan, Moderator, April, 17 1964, in AUPI-TV, 066B.

77 Breaking with established practice, the Pastor Bouchard of Ivrea personally involved the architects, without prior discussion with the Table. See: the polemic correspondence between Giorgio Bouchard, the Moderetor Ermanno Rostan, and several members of the Waldensian community in Torre Pellice, Biella and Turin, held in AUPI-TV, 066B. The presentation drawings of the various phases of the project that were progressively submitted to the Table for approval (and later also to Olivetti) are held in AUPI-TV, 066B, and in AASO, SO, P, CP, 22.310, issue 1156, "CHIESA EVANGELICA VALDESE – COMUNITA' DI IVREA, 23/1/1961 – 13/5/1970."

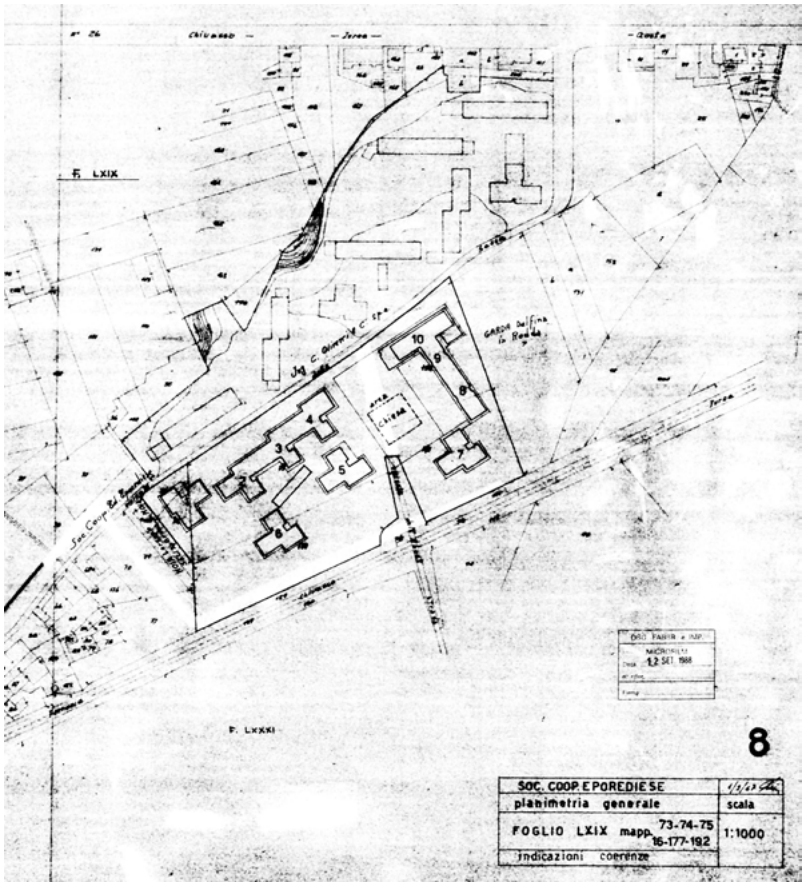
78 Valdo Spini, "Ricordo di Gianni Koenig, architetto valdese," in *Giovanni K. Koenig: un fiorentino nel dibattito nazionale su architettura e design (1924-1989)*, ed. Maria Cristina Tonelli (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2020), 271-274.

79 A valuable catalogue of Waldensian religious architecture in the Pinerolo valleys is the volume Renzo Bounous, Massimo Lecchi, eds., *I templi delle valli Valdesi* (Torino: Claudiana Editrice, 1988). A history of

Fig. 18
Giovanni Klaus Koenig and Claudio Messina, plan of the ground floor of the Waldesian Temple, Ivrea 1965 (source: AASO, SO, P, CP, 22.310, issue 1156, *CHIESA EVANGELICA VALDESE - COMUNITA' DI IVREA, 23/1/1961 - 13/5/1970*).

Fig. 19
The Waldesian Temple of Ivrea, Eastern elevation (Photo by the authors, 2024).

In Ivrea, the spirituality of the "Catholic" expressionism of Giovanni Michelucci[80] – whose Catholic church on the Autostrada del Sole in Florence was just being inaugurated- was combined with the spatiality of early Waldensian churches (Valle Pellice, Pinerolo, Turin)[81]. This all was enriched by deep research into early Protestant architectural expressionism in Germany studied by Koenig for the *Convegno internazionale di studi sull'espressionismo* held in Florence in May 1964.[82] Olivetti's direct influence in the architectural project was nil, while the financial aid offered both by the Company – from 1964 in the hands of a new Board of Directors that has almost totally disempowered the Olivetti component – and the Olivetti family, in particular Dino, Adriano's younger brother, turn out to be crucial.




20

In 1961, the Catholic community of the La Sacca neighbourhood requested the construction of its own church, which is wanted in the heart of the settlement. Still under construction, the borough had itself been built through cooperative formulas within Olivetti company on the initiative of Catholic trade unionist and missionary Riccardo Lizier.[83] **[Fig. 20]** Regarding the church – then dedicated to San Francesco –, Lizier personally took care of reaching out to the architects, those same *architetti di Olivetti* who had signed part of the neighbourhood on Adriano's commission, that is the Roman firm of Massimo Boschetti, Adolfo De Carlo, Luciano Giovannini, and Aldo Livadiotti. Livadiotti in particular was a close collaborator of Ludovico Quaroni even for Ivrea plans since the

Waldensian architecture in Piedmont and Savoy has been attempted in Paolo Cozzo, Filippo De Pieri and Andrea Merlotti, eds.,, *Valdesi e protestanti a Torino, XVIII-XX secolo: convegno per i 150 anni del Tempio Valdese, 1853-2003* (Torino: Zamorani, 2005).

80 The intellectual debt to Michelucci has been expressed by Koenig himself in "Il consumo del razionalismo italiano," parts I, II and III, *L'architettura, cronache e storia*, no. 73-74-75 (1962).

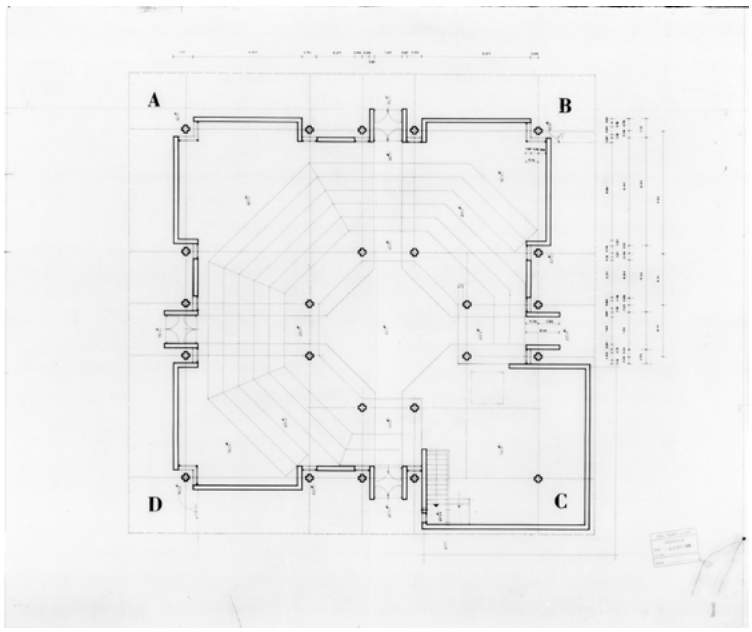
81 See the theoretical premises of the project, in Giovanni K. Koenig and Claudio Messina, *Progetto del tempio valdese. Ivrea – Canton Vesco*, [1963], in AUPI-TV, 066B.

82 The results of Koenig's studies on German architecture partly flowed into the volume *Architettura tedesca del secondo dopoguerra* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1965). See: the essays by François Burkhardt ("Giovanni K. Koenig e l'architettura in Germania," 199-204) ed Ezio Godoli ("Il ruolo di Koenig nella storiografia dell'architettura dell'espressionismo," 213-224), in Tonelli, *Giovanni K. Koenig: un fiorentino nel dibattito nazionale su architettura e design (1924-1989)*.

83 See the correspondence between Riccardo Lizier and the various Olivetti offices held in AASO, SO, DS, Corr. Pres., issue 2044, *LIZIER Sig. RICCARDO,* 1962-1974; AASO, PSO, AO, 22.3.1, issue 1399, *Riccardo Lizier – Cooperativa "La Familiare,"* 1955-1956. The project drawings (structural and installation) are stored in AASO, SO, DS, MDUTO-PP, 42, *Comune di Ivrea - Stab. di Ivrea (La Sacca) – Settore Chiesa San Francesco,* 1964-1965.

Fig. 20
La Sacca district urban plan, designed by Società Cooperativa Eporediese directed by Riccardo Lizier, 1967. Note the church building footprint (dashed line) in the very centre of the new residential district (source: AASO, SO, DS, MDUTO-PP, 36, *Comune di Ivrea - INA casa - Regione "La Sacca," planimetrie*).

21




22



23

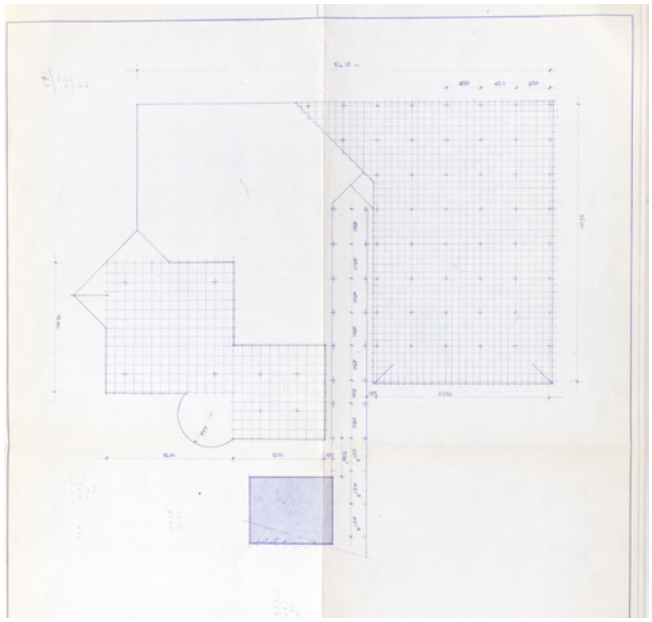


Fig. 21
Massimo Boschetti, Adolfo De Carlo, Luciano Giovannini, and Aldo Livadiotti, ground floor plan of the church of San Francesco alla Sacca, Ivrea n.d. [1964] (source: AASO, SO, DS, MDUTO-PP, 42, *Comune di Ivrea - Stab. di Ivrea (La Sacca) - Settore Chiesa San Francesco,* 1964-1965).
Fig. 22
The church of San Francesco alla Sacca, entrance elevation (Photo by the authors, 2024).

Fig. 23
Ezio Sgrelli (with Ottavio Cascio), ground floor scheme of the Olivetti Civic Centre for Bellavista, 1971. The church building (bottom left) can be recognised by the semicircular shape of one of the rooms, an area probably intended for the baptistery (source: AASO, As, Cascio, B-Poc, issue 70, *(B76) Olivetti Centro Civico, Ivrea - Progetto dell'arch. Ezio Sgrelli,* 1970-1972).

early 1950s[84], while Adolfo De Carlo collaborated with Quaroni on the design of the church of the Sacra Famiglia in Genoa (1956-1959) and – for Olivetti client – of the elementary school for the Canton Vesco of Ivrea, under construction in the same years (1956-1963). Furthermore, in the late 1950s the firm has signed the design of the Movimento di Comunità Centre in Terracina in Lazio.[85] The building proposed meets the needs of a domestic, intimate place of worship; favouring horizontality as well as centrality of layout, it fits quietly among the residential towers, almost as a counterpoint to the sought-after monumentality of Sacro Cuore.[86] **[Fig. 21, 22]** The church is built over a period of more than two decades almost exclusively with funds raised within the community, and a room for condominial meetings is also housed inside the building.[87] A double short-circuit is highlighted here. On the one hand, the involvement of Giovannini and De Carlo's firm is a direct emanation of that "diffuse quality" of spaces and architecture so intelligently promoted by Adriano since the 1930s, which is reflected in the design of a neighbourhood church that can almost be defined as "spontaneous" if not "self-constructed." On the other side, the barycentric placement relatively to the surrounding neighbourhood discards the logics previously planned/imposed by Adriano - which, in the case of religious buildings, are top-down –, thus going – paradoxically – to respond to the real needs of a Community that, after all, is the custodian and heir of the Olivettian awareness. In the second half of the 1960s, the Bellavista area (South of Canton Vesco) still needed a church, as Piccinato's 1956 project was not realized. In this case Annibale Fiocchi was entrusted with the task, and he presented a design for a magnificent building placed once again in the heart of the neighborhood. Neither would this project be followed up in Bellavista, but would be realized, partially modified, in another suburb north of Ivrea a decade later, while Bellavista would not have a church until the 2010s.[88]

## Conclusions

If compared to the 1950s ones, the processes that took place in the 1960s described above tended to realign the case of Ivrea with the debate h that informed the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). During those same years,

84 On Giovannini see Claudio Baldoni, "L'architettura di Luciano Giovannini (1924-1993)" (PhD diss., Università degli Studi di Roma Tor Vergata, 2010), in part. the chapters "La relazione con Ludovico Quaroni e la partecipazione al GTCUC" and "Luciano Giovannini 'architetto di Olivetti'," 23-62. To be noticed that Giovannini was also the (co-)author of two volumes edited by the GTCUC for Ivrea general plan GTUC, *Collana di studi e ricerche per il coordinamento urbanistico del Canavese,* 15 voll.: (with Carlo Doglio), *Storia di Ivrea urbana*, vol. X, and *L'ambiente dell'Eporediese*, vol. XIII.

85 Claudio Baldoni, "Una realizzazione del Movimento Comunità nel territorio Pontino. Adriano Olivetti e la Biblioteca Comunale di Terracina," *Lazio Ieri e Oggi*, no. 4-6 (2018): 3-18.

86 It is a square-based central layout model that was very common in religious architecture in the late 1950s, which can be found in the churches of San Pio X in Bologna (Giorgio Trebbi, 1957-1962) or of San Giuseppe Cottolengo in Turin (Mario Roggero, 1959-1965).

87 The church still lacks a systematic study. A description of some social aspects related to its construction can be found in Rolando Argentero, *I percorsi della fede in Canavese. Ivrea & Canavese Orientale* (Ivrea: Hever, 2015), 54.

88 AASO, Aa, Fiocchi, SV, Poc, fold. 49, *Chiesa di Santa Chiara – Progetto – Quartiere Bellavista, Ivrea (TO)*; see the architectural record of the church in Daniele Boltri, Enrico Papa, eds.,, *Architetture olivettiane a Ivrea – I progetti non realizzati* (Cernobbio: Archivio Cattaneo Editore, forthcoming).

the Church was in fact questioning the distribution, role and spaces of religious service within the contemporary city, and the concept of the *integrated city* was investigated, as were the breakthroughs derived from Team X and the Archigram or, from Japan's Metabolists with Tange Kenzo, who had, not surprisingly, a crucial role in Lercaro's Bologna in the 1960s.[89]

The journal "Chiesa e Quartiere" once again constitutes the privileged observatory, with particular reference to No. 39 of September 1966, specifically devoted to these issues, with articles by, among others, Yona Friedman and Ludovico Quaroni on the *Parrocchia del futuro*.[90] The definition of a new "pastoral planning" leads to considering the "parish system" as an increasingly integral part of the social centre of the new cities. This became necessary in order to cope with the rapid transformations observed within society, particularly regarding the processes of demographic explosion, inter-regional or even inter-borough emigration, and the cultural level of the new working-class neighbourhoods in terms of basic schooling.[91] The difficulties of the parish centre in fulfilling social functions, and the late 1960s social crise was emblematically reflected in the cessation of the publication of "Chiesa e Quartiere" in 1968.[92]

It is significant to highlight how the trajectory of the Olivetti-Church relationship comes to an end with the early 1970s un-built project of a Civic Center for Bellavista district designed by the architect Ezio Sgrelli on behalf of Olivetti company.[93] The building housed the main social functions (restaurant, market, shops, theatre) as well as a space for worship. The new church would have a seamless structure within the civic centre housing the social services, echoing Quaroni's research on the church-social centre unity of the early 1950s [Fig. 23].

What has been attempted to demonstrate in this paper is the strong eccentricity of the model proposed by Adriano in the 1950s for "his" Ivrea in terms of the church-borough relation, with respect to the general national situation of the post war "economic miracle" and the reconstruction, highlighting the role of absolute protagonism and control exercised by Adriano in terms of both urban planning and architectural design. The city of Ivrea – and the territory of Ivrea in general – became a field of social and urban experimentation, a real attempt to import into Italy a model that elsewhere would not have had the strength to

89 A direct reference to these movements is proposed in Piero Bulgheroni and Raffaele Selleri, "La parrocchia nella città contemporanea," *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 39 (September 1966), 34-39.

90 See the essays: Yona Friedman, "La theorie des systèmes compréhensibles et son application à l'urbanisme," *Ch&Q*, no. 39 (September 1966): 10-11; Ludovico Quaroni, "Cultura e realizzazioni urbanistiche," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 39 (September 1966): 12-15; Silvano Burgalassi, "Religiosità e mutamento sociale," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 39 (September 1966): 16-21; Joseph Fitzpatrick, "La parrocchia del futuro," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 39 (September 1966): 40-49.

91 The debate began at the beginning of the decade – Mazzoli, "Elementi e criteri informatori di un 'planning' parrocchiale," 69-89 – and grew in the following years; an early critical summary is presented, in the Italian context, in Bulgheroni and Selleri, "La parrocchia nella città contemporanea," 34-39.

92 See also: Giorgio Pecorini, "Una crisi di coscienza cattolica. A chi giova il concordato?," *Comunità*, no. 144-145 (1967): 38-40; Andrea Longhi, "Movimenti, associazioni e spazi liturgici nel postconcilio: prospettive di ricerca," in *Architettura Chiesa e Società in Italia 1948-1978*, eds. Andrea Longhi and Carlo Tosco (Roma: Studium, 2010), 179-188.

93 The first Civic Centre project by Sgrelli, though without a religious component, dates back to 1962. See AASO, SO, DS, MDUTO-PP, 30, issues 1-100, *Case di civile abitazione - Quartiere Bellavista*. Some drawings of the last project are held in AASO, As, Cascio, B-Poc, issue 70, *(B76) Olivetti Centro Civico, Ivrea - Progetto dell'arch. Ezio Sgrelli,* 1970-1972.

impose itself. With his death in 1960, a decade of realignment began, but this took the form of punctual and isolated realities, which escaped the logic of integrated urban and territorial planning promoted by Adriano since the 1930s and only assimilated at national level thirty years later.

**Acknowledgements** The contents of this essay have been fully discussed, structured, and shared by the authors. The introductory paragraph and *The ambiguity of Adriano Olivetti, the cumbersome presence in the Diocese of Ivrea* and *The church of the Sacro Cuore: patronage, spaces, structure* have been written by Martina Ulbar. The conclusive paragraph, *Between the church and the Social centre: the "Heart of the city" in the 1950s* and *Realignments. Church and neighbourhood in Ivrea in the 1960s* have been written by Giorgio Nepote Vesin.
A special thanks goes to the archive's staff for their willingness to facilitate our research: Silvia Raucci (Archivio Storico del Politecnico di Milano, Milano), Gabriella Ballesio and Federica Tammarazio (Archivio della Tavola Valdese, Torre Pellice), Marcella Turchetti (Associazione Archivio Storico Olivetti, Ivrea), mons. Giovanni Battista Giovanino (Archivio Storico Diocesano, Ivrea).
We are grateful to arch. Daniele Boltri and Don Davide Rossetto for their precious support and availability. A sincere thanks to prof. Andrea Longhi for his continuous support since the initial stages of the research.

## Bibliography


Alpini, Andrea. "Aldo Favini. Architettura e costruzione." Master's thesis, Politecnico di Milano, 2010.

Argentero, Rolando. *I percorsi della fede in Canavese. Ivrea & Canavese Orientale.* Ivrea: Hever, 2015.

Astarita, Rossano. *Gli architetti di Olivetti: una storia di committenza industriale*. Milano: Franco Angeli, 2012.

Baldoni, Claudio. "L'architettura di Luciano Giovannini (1924-1993)." PhD diss., Università degli Studi di Roma Tor Vergata, 2010.

Baldoni, Claudio. "Una realizzazione del Movimento Comunità nel territorio Pontino. Adriano Olivetti e la Biblioteca Comunale di Terracina," *Lazio Ieri e Oggi*, no. 4-6 (2018): 3-18.

Barazzetta, Giulio, ed. *Aldo Favini. Architettura e ingegneria in opera*. Milano: CLUP, 2004.

Barazzetta, Giulio. "Milano anni '50: tecnica e architettura. Morassutti, Mangiarotti, Favini." *Casabella*, no. 721 (April 2004): 82-91.

Bilò, Federico, and Ettore Vadini, eds. *Matera e Adriano Olivetti: testimonianze su un'idea per il riscatto del Mezzogiorno.* Roma/Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, 2016.

Boltri, Daniele, Giovanni Maggia, Enrico Papa, and Pier Paride Vidari, eds. *Architetture olivettiane a Ivrea: i luoghi del lavoro e i servizi socio-assistenziali di fabbrica*. Roma, Gangemi, 1998.

Boltri, Daniele and Enrico Papa, eds. *Architetture olivettiane a Ivrea – I progetti non realizzati.* Cernobbio: Archivio Cattaneo Editore, Forthcoming, 2024.

Bonifazio, Patrizia, and Paolo Scrivano, eds. *Olivetti costruisce: architettura moderna a Ivrea: guida al museo a cielo aperto*. Milano: Skira, 2001.

Brunetti, Fabrizio and Paolo Milani. *Perché si pianifica? I lavori del gruppo tecnico per il coordinamento urbanistico del Canavese. Una cronaca ragionata (1951-1954)*. Fondazione Adriano Olivetti: Ivrea, 1995.

Bounous, Renzo and Massimo Lecchi, eds. *I templi delle valli Valdesi.* Torino: Claudiana Editrice, 1988.

Bulegato, Fiorella and Elena Dellapiana. *Il design degli architetti italiani. 1920-200.* Milano: Electa, 2014.

Bulgheroni, Piero and Raffaele Selleri. "La parrocchia nella città contemporanea," *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 39 (September 1966): 34-39.

Burgalassi, Silvano. "Religiosità e mutamento sociale." *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 39 (September 1966): 16-21.

Burkhardt, François. "Giovanni Klaus Koenig e l'architettura in Germania." In *Giovanni Klaus Koenig: un fiorentino nel dibattito nazionale su architettura e design (1924-1989),* edited by Maria Cristina Tonelli, 199-204. Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2020.

"Chiesa del 'Sacro Cuore' ad Ivrea (Torino)." In *IV Congresso Internazionale del Precompresso. Realizzazioni italiane in cemento armato precompresso*, edited by AITEC. Roma: AITEC, 1962.

Ciucci, Giorgio. "Ivrea ou la communauté des clercs." *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'Hui*, no. 188 (December 1976).

Cozzo, Paolo, Filippo De Pieri, and Andrea Merlotti, eds. *Valdesi e protestanti a Torino, XVIII-XX secolo: convegno per i 150 anni del Tempio Valdese, 1853-2003.* Torino: Zamorani, 2005.

Deschermeier, Dorothea. "Il ruolo della religione e le chiese dell'Eni." In *Impero ENI: l'architettura aziendale e l'urbanistica di Enrico Mattei*, edited by Dorothea Deschermeier, 98-105. Brescia: Damiani, 2008.

Doglio, Carlo. "Ragioni, stranezze e incognite del voto sul piano regolatore." *La Sentinella del Canavese*, April 8, 1955.

"Dieci nuove chiese a Milano." *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 9-10 (1958): 30-88.

Di Biagi, Paola, ed. *La grande ricostruzione: il piano Ina-Casa e l'Italia degli anni cinquanta.* Roma: Donzelli, 2001.

"Editoriale." *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 1 (March 1957): 2.

Fabbri, Marcello, and Antonella Greco, eds. *La comunità concreta: progetto e immagine. Il pensiero e le iniziative di Adriano Olivetti nella formazione della cultura urbanistica ed architettonica italiana.* Milano/Roma: Edizioni di Comunità, 1988.

Ferrero-Aprato, Diego et al. "La Chiesa del Sacro Cuore di Gesù." in *I primi cinquant'anni di vita e di cammino*, edited by Parrocchia del Sacro Cuore di Gesù in Ivrea, 89-93. Ivrea, 2004.

Fitzpatrick, Joseph. "La parrocchia del futuro." *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 39 (September 1966): 40-49.

Friedman, Yona. "La theorie des systèmes compréhensibles et son application à l'urbanisme." *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 39 (September 1966): 10-11.

Figini, Luigi. "Ricordo di Adriano Olivetti." *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 13 (1960): 98.

Giacopelli, Enrico. "Scuola elementare di Canton Vesco. Ivrea 1956-1963. Ludovico Quaroni, Adolfo De Carlo." *DOCOMOMO Italia Giornale*, no. 29 (November 2011).

Godoli, Ezio. "Il ruolo di Koenig nella storiografia dell'architettura dell'espressionismo." In *Giovanni Klaus Koenig: un fiorentino nel dibattito nazionale su architettura e design (1924-1989),* edited by Maria Cristina Tonelli, 213-224. Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2020.

Gravagnuolo, Benedetto. *Gli studi Nizzoli: architettura e design. 1948-1983.* Milano: Electa, 1983.

Gresleri, Glauco, 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.

Harris, Lindsay. "The Human Face of Big Business: American Documentary Photography in Matera (1948-1954)." *rivista di studi di fotografia rsf*, no. 9 (2019): 30-53.

Iori, Tullia. "Angelo Mangiarotti e la Scuola di Vevey." In *Angelo Mangiarotti. Quando le strutture prendono forma*, edited by Fulvio Irace, Milano: Electa, 2023, 162-169.

Koenig, Giovanni K. *Architettura tedesca del secondo dopoguerra.* Bologna: Cappelli, 1965.

Koenig, Giovanni K. "Il consumo del razionalismo italiano." parts I, II and III. *L'architettura, cronache e storia*, no. 73-74-75 (1962).

Koenig, Giovanni K. "Origine e forme del centro civico." *Comunità*, no. 64 (November 1958): 58.

Lercaro, Giacomo. "Chiesa e Quartiere." *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 5 (March 1958): 25-34.

Longhi, Andrea and Carlo Tosco. *Architettura Chiesa e Società in Italia 1948-1978.* Roma: Edizioni Studium, 2010.

Maffioletti, Marco, ed. *L'impresa ideale tra fabbrica e Comunità. Una biografia intellettuale di Adriano Olivetti*. Roma: Fondazione Adriano Olivetti, 2016, 34-72, 228-232.

Maguolo, Michela. "La comunità e il suo centro. Una rivista, un tema, un dibattito." *Engramma*, no. 166 (2019): 241-266.

Margotti, Marta. *La fabbrica dei cattolici. Chiesa, industria e organizzazioni operaie a Torino (1948-1965)*. Torino: Edizioni Angolo Manzoni, 2012.

Margotti, Marta. "L'equivoco 'olivettiano'. Il mondo cattolico canavesano e l'Olivetti attraverso 'Il risveglio popolare' (1945-1965)." In *Olivetti è ancora una sfida. Lavoro, personale, territorio in un'impresa responsabile*, edited by Diocesi di Ivrea, Ivrea, 2010, 227-242.

Margotti, Marta. "Una scelta di campo. L'Azione cattolica di Ivrea alla prova del Concilio." In *Il Concilio in azione. La recezione dell'Azione cattolica nelle chiese d'Italia*, edited by Raffaele Cananzi and Paolo Trionfini, Roma: AVE, 2019.

Mazzoli, Aleardo. "Elementi e criteri informatori di un 'planning' parrocchiale." *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 19 (September 1961): 69-89.

Mele, Giovanni. "Ombre e luci nella polemica su La Martella, i giudici sono gli imputati." *L'eco di Matera* (March 1995): 3.

Montanari, Guido. "L'architettura sacra nella diocesi di Ivrea nel Novecento." In *Storia della Chiesa di Ivrea in epoca contemporanea*, edited by Maurilio Guasco, Marta Margotti and Francesco Traniello, 487-503. Roma: Viella, 2006.

Nuti, Beatrice. "Adriano Olivetti. Un cristianesimo politico ed economico." Post-graduate's thesis, Scuola Normale Superiore, 2018.

Olivetti, Adriano. *L'ordine politico delle Comunità*. Ivrea: Nuove Edizioni Ivrea, 1945.

Olivetti, Adriano. *Società, Stato, Comunità: per un'economia politica e comunitaria*. Milano/Roma: Edizioni di Comunità, 1952.

Olmo, Carlo. *Urbanistica e società civile.* Roma/Ivrea: Edizioni di Comunità, 1992.

Paci, Enzo. "Il cuore della città." *Casabella Continuità*, no. 202 (1954): VII-X.

"Parrocchia del Sacro Cuore – Ivrea." *La voce del Sacro Cuore*, no. 5 (October 1956).

Passera, Tiziano. "Cinquant'anni di storia." In *I primi cinquant'anni di vita e di cammino*, edited by Tiziano Passera, Ivrea: 2004.

Pecorini, Giorgio. "Una crisi di coscienza cattolica. A chi giova il concordato?" *Comunità*, no. 144-145 (1967): 38-40.

Peruccio, Pier Paolo. "Il design della Ricostruzione: Italiani a Losanna (1944-1950)," *Ais/Design*, no. 2 (2013): 105-111.

"Piano regolatore della città di Ivrea (architetti Figini e Pollini)", and Adriano Olivetti, "Architettura al servizio sociale", *Casabella*, no. 101 (May 1936): 6-11.

Piccinini, Mario ed. *Adriano Olivetti: il lascito*. Roma: INU, 2014.

"Presentazione." *Centro sociale*, no. 32-33 (1960): 4.

Quaroni, Ludovico. "Il Centro sociale come edificio." *Centro sociale*, no. 1-3 (1954): 27-29.

Quaroni, Ludovico. "La chiesa del villaggio La Martella." *Casabella-continuità*, no. 208 (1955): 30-39.

Quaroni, Ludovico. "La Chiesa, lo spazio interno." *Casabella-continuità,* no. 208 (1955): 31-34.

Quaroni, Ludovico. "Città e quartiere nell'attuale fase critica di cultura." *La Casa. Quaderno a cura dell'Incis*, no. 3 (October 1956).

Quaroni, Ludovico. "Cultura e realizzazioni urbanistiche." *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 39 (September 1966): 12-15.

Quintavalle, Arturo C. *Marcello Nizzoli.* Milano: Electa, 1990.

"Respinto dal Consiglio di Ivrea il progetto di Piano regolatore. Era destinato a favorire la Olivetti." *L'Unità* (Piedmontese edition), March 24, 1955.

Rey, Mario. "Adriano Olivetti e il mondo cattolico eporediese: contrapposizioni e continuità." In *Olivetti è ancora una sfida*, edited by Diocesi di Ivrea, Ivrea, 2010.

Rogers, Ernesto Nathan. "L'unità di Adriano Olivetti." *Casabella-continuità*, no. 270 (December 1962).

Roggero, Mario. "Problemi di organizzazione parrocchiale di una città industriale." *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 6 (June 1958): 45-49.

Savioli, Antonio. "Aspetti del problema dei rapporti fra chiesa e collettività." *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 1 (March 1957): 47-50.

Scrivano, Paolo. "La comunità e la sua difficile realizzazione. Adriano Olivetti e l'urbanistica nel Canavese." In *Costruire la città dell'uomo. Adriano Olivetti e l'urbanistica*, edited by Carlo Olmo, Torino: Einaudi, 2001: 85-112.

Sert, Josep Lluís, Ernesto Nathan Rogers, and Jacqueline Tyrwhitt, eds. *The heart of the city: towards the humanisation of urban life*. New York/London-Bradford, Pellegrini and Cudahy/Lund Humphries, 1952.

Sert, Josep Lluís, Ernesto Nathan Rogers, and Jacqueline Tyrwhitt, eds. *Il cuore della citta: per una vita più umana delle comunit.,* Translated by Julia Banfi Bertolotti. Milano: Hoepli, 1954.

Spinelli, Luigi. *G. Mario Oliveri e gli studi Nizzoli.* Milano: Editoriale Domus, 2001.

"Statuto del Centro Studi." *Chiesa e Quartiere*, no. 19 (September 1961): 43-49.

Spini Valdo "Ricordo di Gianni Koenig, architetto valdese.*"* In *Giovanni Klaus Koenig: un fiorentino nel dibattito nazionale su architettura e design (1924-1989)*, edited by Maria Cristina Tonelli, Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2020, 271-274.

Tafuri, Manfredo. "Aufklarung I. Adriano Olivetti e la *communitas* dell'intelletto." In *Storia dell'architettura italiana. 1944-1985,* edited by Manfredo Tafuri, Torino: Einaudi, 1986: 47-63.

Tafuri, Manfredo. *Ludovico Quaroni e lo sviluppo dell'architettura moderna in Italia.* Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, 1964.

Talamona, Marida. "Dieci anni di politica dell'Unrra Casas: dalle case dei senzatetto ai borghi rurali nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia (1945-1955). Il ruolo di Adriano Olivetti*".* In *Costruire la città dell'uomo. Adriano Olivetti e l'urbanistica*, edited by Carlo Olmo, Torino: Einaudi, 2001: 173-204.

Tedesco, Luca. "Chiesa cattolica e Unrra Casas.*"* *Studium*, no. 2 (2010): 233-246.

Veronesi, Giulia. "Chiese nuove: la situazione a Milano." *Comunità*, no. 68 (1959): 48-56.

Volponi, Paolo. "L'UNRRA CASAS e i Centri Sociali." *Centro sociale,* no. 1-3 (1954): 7-16.

Zevi, Bruno. *Zevi su Zevi: architettura come profezia.* Venezia: Marsilio, 1993.

Zito, Carla. *Casa tra le case: architettura di chiese a Torino durante l'episcopato del cardinale Michele Pellegrino (1965-1977).* Torino: Effatà, 2013.

Zucconi, Angela. "Centri sociali in Italia." *Centro sociale*, no. 1-3 (1954): 3-6.

Zucconi, Angela. *Cinquant'anni nell'utopia, il resto nell'aldilà.* Roma: L'Ancora, 2000.

## Archival resources


Archivio Apostolico Vaticano (Città del Vaticano):

- Archivio Campane, Capo I, 694, f. 1. Letter from Monsignor Paolo Rostagno to Pontifical Commission, June 28, 1954.
- Archivio Campane, Capo I, 694, f. 1. Extract from the record of the meeting held by the Pontifical Commission in the Chancellery Palace, July 1, 1954.
- Archivio Campane, Capo I, 694, f. 2. Notary deed for the Sacro Cuore Church, December 30, 1955.
- Archivio Campane, Capo I, 694, f. 3. Letter from Monsignor Paolo Rostagno to Ministry of Public Works, May 15, 1956.

Servizio Archivi Storici e Attività Museali, Politecnico di Milano, ACL. Fondo "Aldo Favini":

- Cartella 6, Chiesa del Sacro Cuore. Ivrea, [Chiesa del Sacro Cuore, Ivrea, da "Lettera opere scelte"], s.d. [2004 (da sito Fondazione Favini)] 0144.
- Album fotografico, Chiesa Ivrea, [Chiesa del Sacro Cuore, Ivrea, fotografie di cantiere e dell'edificio realizzato], s.d. [1957-1958], 087.
- Album fotografico, Chiesa del Sacro Cuore di Ivrea. SCAN def A. 7 tav., [Chiesa del Sacro Cuore, Ivrea, disegni], s.d. [1957-1958], T135.
- Chiesa del Sacro Cuore Ivrea 1962. tubo 1 blu, [Chiesa del Sacro Cuore, Ivrea, disegni], s.d. [1957-1958], T146.

Associazione Archivio Storico Olivetti, Ivrea (Turin):

- Società Olivetti, Documentazione Società, Microfilm Disegni Immobili Olivetti, Microfilm Disegni Ufficio Tecnico Olivetti - Prima Parte: SO, DS, MDUTO-PP.
- AASO, Società Olivetti, Documentazione, DSSS - Direzione Sviluppo Servizi Sociali, Competenze: SO, D, DSSS-C
- Società Olivetti, Documentazione Società, Presidenza, Corrispondenza Presidenza: SO, DS, P, CP
- Società Olivetti, Presidenza, Corrispondenza, Corrispondenza Presidenza, 22.310: SO, P, CP, 22.310.
- Personalità della storia Olivetti, Adriano Olivetti, 22.3 Corrispondenza 1912-1964, 22.3.1 Carteggi ordinati per corrispondente: PSO, AO, 22.3.1
- Altri archivi, Fiocchi, Annibale, Secondo versamento, Progetti in ordine cronologico: Aa, Fiocchi, SV, Poc
- Altri archivi, Ottavio Cascio, (B) Progetti in ordine cronologico: Aa, Cascio, B-Poc
- Collezioni Olivetti, Fototeca Olivetti, Foto Miscellanea Olivetti (Personaggi, attività, Canavese et al.), Foto Olivetti Ivrea, Canavese, Cartoline d'epoca: CO, FO, FMO-Cde

Archivio dell'Ufficio Patrimonio Immobiliare della Tavola Valdese, Torre Pellice, faldone 066, *Ivrea - Stradale Torino, 217, B fino al 2001*, corrispondenza 1947-2001: AUPI-TV, 066B

Università di Roma "La Sapienza", Roma, Dipartimento di Pianificazione, Design, Tecnologia dell'Architettura (PDTA), Archivio Luigi Piccinato, 01.02_174, *Quartiere Bellavista a Ivrea*: ALP, 01.02_174

**Stefano Mais**

# Urban Projects and Religious Architecture in Post-War Cagliari: the Sant'Elia Village and its Church (1951-1956)

ARTICLE

*Architecture, Urban Planning, Reconstruction, Church, Society*

**/Abstract**

**The first residential area planned and built in Cagliari after the Second World War was in Sant'Elia (1951-1956), selected after debateable political choices as an area of refuge for the poorer classes of the city's population left homeless after the war. The neighbourhood is in the peripheral area known as Lazzaretto, where many displaced people had already found refuge during the war. Without basic services, the neighbourhood initially accommodated around 2,400 people. The physical and social centre of the Sant'Elia community was the parish church of the same name, one of the few services in the neighbourhood. The project started to be developed in 1956 by the architect Salvatore Rattu, responsible for the main local architectural projects before and after the Second World War. He acted on the suggestions put forward by Archbishop Paolo Botto, who was heavily committed to pastoral work involving the peripheral areas of the city. Despite its basic conformation, the church reflects the developing technical trends of national religious architecture and would become fundamental in the urban and social characterization of the neighbourhood.**

**/Author**

**Stefano Mais**
**DICAAR – University of Cagliari**
**stefano.mais@unica.it**

Researcher and Assistant Professor at the DICAAR of the University of Cagliari, he works on research projects on the history of architecture, city and landscape, with a focus on 19th and 20th centuries. Since 2015 he has collaborated with the History of Architecture chair at the University of Cagliari and since the academic year 2021-2022 he has been a lecturer in the History of Contemporary Architecture at the same university within the Master's Degree in Architecture and in PhD courses. He has also been a guest lecturer at the University of Alicante, Spain (ERASMUS+ MOSTA) and at the University of Hertfordshire (Hatfield), England (MGR 2022). He is author of several publications, including the book 'Paolo Portoghesi e la Sardegna. I teatri e la città' (Gangemi Roma, 2024). He participates in international scientific conferences and lectures and he carried out traineeships at the Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura in Valladolid (Spain) and at the Art Institute of the University of Wroclaw (Poland).

https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/19072
Copyright © 2024 Stefano Mais

## Introduction: Cagliari and Post-War Reconstruction

During the Second World War Cagliari was bombed several times between February and May 1943.[1] The military bombardments brought the city to its knees; the census of the destruction caused by these attacks was drawn up by the Technical Office of the Municipality of Cagliari in 1945 and summarizes the calamitous consequences.[2] Of the approximately 7000 buildings standing in the city before the war, 36% suffered major damage.[3] Many monuments and public buildings became entirely unusable; several citizens died as a result of the bombs and many of those who were unable to leave the city before the war were forced into makeshift accommodation.[4]

At the end of 1943 the debate on reconstruction began, animated by points of view expressed in the pages of L'Unione Sarda, the island's main local newspaper.[5] The different contrasting positions soon polarized into two approaches: on the one hand there were those who argued that all the houses destroyed in the old neighbourhoods should be rebuilt as soon as possible but maintaining the pre-war urban layout; on the other hand, others insisted on the need for expansion beyond the city's borders by building up new outlying areas, according to what had already been preliminarily outlined by the urban planning commission prior to the war.[6]

However, the pressure of events towards the end of the war and the subsequent government reorganization prevented any immediate intervention. The impetus to act, however, came from the Legislative Decree of March 1st, 1945, which required the adoption of urgent reconstruction plans for cities damaged by the war.[7] In 1945 the City Council of Cagliari approved the Reconstruction Plan that had been drawn up by the Technical Office, and then definitively reapproved it following modifications in 1947.[8]

With no real radical vision for urban planning, the new plan fell back on the approach set out in the 1941 plan, which focused above all on reorganising, demolishing and straightening roads in the historical centre; therefore, it advo-

1 Manlio Brigaglia and Giuseppe Podda, eds., *Sardegna 1940-45. La guerra, le bombe, la libertà. I drammi e le speranze nel racconto di chi c'era* (Cagliari: Tema, 1994).

2 Historical Archive of the Municipality of Cagliari (hereinafter HAMC), Technical Office, Census of the destruction caused by war events, General Planimetry, scale 1:4000.

3 Gavino Santucciu, *La storia di Cagliari nel dopoguerra tra processi urbanistici e conflitti sociali* (Fiesole: Fondazione Michelucci Press, 2020), 20-22.

4 Massimo Rassu, *Cantine, Caverne, Bunkers, La protezione antiaerea a Cagliari durante la seconda guerra mondiale* (Cagliari: ARSOM, 1944); Alessandro Ragatzu, *La ricostruzione e riabilitazione sotto l'egida della Allied Control Commission, Region 6. La questione degli sfollati* (Soleminis: Alisea, 2014).

5 Franco Masala, *Architettura dall'Unità d'Italia alla fine del '900* (Nuoro: Ilisso, 2001), 240.

6 The city of Cagliari had finally managed to formulate a Master Plan in 1941, following the announcement of a public tender 1928, which was awarded only in 1931. The new urban planning law of 1942 and the bombings of 1943 blocked the process of implementing the plan, making it basically obsolete. See: Anna Maria Colavitti and Nicola Usai, *Cagliari* (Firenze: Alinea, 2007), 101-114.

7 Lieutenant Legislative Decree of 1 March 1945, n. 154. Rules for reconstruction plans for towns damaged by war. Published in the Official Journal no. 53 of 2 May 1945, in force since 3 May 1945.

8 The first resolution of the municipal council dates back to 29 October 1945 (n. 1612) and was implemented by the Prefect on 24 December of the same year. Subsequently modified on 10 December 1946, the plan was definitively approved on 31 July 1947. See HAMC, Cat. I, Cl. VII, Resolutions of the Municipal Council.

cated straight lines of expansion along the main axes of expansion of the pre-war city: to the east along Via Dante, Colle di Bonaria, San Benedetto and Monte Urpinu; to the west towards the regional road routes, with new areas for low-cost residential housing and various other commercial activities.[9]

However, the plan was basically disregarded and then applied piecemeal and without conviction. Not even the establishment of the Autonomous Region and the appointment of Cagliari as the Sardinian capital encouraged any rapid and comprehensive reconstruction.[10] The work on the city was carried out amid discontent and insufficient economic resources characterised by poorly coordinated emergency episodes of reconstruction that resulted in what has been defined as "haphazard and makeshift architecture and urban planning"[11]. However, some economic and planning efforts had a different tenor, especially those concentrated on the reconstruction of the city's symbolic buildings that had suffered serious damaged in the war.[12]

Against this background of ambiguous political-urban planning, the further onerous problem emerged of how and where to house displaced residents as well as those who, after the war, had flocked to the city from the countryside. The housing issue thus became one of the main emergencies of Cagliari but at the same time provided potential opportunity for economic and social recovery for the city and for the entire region.[13]

In Sardinia, as in the rest of Italy, the construction of new residential neighbourhoods was chiefly encouraged by the so-called "Fanfani Plan", named after the Minister of Labour, who in 1949 introduced a law called "Measures to increase worker employment by facilitating construction of homes for workers"[14]. The law aimed to encourage public residential housing throughout Italy and was implemented and coordinated by the National Insurance Institute (INA), so came to be known as the "INACASA plan"[15]. It is within this scenario that the first popular neighbourhoods of reconstruction arose in Cagliari too, setting in motion architectural and urban planning projects of considerable importance for the ongoing expansion of the city up to the present day.[16]

---

9 Masala, *Architettura dall'Unità d'Italia alla fine del '900*, 241-242; Colavitti and Usai, *Cagliari*, 111-112. See also: Alessandra Casu, Aldo Lino and Antonello Sanna, eds., *La città ricostruita. Le vicende urbanistiche in Sardegna nel secondo dopoguerra* (Cagliari: CUEC, 2002).

10 Gian Giacomo Ortu, *Cagliari tra passato e futuro* (Cagliari: CUEC, 2004), 16.

11 Cit. Vico Mossa, "La ricostruzione della città," *L'Unione Sarda*, 28 ottobre 1945.

12 Bernadette Petti, *I restauri e le ricostruzioni nel secondo dopoguerra. Il caso di Cagliari a confronto con il panorama nazionale ed europeo* (Cagliari: La riflessione, 2012).

13 Santucciu, *La storia di Cagliari nel dopoguerra tra processi urbanistici e conflitti sociali*, 27-29.

14 Law 28 February 1949, n. 43 published in the Official Gazette on 7 March 1949.

15 The two seven-year periods of activity of the INACASA plan (1949-1956 and 1956-1963) set in motion a complex mechanism, controlled centrally through a series of steps outwards towards periphery areas. The general coordination followed the process of officialising the work procedure up to its delivery to the user, with a rational division of tasks and the participation of other local authorities and national bodies (INCIS, INAIL, INPS). See: Omar Ottonelli, ed., *Il piano Fanfani INA-Casa: una risposta ancora attuale* (Firenze: Polistampa, 2013); Paola Di Biagi, ed., *La grande ricostruzione. Il Piano Ina-Casa e l'Italia degli anni '50* (Roma: Donzelli, 2001).

16 Casu, Lino and Sanna, *La città ricostruita. Le vicende urbanistiche in Sardegna nel secondo dopoguerra.*

## Creation and development of the Sant'Elia village: a new neighbourhood of "basic housing"

The area of Sant'Elia was the first neighbourhood in Cagliari to see the building of public housing after the Second World War. The new housing complex was located on the slopes of the promontory of the same name, about 4 kilometres south of the Cagliari's historic centre, and near the marshy area of San Bartolomeo, close to the coastline.[17] The area was associated with the historic production of the Royal salt mines, with the large prison dedicated to the forced labour in the salt pans themselves (the Wet Prison), as well as the site of interesting agricultural and land reclamations carried out both in the mid-nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century[18] [Fig. 1].

The area chosen for the new neighbourhood was deliberately distant from the historic centre of the old town, in an area with poor infrastructure and characterized by the presence of a small fishing village and the old Lazzaretto hospital, which had housed a high number of displaced people during and after the war.[19]

Despite being situated in a desirable environmental context, the area had historically been a place of segregation but to the town's post-war political classes it seemed natural to choose it as a "refuge area" in which to confine the city's poorer working class population in order to be able to conserve the central areas to build housing on demand for the middle-upper classes.[20]

It was a choice that reflected the more general growth of Cagliari immediately after the Second World War, where weak urban planning regulations reigned and a speculative global vision of planning was implemented, prioritising separation, segregation, and exclusion in their planning rationale. The first act of planning for the new residential nucleus dates back to the summer of 1950, when the city council of Cagliari decided to allocate 50 million lire of funds for the construction of "basic housing" for the homeless on the outskirts of the city.[21]

---

17 The area takes its name from the medieval cult of Sant'Elia to which a church on the promontory was dedicated, but which has now disappeared. The hill is today also called Sant'Ignazio, from the name of the fort built at the top in the Savoy era. See: Maria Adele Ibba, et al, "Indagini archeologiche sul capo Sant'Elia a Cagliari," *Quaderni. Rivista di Archeologia*, no. 28 (2017): 353-386.

18 For an accurate study of the area from a historical perspective and of the physical transformation of the territory in in terms of changing landscapes, see: Marco Cadinu, "Architettura e tecnologia nelle saline di Cagliari nell'800 e nel '900," in *Il tesoro delle città*, V, (Roma: Kappa, 2007), 99-113; Marco Cadinu, "*Cagliari, il recupero dell'area orientale. Storia del paesaggio agrario e archeologia industriale,*" in *Recupero urbano per la città del duemila. Ricerca ed Ambiente*, ed. Vito Biolchini and Roberto Paracchini (Cagliari: Demos, 1996), 56-64.

19 The Cagliari Lazzaretto was built in the seventeenth century, then renovated in the nineteenth century. It was initially a place for society's marginalised, near the coast to house people affected by infectious diseases and for the quarantine of goods, animals and travellers. During the Second World War it housed a large number of displaced people, becoming a chaotic space with precarious hygienic and health conditions. Subsequently abandoned, it was renovated at the end of the last century, then reopened to the public as a cultural centre. See: Giuseppe Dodero, *I lazzaretti. Epidemie e quarantena in Sardegna* (Cagliari: Aipsa, 2001). See also: www.comune.cagliari.it/portale/page/it/il_lazzaretto (last accessed November 2024).

20 The basic idea of the policy of the time was to «purge the central areas of a certain type of inhabitants, demolish the old housing and begin extensive urbanization programs». Quoted from Gian Mario Selis, *Produzione e consumo di sottoproletariato. Un ghetto urbano in Sardegna. Il Borgo S. Elia a Cagliari* (Cagliari: Edizioni della Torre, 1975), 34. See also: Maurizio Memoli and Raffaele Cattedra, "Un contre-lieu d'urbanité marginale. L'exemple du quartier de Sant'Elia (Cagliari)," in in *Marges urbaines et néolibéralisme en Méditerranée*, ed. Nora Semmoud, Bénédicte Florin, Olivier Legros and Florence Troin (Tours: PUFR, 2014), 125-144.

21 Resolution no. 26 "Construction of basic residential houses with 50 million lire financed by the Regional Administration" of the City Council of Cagliari n. 7 of 10 July 1950 (HAMC, Cat. I, Cl. VII, Resolutions of the Municipal Council, Council from 14 March 1950 to 23 November 1954, 14-15).



1

The cost was sustained by the local regional government, thanks to provisions guaranteed by Regional Law no.12 of March 9th, 1950.

The new houses were to make it possible to provide shelter firstly to the displaced people who were temporarily housed at the 'Is Mirrionis' military barracks, so that these could then be used as an infectious disease division of the nearby "Santissima Trinità" Hospital.

On 29 August 1950, Cagliari's town council announced a «public tender for the construction of basic social housing» initially to be built in the 'Bingia Matta' area, on the northern outskirts of the city of Cagliari. The municipal technical office, which prepared the tender, indicated building "types" that the competitors in the competition would be obliged to use in the development and execution of the project, to be presented together with a project outline for carrying out the works. Two companies participated in the tender: A company run by Engineer Ferdinando Martelli of Pisa[22] and the "Società Generale Immobiliare of Rome"[23]. The Administration awarded the contract to the former, but then subsequently

22 The company of Ferdinando Martelli son of Giovanni, from Pisa, was very active in Sardinia after the Second World War, as can be seen from the electricity supplies granted to the company (see Enel Historical Archive Cagliari, Ex Compartimento Angelo Omodeo, Società Elettrica Sarda, Distribution and sale of electricity, Construction Company Martelli Engineer Ferdinando). The same company was awarded a contract in Sassari for the construction of a house for the employees of the Chamber of Commerce in the Prunizzedda area in 1951 and another contract for the construction of a house for employees based on the architect's design. Antonio Simon of 1956 (Historical Archive of the Chamber of Commerce of Sassari, Cat. V, b. 238, fasc. 22 and b. 244, fasc. 42). Ferdinando Martelli was the owner together with his parents of some lots in the Cisanello business area in the city of Pisa, as shown in the expropriation plan for the Executive Intervention Plan of the 1980s (cfr. Archivio del Comune di Pisa, *Luca Pasquinucci Architetto, Pisa, Piano Esecutivo di Intervento in Cisanello «Centro Direzionale», Stralcio A,* 1982).

23 Società Generale Immobiliare was among the most important construction companies operating in Italy from the end of the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century. Initially established in Turin in 1862, it began working in Rome in 1880, becoming a protagonist in the construction of important projects thanks also to the control of Sogene, Società Generale per Lavori e Pubbliche Utilità. In the 1930s, controlled by the Special Administration of the Holy See, it began to expand further, and after the Second World War participated in the construction of the largest residential complexes in Rome and important architecture in Italy and around the world, including some designed by Luigi Moretti (the Esso and Società Generale Immobiliare buildings in EUR, the Stock Exchange Tower in Montreal and the Watergate complex in Washington) in addition to other notable works such as the Velasca Tower in Milan. See: Paolo Puzzoli, ed., *La Società generale immobiliare Sogene: Storia, archivio, testimonianze* (Roma: Palombi Editori, 2003).

Fig. 1

Aerial photograph of the city of Cagliari, 2019. Highlighted, Borgo Sant'Elia, at the foot of the hill of the same name (source: Autonomous Region of Sardinia, Sardegna 'Foto Aeree portal').




received a bid from the latter to have "48 real estate units" constructed by one of the companies under its control, Sogene. These were to be added to the 50 initially planned and implemented following a deferred payment agreement over three subsequent years. The offer was considered advantageous by the municipal administration, as on the one hand it meant obtaining approximately double the expected amount of housing, thus satisfying the applications received by the municipal council offices,[24] and at the same time organising payment in several instalments would provide the time needed to find new budget resources.[25]

Having deemed the offer acceptable, the administration initially explored the possibility of building this new group of houses on land «located between the two municipal roads "is Maglias" and the "is Corralis"». However, the negotiations fell through and the decision was made to build all the new units – both those awarded to the Martelli company and those agreed with Sogene – in the suburb of Sant'Elia, which was already municipal property and partly urbanised.[26] This choice gave rise to the principle of defining the neighbourhood, later renamed Borgo Sant'Elia **[Fig. 2]**.

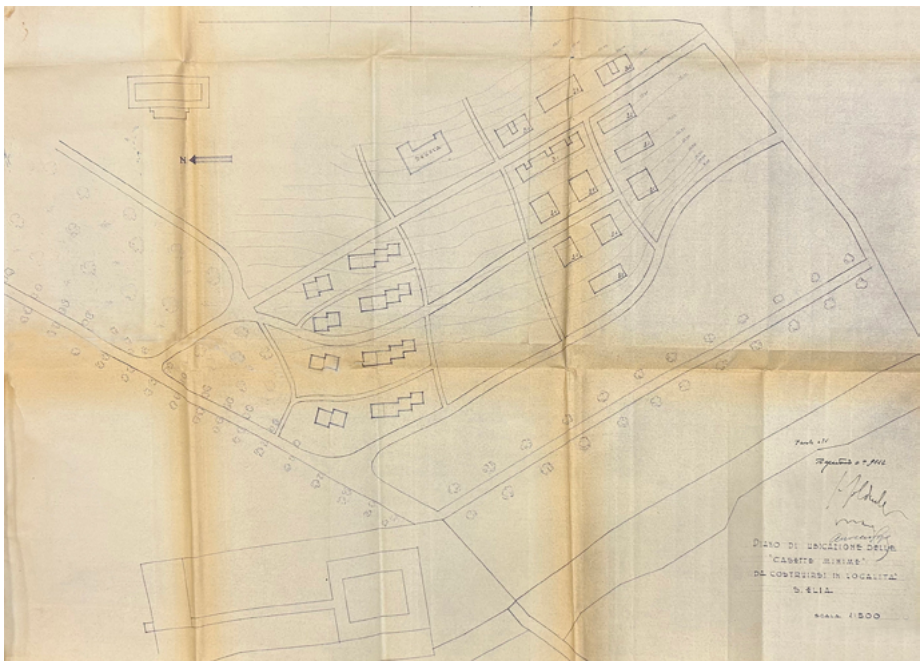
However, the continual changing of minds regarding location was indicative of the administration's weakness and uncertainty and indeed reflected the absence of any general planning impetus that might have better guided urban planning choices. In fact, the reconstruction plan provided no real detailed planning valuable for directing the choices of layout and organisation of the new urban spaces; nor did it outline a basic supply of public services, something

Fig. 2
Plan of Borgo Sant'Elia in Cagliari, 1956. The configuration, which can be deduced from the drawings attached to the contracts from the mid-1950s, shows the housing already built in 1956 and those still in the planning phase, including the church and parish structures (graphic by the author).

24 This refers in particular to the recommendation advanced by Councillor Tola in the City Council meeting of 10 July 1950. See Resolution no. 26 "Construction of basic residential houses for 50 million financed by the Regional Administration" of the City Council of Cagliari n. 7 of 10 July 1950 (HAMC, Cat. I, Cl. VII, Resolutions of the Municipal Council, Council from 14 March 1950 to 23 November 1954, 14-15).

25 Resolution no. 49 "Construction of basic housing" of the City Council of Cagliari n. 7 of 18 December 1950 (HAMC, Cat. I, Cl. VII, Resolutions of the Municipal Council, Council from 14 March 1950 to 23 November 1954, 53).

26 Resolution no. 49 "Construction of basic housing" of the City Council of Cagliari n. 7 of 18 December 1950.



which would have significant repercussions in the history of the Sant'Elia neighbourhood.

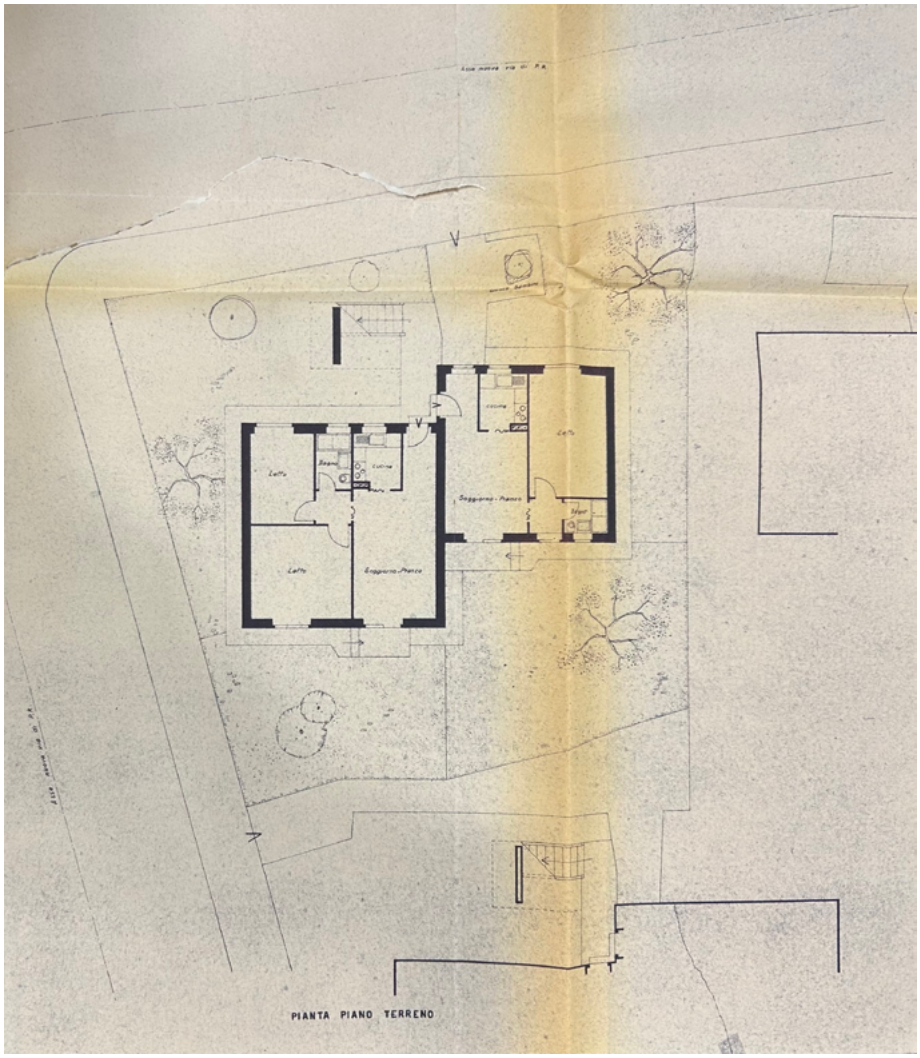
The contract with Impresa Martelli was stipulated on 17 March 1951,[27] while the contract negotiated with Società Generale Immobiliare di Roma dates to 16 April 1951.[28] The executive working drawings of the latter were created in November 1950 and were attached to the contract. They suggested restoring the original layout of the village of Sant'Elia, presumably following negotiations between the parties [Fig. 3]. The area identified for the urbanization is just east of the Lazzaretto, on the slopes of the Sant'Elia hill, in a slightly inclined area. The new graphic planimetric mapping system simply highlighted the new network of streets, the planned buildings, and the existing buildings, including the Lazzaretto. Three main road arteries outlined the layout for the road system, and approximately followed contour lines. These were interrupted by sinuous streets arranged grid-like to the former, thus creating large blocks. Further roads innervated the area with two separate building complexes, one to the north (that of the Sogene contract) and one to the south (the Martelli contract), separated by two large areas with no specific use decided but at the time probably intended as a possible site for services still to be finalised. The only service indicated was a school, which was never built, located higher above the complex.

From an architectural point of view, however, the two housing complexes differed somewhat in unit design, though were all contained within the two floors above ground, according to specifications that followed the criteria

Fig. 3
Location plan for the "basic public housing" to be built in the S. Elia area, tender for the construction of houses for the homeless, Executive Project, Società Generale Immobiliare, 15 November 1950 (source: Archivio Storico Comune di Cagliari, Contracts, n. 1676, 16 April 1951, Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract No. 9532, Contract for the construction of 48 council houses in the suburb of S. Elia – formerly Lazzareto. Sogene Company, Table 1).

27 Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract n. 9462, Contract for the construction of two housing construction projects awarded to the 'Impresa Martelli Ing. Ferdinando' in the Sant'Elia suburb (ex Lazzaretto) (HAMC, Contract no. 1673, 17 March 1951). Added to this are two additional contracts stipulated in the following months: Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Procurement Contract. n. 9572 and no. 10494 (HAMC, Contracts, n. 1673, 17 March 1951). The signing of the new contracts had become necessary mainly due to the removal of the building fences and other minimal changes.

28 Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract n. 9532, Construction contract for 48 minimum social housing units in the suburb of S. Elia (formerly Lazzaretto). Soc. Sogene (HAMC, Contracts, n. 1676, 16 April 1951).




4




5

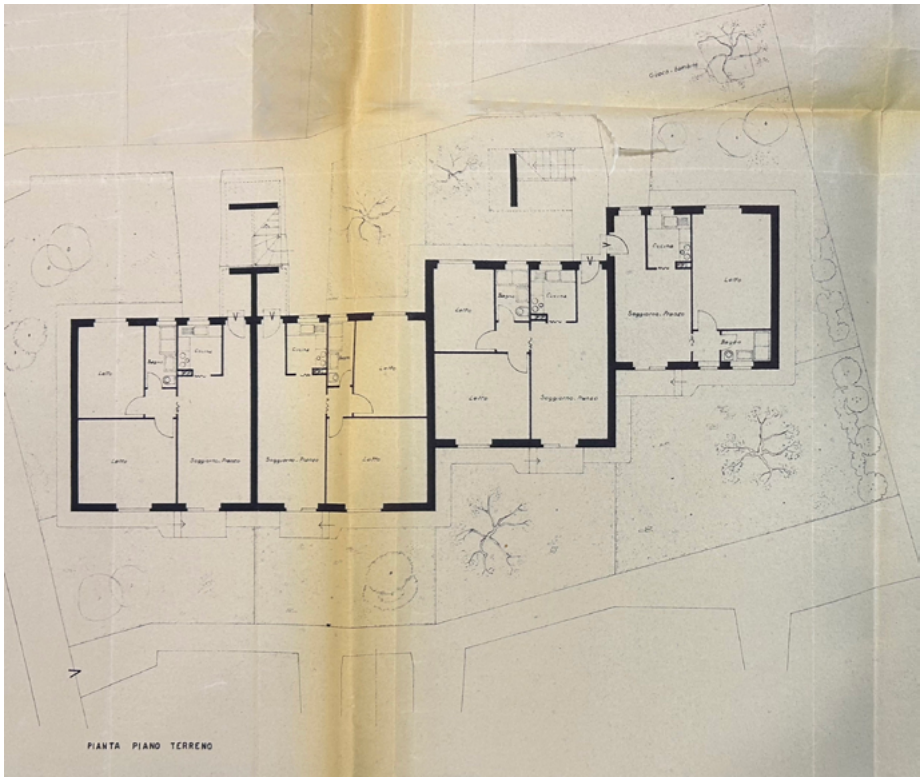
established in the first of the four manuals published by INACASA, with the title Worker Employment Growth Plan. Homes for workers.[29]

The proposed building typologies took advantage of the experiments carried out by the modern movement before the war and tended, in addition to architec-

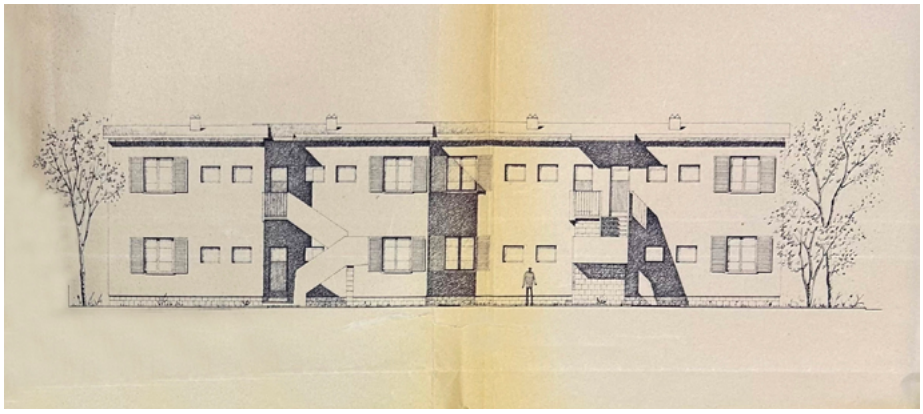
Fig. 4
Ground floor plan of Type m+P, Contract for the construction of basic social housing for the homeless, Executive Project, Società Generale Immobiliare, 15 November 1950 (source: Archivio Storico Comune di Cagliari, Contracts, n. 1676, 16 April 1951, Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract No. 9532, Construction contract for 48 social housing units in the suburb of S. Elia – formerly Lazzareto. Sogene Company, Table 6).

Fig. 5
East and west elevation of Type m+P, Contract tender for the construction of basic houses for the homeless, Executive Project, Società Generale Immobiliare, 15 November 1950 (source: Archivio Storico Comune di Cagliari, Contracts, n. 1676, 16 April 1951, Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract No. 9532, Contract for the construction of 48 social housing units in the suburb of S. Elia – formerly Lazzareto. Sogene building company, Table 7).

29 INACASA published two dossiers in the first seven years of activity (1949-1956) and two in the second (1956-1963). The first dossier contained suggestions, rules and outlines for the development and presentation of projects. Building tenders (1949) specified the design of the housing, detailed according to four typologies of building: single or attached blocks of multi-storey houses, single-storey and two-storey terraced house. In the second dossier, "Suggestions, examples and rules for urban planning", blueprints for projects (1950) imagined the creation of whole neighbourhoods from a perspective of extensive urban planning. A third dossier, "Guide for the examination of INA-CASA construction projects" to be carried out in the second seven-year period (1956) was communicated as an update of the indications already published. The last dossier, "Regulations for the construction of the second seven-year period" extracted from resolutions of the Committee for the implementation of the Plan and the Board of Directors of the Ina-Casa management (1957), addressed the economic, financial, and procedural aspects of the plan for the implementation of building works.




6



7

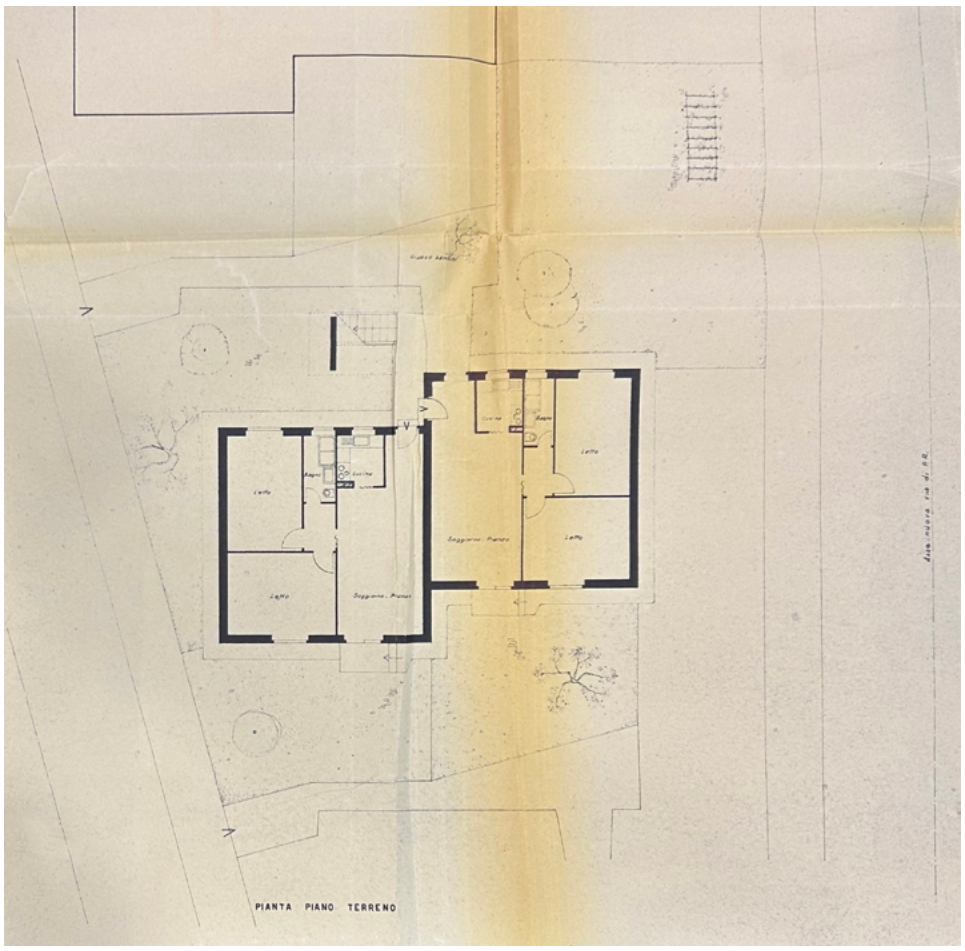
Fig. 6
Ground floor plan of Type M+M+m+P, Contract tender for the construction of basic houses for the homeless, Executive Project, Società Generale Immobiliare, 15 November 1950 (source: Archivio Storico Comune di Cagliari, Contracts, n. 1676, 16 April 1951, Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract No. 9532, Contract for the construction of 48 basic council houses in the suburb of S. Elia – formerly Lazzareto. Sogene Company, Table 2).

Fig. 7
East elevation of Type M+M+m+P, Competition for the construction of basic houses for the homeless, Executive Project, Società Generale Immobiliare, 15 November 1950 (source: Archivio Storico Comune di Cagliari, Contracts, n. 1676, 16 April 1951, Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract No. 9532, Contract for the construction of 48 social housing units in the suburb of S. Elia – formerly Lazzareto. Sogene Company, Table 3).

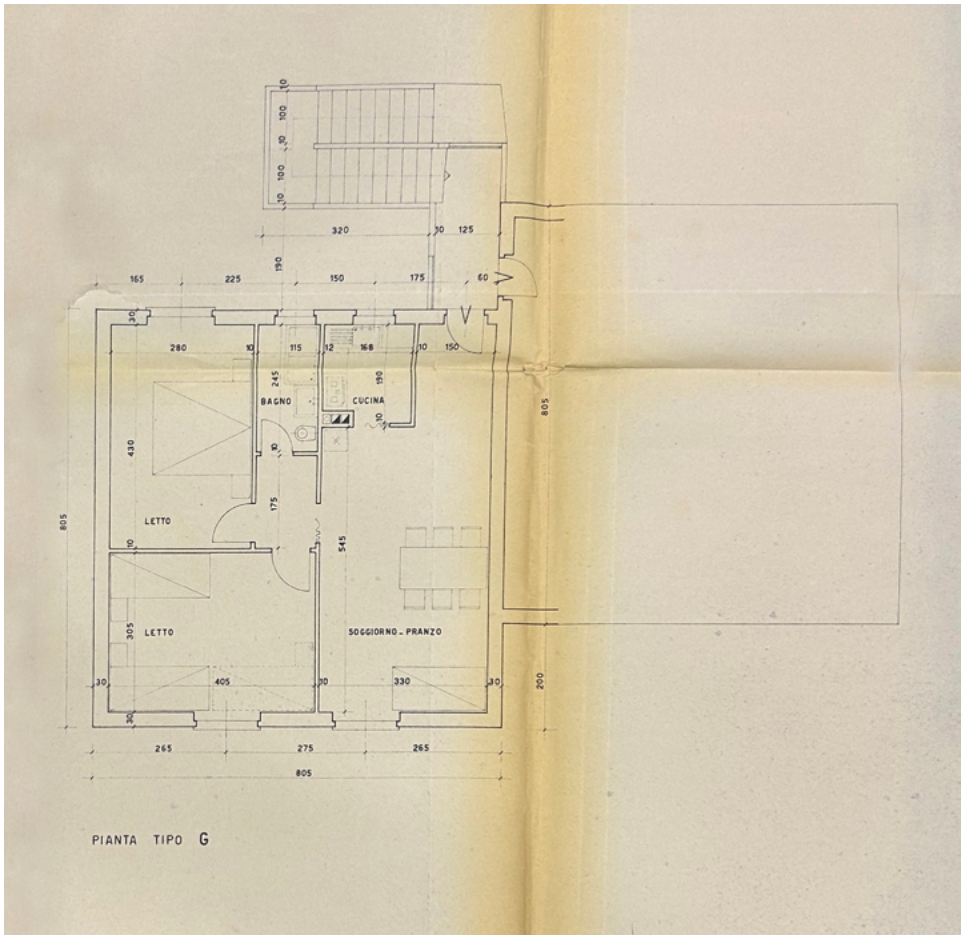
tural renewal and modernisation, towards standardization of building processes and the easy replication of the existing design typology. One of the reflections of this evolution can be found in the proposal for maintain essential building standards which, in Italy in the immediate post-war period, had as its first and most influential reference the Architect's Manual published by the CNR and USIS (1946).[30]

The Martelli Company project included 5 types of houses on two floors: type A/1 and type A/2 with four apartments; the A/3 type with eight accommodation units; type B/1 with six accommodation units and type B/2 with four accommodation units, making a total of 12 buildings. All types had a pitched roof and were built in a reinforced concrete frame, brick and concrete floors, plastered brick walls and wooden window frames. The same construction characteristics were adopted in the project put forward by Sogene, characterized by a more refined, albeit simple work of recombining the typologies. The architectural plan was

30 National research council, *Manuale dell'architetto* (Roma: USIS, 1946).




8




9

Fig. 8
Ground floor plan of Type G+G, Contract tender for the construction of basic houses for the homeless, Executive Project, Società Generale Immobiliare, 15 November 1950 (source: Archivio Storico Comune di Cagliari, Contracts, n. 1676, 16 April 1951, Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract No. 9532, Contract for the construction of 48 social housing units in the suburb of S. Elia – formerly Lazzareto. Sogene Company, Table 4).

Fig. 9
Detailed plan of Type G, Contract tender for the construction of basic houses for the homeless, Executive Project, Società Generale Immobiliare, 15 November 1950 (source: Archivio Storico Comune di Cagliari, Contracts, n. 1676, 16 April 1951, Municipality of Cagliari, Contract of Rep. contract no. 9532, Contract for the construction of 48 council houses in the suburb of S. Elia – formerly Lazzareto. Sogene Company, Table 8).



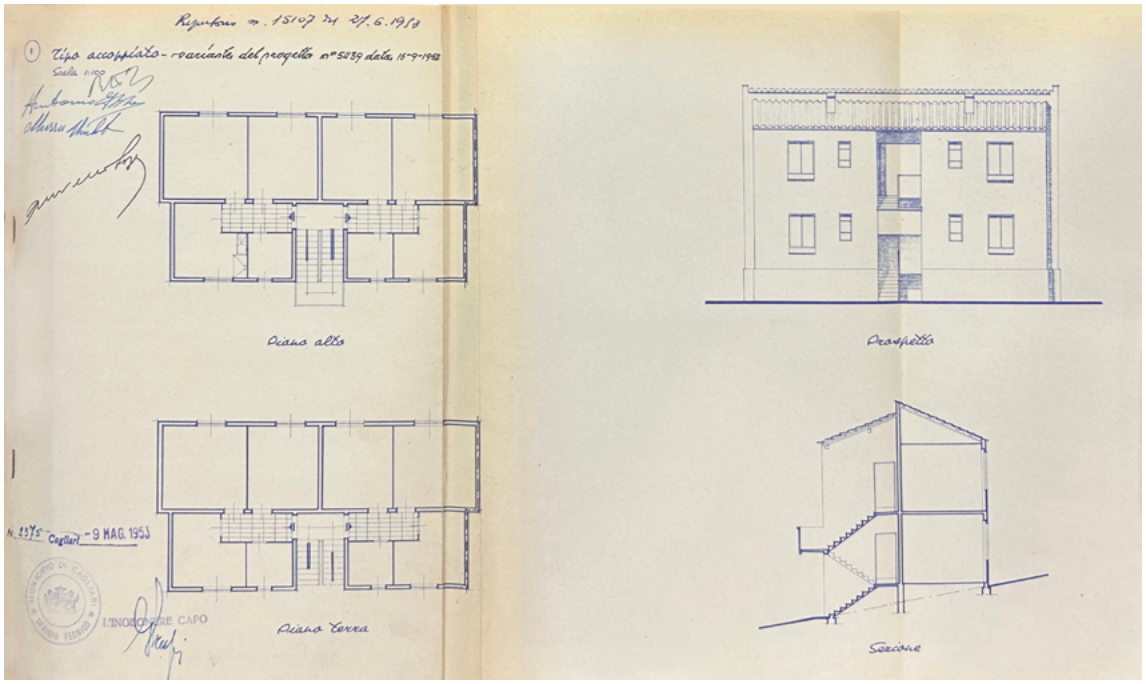

divided into three main combinations of accommodation units: m+P type **[Fig. 4, 5]**, type M+M+m+P **[Fig. 6, 7]**, and type G+G **[Fig. 8, 9]**. Each unit, identified by a letter, was designed on a square plan which rationalizes the internal space distribution to the maximum and features one or two bedrooms in addition to the living-dining room, the kitchen, and the bathroom. The accommodation units of the same size were stacked in pairs on top of each other and placed next to others along the perimeter wall with a slight planimetric staggering. The choice gives an interesting compositional variation which is reflected in the articulation of the elevations but essentially allows the respective entrances to the accommodation to be opened onto an external common space in the corner, helping to rationalize the service spaces.[31]

The new accommodation was intended primarily for displaced people who had been housed in the buildings to be demolished in Via Pessina, which was an area covered by the "Intervention Plan for Economical Social Housing" for the construction of accommodation to be used for employees of various public authorities operating in the city. The project for this area was carried out by Adalberto Libera between 1949 and 1952[32] **[Fig. 10]**. While it had already drawn the attention of historiographers, the plan has been the subject of renewed interest in the light of the analysis of the Sant'Elia village conducted here. The several common characteristics between the two building projects have provided renewed interest in seeking further comparisons and fresh considerations. The first concerns the Società Generale Immobiliare of Rome, which together with

31 The documents of the executive project are contained in 10 tables attached to the contract plus an additional variation. See: Comune di Cagliari, Contratto di Appalto rep. n. 9532, *Appalto costruzione 48 case minime popolari sobborgo S. Elia (ex Lazzareto). Soc. Sogene* (HAMC, Contratti, n. 1676, 16 aprile 1951).

32 Paolo Sanjust, *Modernismi. Storie di architetture e costruzioni del '900 in Sardegna* (Roma: Aracne, 2017), 163-176; Paolo Sanjust, "Il nucleo edilizio di via Pessina a Cagliari," in *L'architettura INA Casa (1949-1963). Aspetti e problemi di conservazione e recupero*, ed. Rosalia Vittorini, Riccardo Capomolla and Sergio Poretti (Roma: Gangemi, 2004), 140-151.

Fig. 10
Panorama of Cagliari from via Pessina, in the foreground the accommodation of the IEEP project by Adalberto Libera, 1949-1952 (postcard).

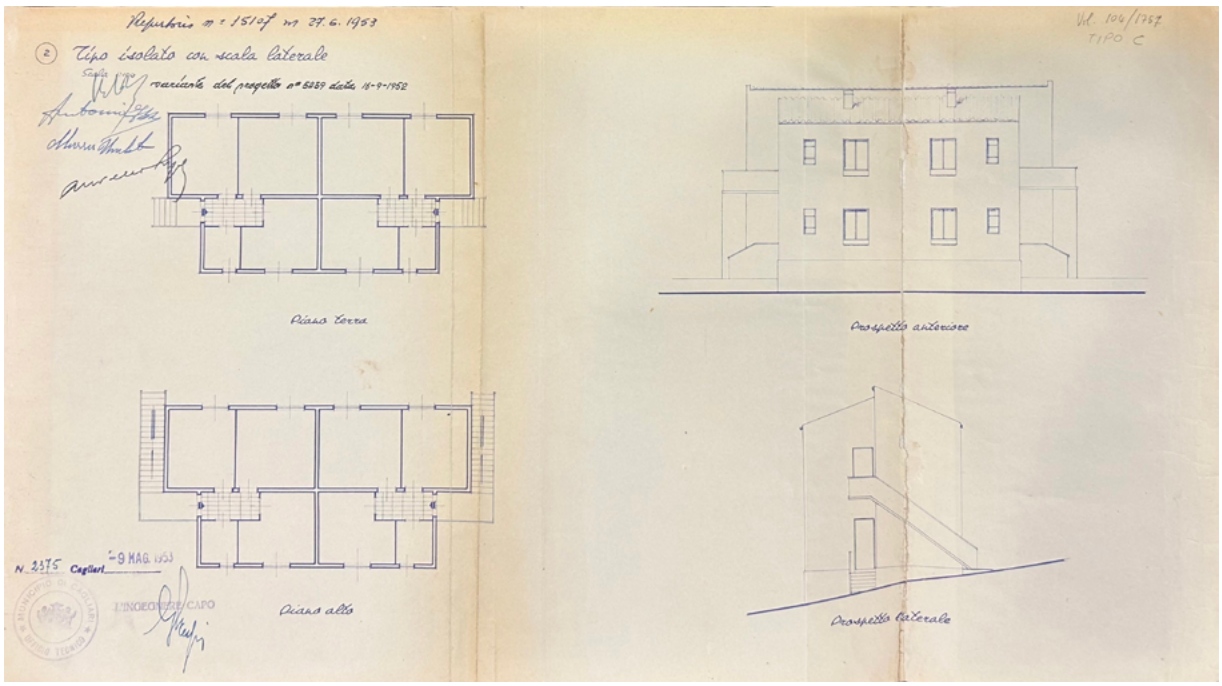



INAIL, the Chamber of Commerce of Cagliari and the Società Elettrica Sarda formed the Economical Public Building Institute, promoter of the neighbourhood of the same name in via Pessina. This is interesting to note because it highlights the involvement of the Società Generale Immobiliare in both the Sant'Elia projects as well as those in via Pessina and confirms how at the time it was part of a broader geography of the company's Sardinian projects. The Società Generale Immobiliare was undoubtedly an able player in the technical panorama of the island's economy.[33] The second aspect concerns the architectural features of the building project. Adalberto Libera designed a garden city of 41 buildings with a total of 172 accommodation units and positioned the buildings at 45 degrees rotation compared to the road front, in order to achieve optimum solar thermal orientation, and to create a series of green spaces at the same time. A single building scheme, appropriately varied, generates a settlement divided into three types of buildings (type A, B and C), which appear as plastered prisms, pierced by large loggias and plastically composed in the urban space available.[34] Libera seems to have skilfully applied the dictates of the INACASA manuals and although the final outcome appeared airier than Sogene's project for Sant'Elia, it used the same original design matrices. Even the project developed by the Roman company's technicians succeeded in creating a continuous variation starting from an initial, elementary typology, building a formation of 8 units arranged in the lots planned on the northern front of the village. The simple manual application was anything but banal and found solutions for optimizing

Fig. 11
Plans and elevations of a duplex model, Variant to project no. 5439, 15 September 1952 (source: Archivio Storico Comune di Cagliari, Contracts, n. 1757, 27 June 1953, Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract n. 15107, Construction works contract n. 13 buildings with 52 apartments in Borgo Sant'Elia, table attached).

33 The Company also had a regional office in Cagliari and the works in Sardinia included the damming of the middle section of the Flumendosa river (1951) and the Alsar aluminum production complex (1968). See: Matteo Costantino, "L'opera della Sogene," in *La Società generale immobiliare Sogene: Storia, archivio, testimonianze*, ed. Paolo Puzzoli (Roma: Palombi Editori, 2003), 159-191 (particularly pages 163, 175, 181).

34 Sanjust, "Il nucleo edilizio di via Pessina a Cagliari," 140-151.



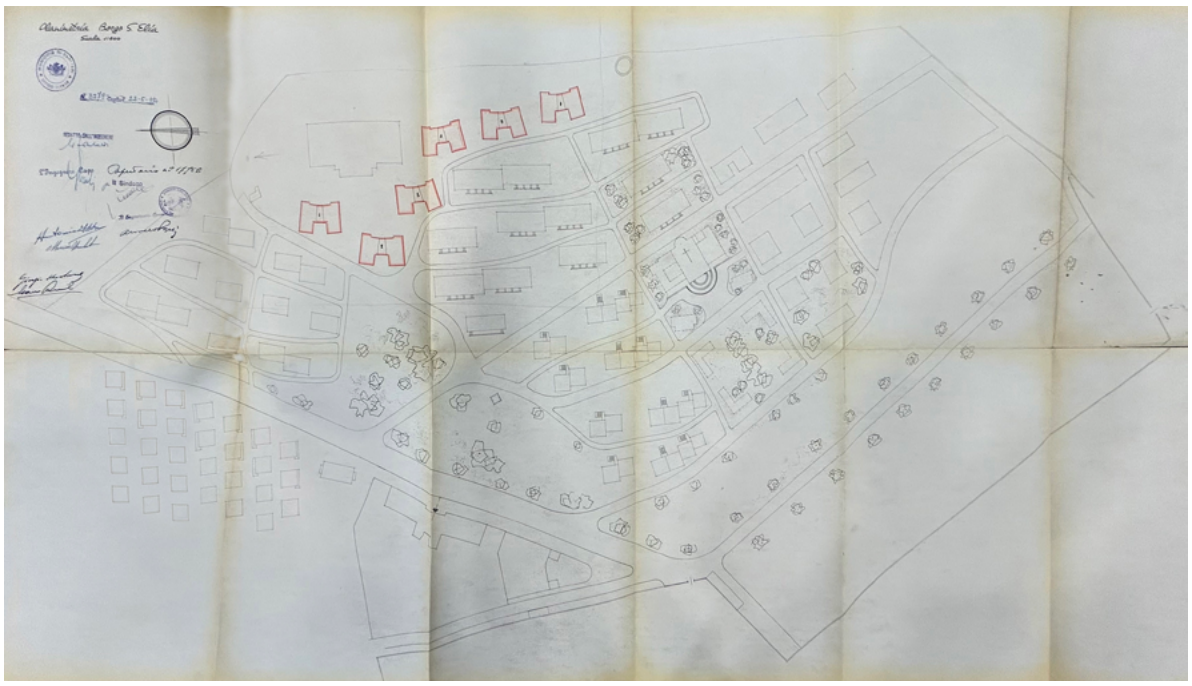

structural features of the buildings by staggering the volumes and reconnecting them with the external staircases. These are in general minimally rotated following the level curving, giving the whole a character that is not excessively static. As was the case in Libera's project, the connection to the ground of the buildings was achieved using a large limestone plinth, simulating an ashlar base, which detaches the volume from the ground, demonstrating once again the convergence towards a series of technical choices and common expressions. However, the different perspectives of the two designs allowed Libera greater structural flexibility and easier access to funding. The architect from Trentino was able to arrange internal spaces with fewer constraints than the Sant'Elia accommodation units, introducing elements such as the corner loggias, which used square meters for non-functional spaces but proved useful for enhancing the quality of the accommodation, both in terms of liveability and the expressive features of architecture. The decision to build four floors also made the structures in via Pessina more streamlined and modern compared to those planned in Sant'Elia, plainly echoing the traditional size of the village house.

The first building project for housing that started in Sant'Elia in 1951 was followed by subsequent developments that aimed to continue the urbanization of the area and creation of additional residential areas. In the same year the Martelli company built an electrical transformation and control cabin,[35] and in 1954 the Picciau Cabras company carried out the bituminisation of the access road to the village while the construction of the electrical systems for 13 of the new buildings continued.[36]

Fig. 12
Plans and elevations of single detached units with lateral staircase; variant to project no. 5439, 15 September 1952 (source: Archivio Storico Comune di Cagliari, Contracts, n. 1757, 27 June 1953, Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract n. 15107, Construction works contract n. 13 buildings with 52 apartments in Borgo Sant'Elia, table attached).

35 Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract n. 11418, Act regarding piece work for the construction of a transformation cabin in the suburb of S. Elia "Lazzaretto". Impresa Martelli Ferdinando (HAMC, Contracts, n. 1702, 29 December 1951).

36 Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract n. 16446, Surface bitumen covering of the road to Borgo S. Elia.



Between 1952 and 1953, a new set of residential buildings was built further uphill from the first two residential complexes, in place of the initially planned neighbourhood school. The new buildings were laid out in rows using the A3 typology of the Martelli company's project and included 13 new blocks, 8 of which are joined together. The new complex developed the model of flat roofed residential blocks, also focusing on a more rational distribution of internal spaces inside the accommodation units, served by external stairwells.

In 1953, 13 new buildings were erected by the Ibba and Paulis construction company further north, along the main access road to the village from San Bartolomeo; there were a total of 52 new homes in all.[37] Two different models were suggested: the paired or semi-detached type **[Fig. 11]** and the detached type with lateral staircase **[Fig. 12]**. Both accommodate two mirror image accommodation units per floor, on two levels. The main difference between the two typologies of design was in the position of the stairs, laterally or centrally placed in relation to the complex, which in turn determined a difference in the layout of the internal rooms. The simple finishes and double-pitched roofs, similar to the first buildings in the neighbourhood built by the Martelli company, contributed to creating the small village atmosphere of the complex.

On the opposite side of the access road to the neighbourhood, further residences were laid out in parallel, 30 square-plan buildings with one and two floors, in addition to a series of 5 residential blocks, rigorously following building manual recommendations. Between 1954 and 1955, 12 new housing structures were built after two different contracts were awarded, respectively to

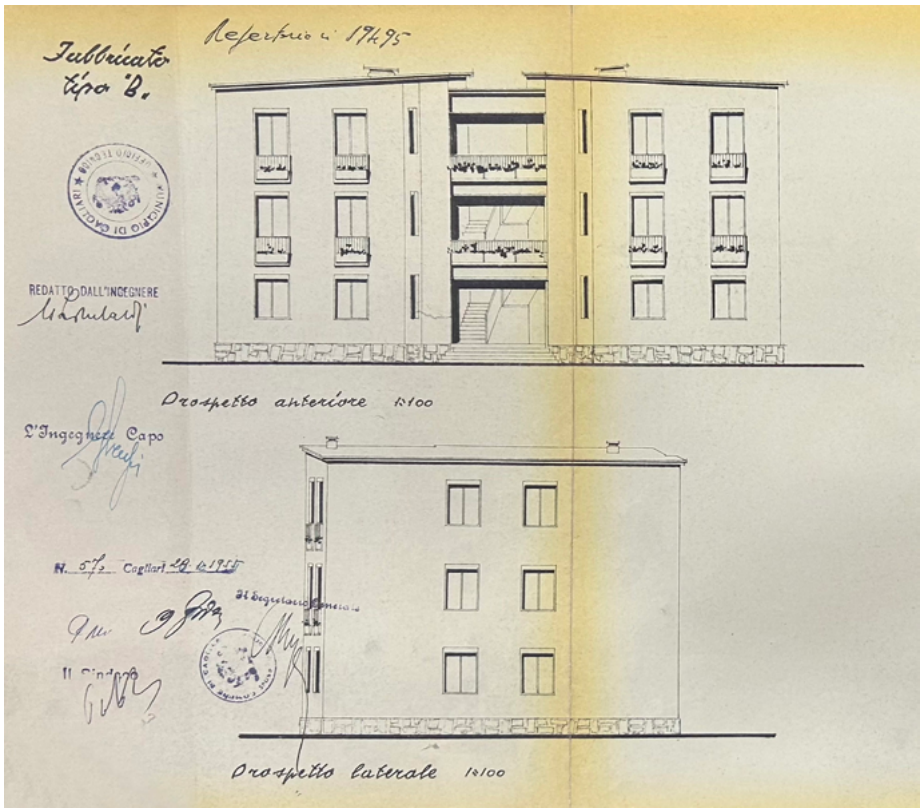
Fig. 13
Plan of Borgo S. Elia, Construction of 6 buildings, totalling 48 accommodation units in Borgo S. Elia, Engineer Lombardo, Municipality of Cagliari Technical Office, 22 May 1954 (source: Archivio Storico Comune di Cagliari, Contracts, n. 1811, 15 July 1954, Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract n. 19353, Contract for the construction of 6 residential buildings in the village of S Elia. Building company: Ibba Antonio and Paulis Beniamino, Table 1).

Impresa Picciau Cabras Mario (HAMC, Contracts, n. 1782, 9 February 1954); Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract n. 16715, Construction work on the electrical systems in the 13 buildings in the 'Borgo S. Elia'. Manca Alessandro and Fantini Alfredo construction company (HAMC, Contracts, n. 1793, 10 May 1954).

37 Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract n. 15107, Construction works contract for 13 buildings with 52 accommodation units in the 'Borgo Sant'Elia' (HAMC, Contracts, n. 1757, 27 June 1953).




14



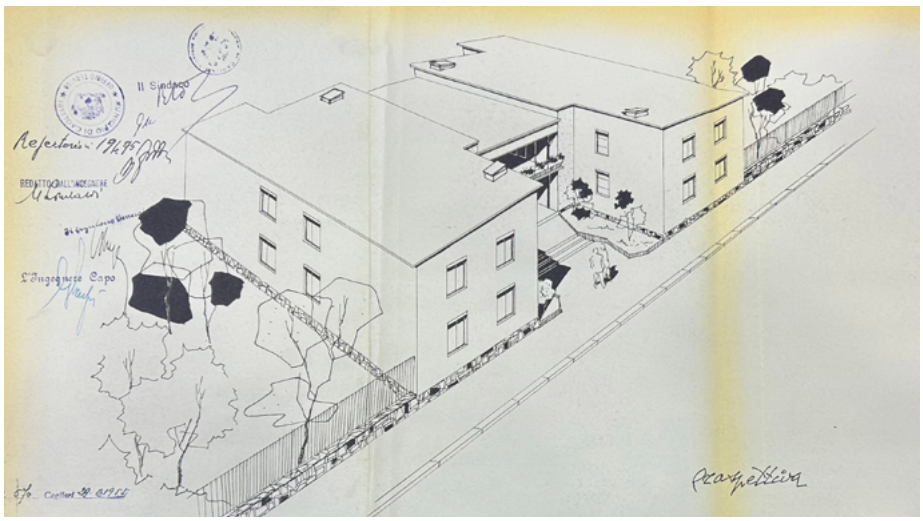

15

the Ibba Paulis company and to the 'Imprese Riunte Costruzioni' company.[38] These are particularly noteworthy because they introduce a design variation to the complex and demarcate the final stage of the expansion of the village. The 12 buildings were divided into two groups of 6, respectively located to the north and south of the urban layout, according to a design plan that recommended incorporating the new buildings within the pre-agreed building area **[Fig. 13]**. The design created by the engineer Lombardi of the Technical Office of the Municipality of Cagliari, included variants A and B, on two and three floors respectively **[Fig. 14, 15, 16]**. The planimetric arrangement of the two typologies is the same, i.e. two mirror-image pairs of accommodation units per floor

38 Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract n. 19353, Contract for construction of n. 6 residential buildings in the S. Elia village. Ibba Antonio and Paulis Beniamino constructions (HAMC, Contracts, n. 1811, 15 July 1954); Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract n. 19455, Construction of n. 6 buildings for accommodation in Borgo S. Elia. Built by 'Imprese Riunite Costruzioni' (HAMC, Contracts, n. 1848, 9 May 1955).

Fig. 14
Elevations and sections Building type A, Construction of 6 buildings, totalling 48 accommodation units in Borgo S. Elia, Engineer Lombardo, Municipality of Cagliari Technical Office, 28 December 1954 (source: Archivio Storico Comune di Cagliari, Contracts, n. 1848, 9 May 1955, Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Procurement Contract n. 19455, Construction of 6 residential housing buildings in Borgo S. Elia; Company: Imprese Riunite Costruzioni).

Fig. 15
Elevations of building type B, construction of 6 buildings, totalling 48 accommodation units in Borgo S. Elia, Engineer Lombardo, Municipality of Cagliari Technical Office, 28 December 1954 (source: Archivio Storico Comune di Cagliari, Contracts, n. 1848, 9 May 1955, Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Procurement Contract n. 19455, Construction of 6 residential housing buildings in Borgo S. Elia; Company: Imprese Riunite Costruzioni).




connected by a trapezoidal distribution space. This design choice gave each building a "butterfly" shape, comparable to that suggested in the same period by Maurizio Sacripanti in the INACASA complex of Is Mirrionis, in Cagliari.[39] In this case too, the planimetric system has symmetrical wings, obtained from the interlocking of two rectangular buildings rotated at 15 degrees, connected by a central staircase which distributes access to 4 accommodation units per floor, over a total of 5 floors. Sacripanti's project showed finer detail and complexity than that of Sant'Elia and, more generally, a different degree of compositional and architectural maturity. However, the almost contemporary research on the same typology once again shows how the design matrices proposed for the Sant'Elia village fell in line with recommendations in contemporary debate on the most suitable typology in designing "homes for all".

Between 1956 and 1957 the village took on the shape and characteristics that it has broadly retained until today, plus various improvements made subsequently.[40] The accommodation units were completed and at the same time further infrastructure building was carried out on the complex in a meagre attempt to improve the provision of services.[41] One important addition was the parish church and its adjacent properties, which would host the neighbourhood schools.[42] The construction of the church became fundamental in creating a

39 Antonello Sanna, "Il nucleo edilizio Is Mirrionis a Cagliari (1953-56)," in *L'architettura INA-CASA 1949-1963. Aspetti e problemi di conservazione e recupero,* ed. Rosalia Vittorini, Riccardo Capomolla and Sergio Poretti (Roma: Gangemi, 2004), 164-173.

40 At the end of the 1950s there were 512 apartments, built thanks to a total financing of 475 million lire, contributed to largely by the Municipality of Cagliari and the Sardinian Region. 470 families (around 2400 people) were housed here; they belonged to the weakest sections of the population, not only of the city but of the province of Cagliari as a whole. See: Selis, *Produzione e consumo di sottoproletariato*, 22-23.

41 Among the works assigned in the years 1956-1957 were the waterproofing of the roofs of the houses, the construction of water pipes and the maintenance of the recently built nursery school. See Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Procurement Contract. n. 23516, Piecework contract for: waterproofing works on terraces of small houses in the suburb of S. Elia. Impresa Loi Salvatore (HAMC, Contracts, n. 1933, 22 November 1956); Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract n. 26409, Contract for water pipeline works in the Bonaria, Poetto, Borgo S. Elia and S. Bartolomeo military areas. C.E.L.P.I Soc. per Az. company – Rome (HAMC, Contracts, n. 1963, 7 May 1957); Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract n. 27063, Piece rate act: Ordinary and emergency maintenance work on the Borgo Sant'Elia nursery school. Company: Becucci Antonio (HAMC, Contracts, n. 2019, 23 December 1957).

42 In the first decades of the neighbourhood's life, roads, green spaces, and adequate connections with the city were lacking. A single tram line connected the neighbourhood with the historic centre, with an infrequent daily service. The only services present were the primary school and the middle school, housed in the parish premises, along with a nursery school. There were no pharmacies, and the only health facilities consisted of a municipal

Fig. 16
Perspective of a type A Building, Construction of 6 buildings, making a total of 48 accommodation units in 'Borgo S. Elia', Engineer Lombardo, Technical Office of the Municipality of Cagliari, 28 December 1954 (source: Archivio Storico Comune di Cagliari, Contracts, n. 1848, 9 May 1955, Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract n. 19455, Construction of 6 buildings for accommodation units in Borgo S. Elia; Company: Imprese Riunite Costruzioni).



17



18



19

village image, which generally reflected renewed Italian urban planning landscapes of a neorealist nature **[Fig. 17, 18, 19].** Despite the serious detailed planning and the continuous addition of haphazard building ideas with uncoordinated projects and contracts, the final visual aspect of the village proved to be very fitting to that "ideology of the village" much discussed in the vast landscape of the post-war reconstruction process in Italy.[43]

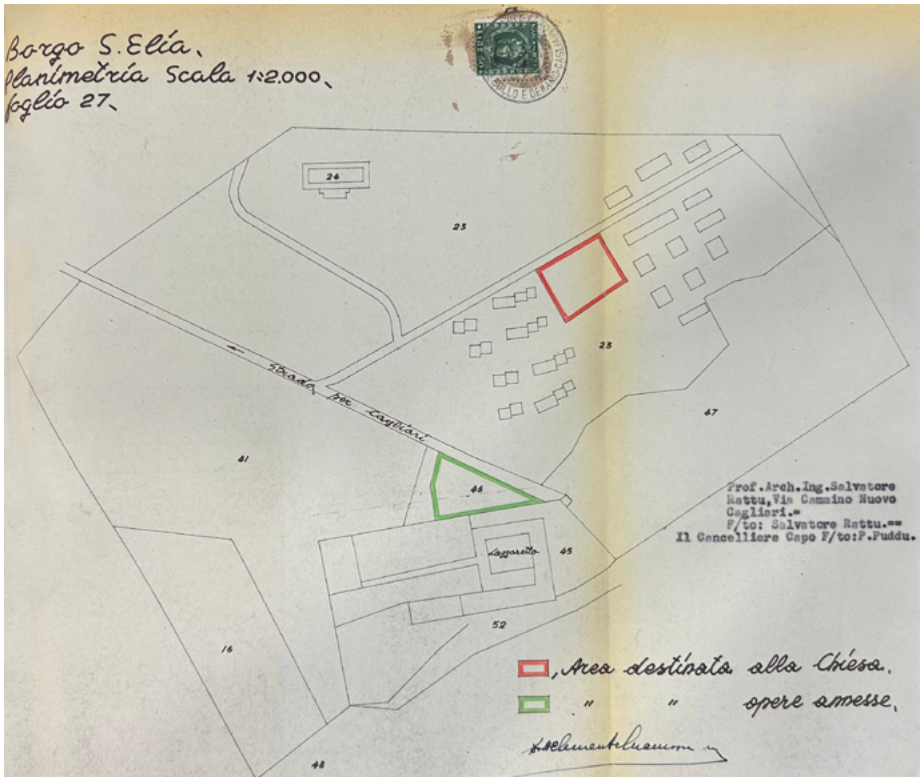
Fig. 17
Cagliari, historical photo of Borgo Sant'Elia taken from the hill (private archive).

Fig. 18
Cagliari, Borgo Sant'Elia taken from the reclaimed area of San Bartolomeo (historical photo taken from the web-documentary "Sant'Elia. Fragment of a communal space"; project coordinated by Maurizio Memoli).

Fig. 19
Cagliari, Borgo Sant'Elia taken from the hill (historical photo taken from the web-documentary "Sant'Elia. Fragment of a communal; space", project coordinated by Maurizio Memoli)

health officer who attended daily and some doctors who had their own clinics that only operated for a few hours a day. See: Santucciu, *La storia di Cagliari nel dopoguerra tra processi urbanistici e conflitti sociali*, 65.

43 The neorealist approach in Italian architecture of the 1950s aimed to build new working class neighbourhoods whose social environment would be akin to that of a traditional village. It adopted a "poor" approach to building, using materials found on site and a low-skilled but numerous workers. The trend was referred to as a utopia of the possible, but fell short of this ideal, often failing to create the environmental and social context to which it




## The Sant'Elia Village Church

The construction of a parish church in the Sant'Elia village undoubtedly played an important role in the story of its foundation and development. As with many churches built in this period, its importance should be gauged in the context of various historical processes and events occurring at the time in both the local and international contexts: reconstruction, the economic boom, political conflict, the growth of cities and their suburbs, as well as church reform and renewal.[44]

It was in 1953 that the City Council of Cagliari decided to grant the newly erected Parish of Sant'Elia municipal land for the construction of the village's parish church.[45] The sale of the area chosen was finalised at the beginning of 1954 and was located between the first two complexes built by the Martelli company and the Società Generale Immobiliare, in an area on a slope that was central to the neighbourhood[46] **[Fig. 20]**. In addition to this, another triangular-shaped lot of land near the Lazzaretto was granted in order to host new buildings for carrying out future parish activities. Assessment and surveying expertise for the transfer of the areas as well as the project of the new church

Fig. 20
Plan of the free concession of the municipal areas for the construction of the church of Sant'Elia and the buildings attached to the parish, Salvatore Rattu, 1953 (source: Archivio Storico Comune di Cagliari, Contracts, n. 1828, 27 January 1954, Municipality of Cagliari, Procurement Contract rep. no. 20928, Free transfer of municipal area for the construction of a parish church in Borgo S. Elia).

aspired. See: Elena Dellapiana and Guido Montanari, *Una storia dell'architettura contemporanea* (Milano: UTET, 2021), 390-395.

44 On the relationship between the Church and architectural movements in Italy in the decades following the Second World War, see: Andrea Longhi and Carlo Tosco, *Architettura, chiesa e società in Italia* (Roma: Studium, 2010); Andrea Longhi, *Storie di chiese storie di comunità. Progetti, cantieri, architetture* (Roma: Gangemi, 2017).

45 Resolution no. 67 "Transfer of municipal area for the construction of a parish in Borgo S. Elia" of the City Council of Cagliari n. 9 of 17 March 1953 (HAMC, Cat. I, Cl. VII, Resolutions of the Municipal Council, Council meeting held on 14 March 1950 to 23 November 1954, p. 241).

46 Municipality of Cagliari, Rep. Contract n. 20928, Free transfer of municipal area for the construction of a parish church in the 'Borgo S. Elia' (HAMC, Contracts, n. 1828, 27 January 1954).

was entrusted to Salvatore Rattu, a key figure in the city's architecture scene before and after the Second World War.[47]

The construction of the parish and church of Sant'Elia is due in no small part to the direct interest of Monsignor Paolo Botto, elected archbishop of Cagliari in 1949. The ecclesial dynamics underlying the creation of the new parish of Sant'Elia are fully in line with the pastoral guidelines pursued by the archbishop, who was the protagonist of an intense effort that involved all the peripheral areas of the city during the 1950s.[48] His work was particularly characterized by the numerous foundations of parishes and churches, as well as the construction of the new diocesan seminary in the capital city.[49]

From the reconstruction of the surrounding context to the construction of the church of Sant'Elia, which was not easy due to the lack of archival materials, the central role of Don Giuseppe Aramu, the first parish priest of Sant'Elia from 1952 to 1970, clearly emerges.[50] Don Aramu was directly involved in securing resources for the construction of the church and the center for parish activities. A first tranche of funding amounting to 40 millions lire was guaranteed by the State, which enabled the completion of the church's basic structure.[51] Subsequent financial provisions were guaranteed until the end of the 1960s to complete the work, primarily from the Region of Sardinia and the Municipality of Cagliari. In 1961, the Region granted 14 millions lire, and the same year, 12 millions more were requested at the same body, along with 10 millions from the Municipality of Cagliari.[52] Between 1962 and 1963, another 15 millions lire was provided by the Region and 4 millions by the Municipality of Cagliari, and a further 12 millions was allocated in 1964.[53]

Don Aramu demonstrated great political agility in navigating the political landscape of the time to secure the necessary resources for the construction of the church. His familiarity with the political world was particularly evident in his interactions with members of the Christian Democracy party. Among his interlocutors were regional councilor Elodia Macis, regional councilors Giovanni De Rio and Salvatore Campus, and municipal councilor Antonio Follesa. He also

---

47 Salvatore Rattu (1899-1960) was an architect and university professor. Born in Cagliari in 1899, he studied at the 'Istituto Superiore delle Belle Arti' in Rome where he obtained the diploma of professor of Architectural Drawing which in 1929 enabled him to obtain the professional qualification to practice as an architect. Together with Ubaldo Badas he became the protagonist of the main projects in the city of Cagliari during the twenty-year period of fascism and after the Second World War, he contributed to the renewal of architectural styles in Sardinia. For an overview of the main projects, please refer to the sheets dedicated to his projects contained in Masala, Architecture, 142, 145-147, 192, 235, 243.

48 Following his appointment, Monsignor Botto was very active with his pastoral work that particularly involved the peripheral areas of the city. The archbishop dedicated much time and effort to the reconstruction and construction of new churches, in a period of general fervour for religious architecture in Sardinia. Piero Marras, *Chiese di Sardegna* (Sassari: Delfino, 2021), 269.

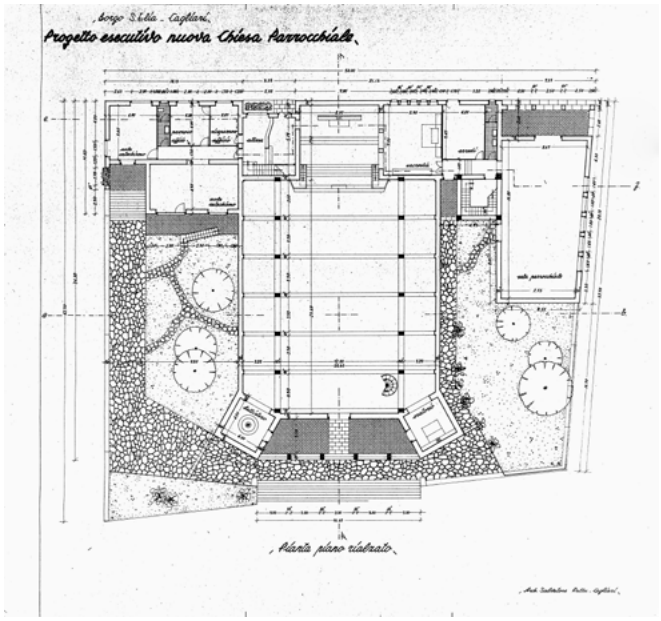
49 See: https://www.seminarioarcivescoviledicagliari.it/storiadelseminario/ (last accessed November 2024).

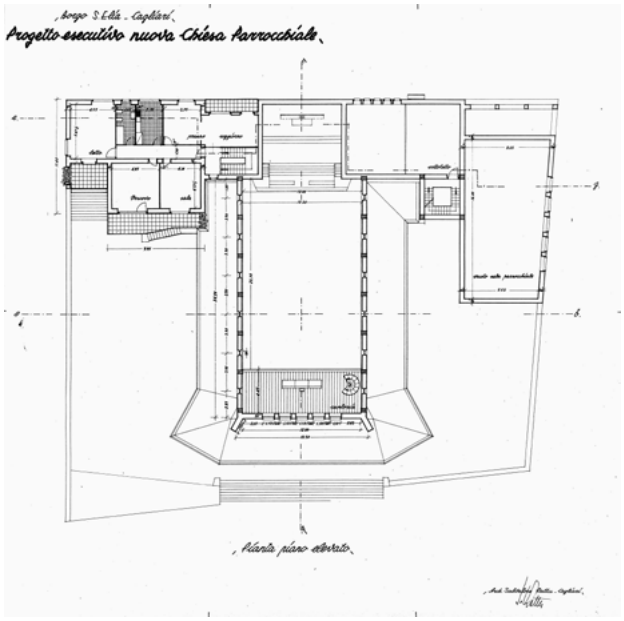
50 The parish was founded by the archbishop in 1952 and was formally recognized with Decree No. 1094 of the President of the Italian Republic, published in the Official Gazette on November 23, 1955. Before the church was built, religious services were held at the chapel of the municipal kindergarten in the neighborhood. Archive of Sant'Elia Parish (hereinafter ASEP), Historical Book of the Parish of Sant'Elia in Cagliari, 3, 9.

51 ASEP, Historical Book of the Parish of Sant'Elia in Cagliari, 19.

52 ASEP, Historical Book of the Parish of Sant'Elia in Cagliari, 35, 41.

53 ASEP, Historical Book of the Parish of Sant'Elia in Cagliari, 42-44.




21 22

established contacts with various technical experts from the municipal and regional offices, including engineer Salvatore Angius.[54] The priest's notable political connections are further evidenced by the constant presence of many authorities at the main annual celebrations at the parish of Sant'Elia, supported by his open alignment with the Christian Democracy party, which was the ruling party at the time.[55] A significant example of his direct involvement in the construction project was the interest shown by the regional councilor for Public Works, Salvatore Campus, who, during the final stages of the work along with the parish priest, expressed dissatisfaction with the result of the ceramics installation in the apse and requested its rearrangement.[56]

As reported in the annual accounts of the parish, Don Aramu personally handled the architectural approval processes in Rome. He travelled to the capital to present the church project to the Pontifical Commission for Sacred Art in Rome in order to forward it to the Ministry of Public Works. On other occasions, he returned to Rome to request financial support from the State.[57]

There are no documents detailing the interaction between the clergy and the architect to define the architectural and liturgical features of the new church. However, what emerges from the few available references is a general consensus among all parties on the proposed design, which does not seem to have undergone any substantial changes even during the construction phase. The choices, predominantly influenced by Don Aramu, seem to aim at compositional simplicity and the possibility of building a new church quickly and within a limited budget. This goal is also evident from the clear appreciation, both from

Fig. 21
Mezzanine floor plan, Executive project of the new parish church, Borgo Sant'Elia – Cagliari, 1956 (source: Salvatore Rattu Archive).

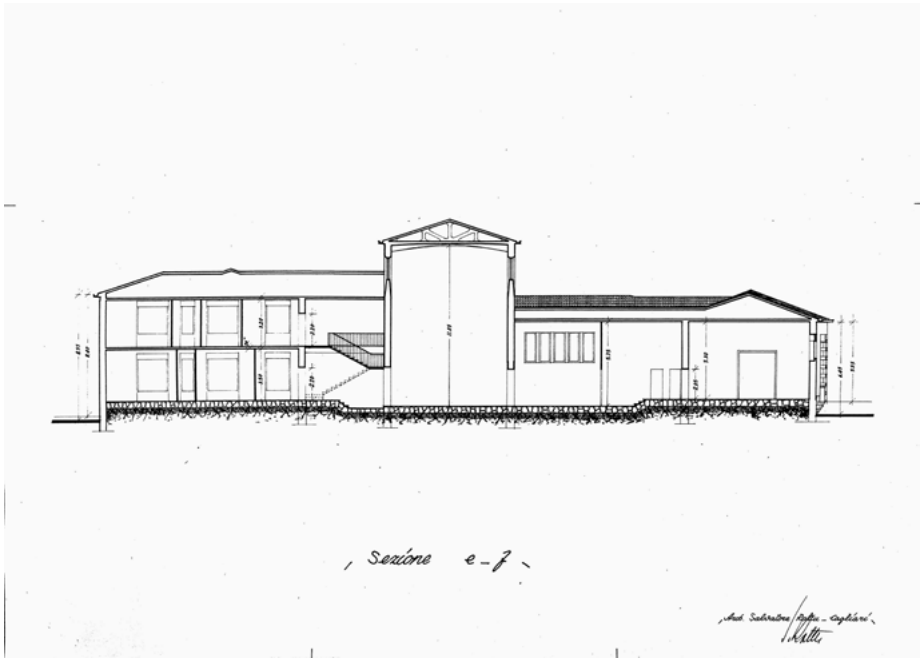
Fig. 22
High floor plan, executive project of the new parish church, Borgo Sant'Elia – Cagliari, Salvatore Rattu, 1956 (source: Salvatore Rattu Archive).

54 ASEP, Historical Book of the Parish of Sant'Elia in Cagliari, 23. The engineer is recognized as a great benefactor of the parish. His passing, in 1963, is recorded as a "nota dolens" in the parish's life. Id., 43.

55 ASEP, Historical Book of the Parish of Sant'Elia in Cagliari, 19.

56 ASEP, Historical Book of the Parish of Sant'Elia in Cagliari, 50.

57 ASEP, Historical Book of the Parish of Sant'Elia in Cagliari, 9, 19.

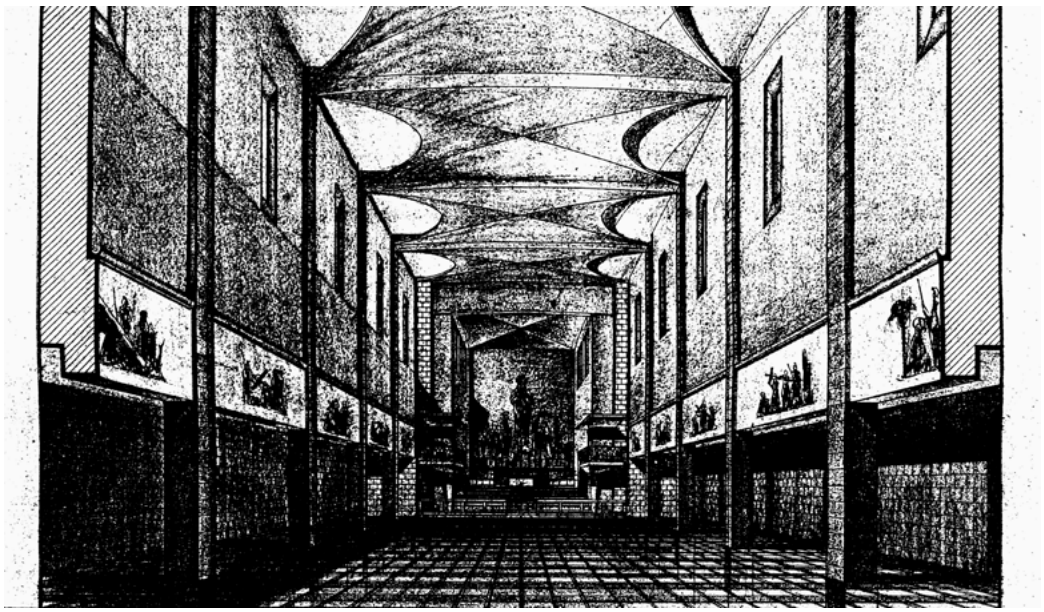



the parish priest and from the archbishop Mons. Botto, for the final result, which was described as "a temple so beautiful architecturally, a triumph of the Faith"[58].

The church has essentially minimalist but not uninteresting forms [Fig. 21, 22, 23]. It extends over a rectangular area of about 20 meters in length, with two rows of pillars that divide the central nave from the side aisles. The central nave is 12 meters wide and 11 meters high, while the side aisles are just over 3 meters wide and significantly lower than the nave. A short staircase with a trapezoidal narthex bearing four pillars - later partially blocked - marks the entrance to the space reserved for religious ceremony. Towards the interior and just beyond the narthex is a choir, reachable via a spiral staircase. On the two short sides of the entrance there are two square-plan rooms, the baptistery and oratory respectively. A large square apse measuring 8 meters on each side completes the structure and features a flight of steps which originally housed the altar at the top, which was subsequently subject to liturgical adaptation following the Second Vatican Council. The gabled roof, fashioned using a reinforced concrete structure, has an internal infill that simulates cross vaults and tensile structures, in the search for a questionable combination of tradition and innovation [Fig. 24]. More interesting is the exterior of the building which seems to faintly echo the stylistic features of early Christian basilicas [Fig. 25, 26]. In addition to the narthex and the gabled roof, the choice of a general sobriety evokes architectural solutions consistent with the first religious buildings of Christianity. The original option of exposed stone - now plastered - and the simple theory of openings in the main and lateral façade confirms the rationale for the choices made. The reference to traditional styles is reiterated by the square bell tower, culminating in a sequence of four long rectangular openings on each side and surmounted by a pyramidal roof. The bell tower is located on the right of the

Fig. 23 Section E-F, Executive project of the new parish church, Borgo Sant'Elia – Cagliari, 1956, Salvatore Rattu (source: Salvatore Rattu Archive).

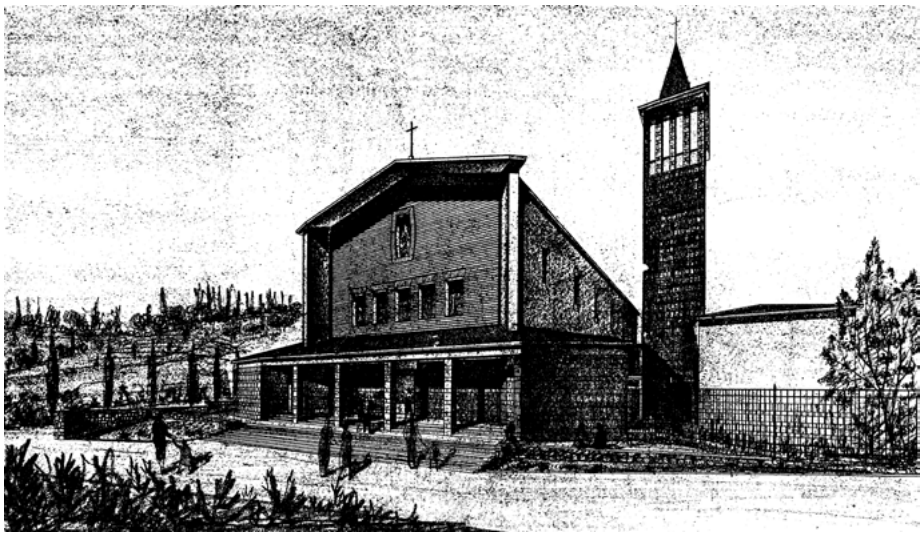
58 ASEP, Historical Book of the Parish of Sant'Elia in Cagliari, 52.



24




25



26

Fig. 24
Perspective view of the interior, Executive project of the new parish church, Borgo Sant'Elia – Cagliari, Salvatore Rattu, 1956 (source: Salvatore Rattu Archive).

Fig. 25
Main elevation, Executive project of the new parish church, Borgo Sant'Elia – Cagliari, Salvatore Rattu, 1956 (source: Salvatore Rattu Archive).

Fig. 26
Perspective view of the exterior, Executive project of the new parish church, Borgo Sant'Elia – Cagliari, Salvatore Rattu, 1956 (source: Salvatore Rattu Archive)

main body, slightly separated from it and set against other service areas that surround the apse: among these the sacristy, a parish hall, classrooms for catechism and the parish priest's office [Fig. 27].



27

Amid the fervour that characterized religious architecture in Sardinia throughout the reconstruction period, the Church of Sant'Elia took inspiration from a model in widespread use, for example in the Church of the Sacred Heart of Nuoro (1951) and in the Church of Santa Lucia of Cagliari (1952 -1955).[59] Designed by the architect Adriano Cambellotti, the latter is particularly noteworthy for its design structures that elegantly imitate early Christian Roman religious architecture.[60] Most probably influenced by Cambellotti's model, Salvatore Rattu thought it expedient to revisit the design scheme used in both the church of Sant'Elia and in that of San Paolo in Cagliari (1955), which he had also designed.[61] Given that it was a widely successful model, it was generally suggested as an alternative to the central plan model used in other contemporary religious buildings in the capital[62] [Fig. 28, 29]. Regarding the artistic aspects of the church, particular interest is also given to the few decorations and furnishings, as well as the general liturgical arrangement of the church [Fig. 30]. The criteria for selecting these elements, within the context of the conscious sobriety of the architecture and the delicate social setting, seem primarily due to the dialogue between the parish priest, the designer, and the artists involved. The decoration of the apse with ceramic tiles is the work of Dino Francesco Fantini (1913-1981)[63] [Fig. 31]. Against a gray-blue background with white linear patterns alluding to sea waves, the scene of the Transfiguration of Christ is depicted, with Christ in the center, and Moses and Elijah on either side, in accordance with Christian iconographic tradition. The two figures are rendered realistically, but without particular virtuosity, using a range of blacks and grays. Christ stands out not only because of his central, elevated position but also for the chromatic treatment: his body and the surrounding aura are gilded, as well as some of the surrounding tiles on the wall, which seem to reflect the light emanating from the Transfigured body.

59 The decade 1951-60 saw more churches were built in Sardinia than any other decade in the 20th century. 69 new religious buildings were built in the island in this period, encouraged by an increase in new parishes. Among these, that of Sant'Elia in Cagliari. See: Marras, *Chiese di Sardegna*, 269. In the capital, between 1945 and 1975, 17 new churches were rebuilt or built from scratch. See: Antioco Piseddu, *Le chiese di Cagliari* (Cagliari: Zonza, 2000).

60 Masala, *Architettura dall'Unitò d'Italia alla fine del '900*, 252-253.

61 An album containing printed tables of Salvatore Rattu's project for the Church of San Paolo in Cagliari is contained in an archive held by the engineer Luciano Deplano (1926-2015) (University of Cagliari, Luciano Deplano Archive).

62 Among the centrally planned churches built in this period are Cristo Re (1952-63) by Giuliana Genta and Silvano Panzarasa and the church of SS. MM. Giorgio and Caterina dei Genovesi (1957-64) by Marco Piloni and Francesco Giachetti. See: Masala, *Architecture*, 253-254.

63 Piseddu, *Le chiese di Cagliari*, vol. 2, 88; ASEP, Historical Book of the Parish of Sant'Elia in Cagliari, 25.

Fig. 27 Project model of the parish church of the Sant'Elia village created by the surveyor Roberto Cretara (Dipartimento Ingegneria Civile, Ambientale e Architettura, University of Cagliari).





28 29

On the wall of the right nave, behind which lies the entrance to the sacristy, there is a large wooden statue of the patron saint, created by Vincenzo Demetz (1911-1990) from Ortisei. In the left nave, the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament is located[64] **[Fig. 31]**.

The fine wooden crucifix in the apse, which was not initially included in the design, is the work of Claudio Pulli (1892-1976) and was placed in the church in the 1980s. The piece was first presented in 1973 at the Biennale of Sardinian Craftsmanship and was later displayed in 1974 at the Exhibition of Sardinian Artists organized to raise funds for the restoration of the Church of San Giuliano in Selargius. The crucifix was then kept in the Church of San Giovanni Battista La Salle in Monserrato before being donated to the parish of Sant'Elia[65] **[Fig. 31]**.

The cornerstone of the church was laid in 1957 during a ceremony attended by the main religious and political authorities, both regional and municipal. The church was built by several construction companies, which alternated due to the fluctuating availability of funds. Among these, the involvement of 'IBO Italia Soci Costruttori' is particularly interesting, as they were asked to send free labor for the construction site[66]. The parish priest initiated the negotiations with the founder of the Italian branch, Don Angelo Marcandella, and with engineer

64 Piseddu, *Le chiese di Cagliari*, vol. 2, 88; ASEP, Historical Book of the Parish of Sant'Elia in Cagliari, 25.

65 ASEP, Brief Profile for the Analysis of the Artwork: Crucifix in Ceramic and Wood, Fondazione Claudio Pulli.

66 The IBO was a construction company founded in 1956 in Northern European Catholic circles and operated through voluntary and free work camps. The Italian branch was founded by Don Angelo Marcandella, instigating a rapid rise in overall building, with numerous active construction sites throughout Italy, mainly concerning the construction of churches and centres dedicated to pedagogy, leisure, and the education of the children of low-income families. There are records of the involvement of IBO Italia in the Borgo Sant'Elia projects from the personal archive of Don Antonino Orrù, a priest involved between the 1950s and 1960s in the construction of a summer residence in Solanas (southern Sardinia) promoted by the diocese of Cagliari. For the construction of the latter, the participation of the IBO was granted thanks to the intervention of Don Angelo Marcandella, who in a letter to Orrù wrote: "[...] this presence of ours will help resurrect an old project that was presented to us in Cagliari (Borgo Sant'Elia)". Cit. Orrù Family Private Archive (Sinnai), Letter from Fr. Angelo Marcandella to Don Antonino Orrù, 20 February 1964.

Fig. 28
Cagliari, Sant'Elia square and church (photo by the author).

Fig. 29
Cagliari, main elevation of the Church of Sant'Elia (photo by the author).



Harmacher, who were hosted in Cagliari in 1959. An agreement was reached, but the result was disappointing: by 1960, the 14 volunteers were sent back because they were deemed unskilled labor and unsuitable for the specialized needs of the church construction site.[67]

As a result, the work proceeded slowly. The parish center, with meeting rooms, a cinema, and other spaces for community activities, was inaugurated in 1961.[68] The church was finally opened for worship with a grand ceremony on June 29, 1968, the day it was consecrated by Mons. Paolo Botto.[69]

The church quickly gained the prominence envisioned in the neighborhood's plans from the previous decades and this was confirmed by the visit of Pope Paul VI on April 24, 1970, during his visit to Cagliari for the sixth centenary of the Madonna di Bonaria. The event is commemorated by an inscription inside the church and remains deeply etched in the Christian memory of the city to this day.[70] The religious building in fact stands as the physical pivot and focal point of the village of the same name, as do other churches built in the same period in the new neighbourhoods of Cagliari, especially working-class areas[71]. The central position in the urban space and the innovative architectural designs compared to other buildings in the village mean that the church of Sant'Elia stands out in

67 ASEP, Historical Book of the Parish of Sant'Elia in Cagliari, 22.

68 ASEP, Historical Book of the Parish of Sant'Elia in Cagliari, 33.

69 ASEP, Historical Book of the Parish of Sant'Elia in Cagliari, 51.

70 ASEP, Historical Book of the Parish of Sant'Elia in Cagliari, 53.

71 For a summary of the examples of religious architecture in the new neighbourhoods of the city of Cagliari between 1945 and 1975, see the summary account published in: Andres Martínez-Medina, Vincenzo Bagnolo and Andrea Pirinu, "The church of Cristo Re in Cagliari, 1952-1963, G. Genta and S. Panzarasa: tradition and modernity in the architecture of the central sacred space," iin *Digital Modernism Heritage Lexicon*, ed. Cristiana Bartolomei, Alfonso Ippolito, Simone Helena and Tanoue Vizioli (Cham: Springer, 2022): fig. 7.

Fig. 30 Cagliari, interior of the Church of Sant'Elia (photo by the author).

the general urban setting and strikingly delineates the skyline of this new part of the city **[Fig. 18, 19].** The rather stereotypical configuration of the ecclesiastical building designed by Rattu further adds to the neorealist character of the village, which aspires to mimic the environment of a rural village rather than the ambience of a city or metropolitan area.

Finally, it should be remembered that the church also acts as the social hub of the village community, at least up to the present day; indeed, it has remained one of the few meeting spaces available, and following its consecration became inextricably associated with the social characteristics of the entire neighbourhood. The pastoral activities conducted by the parish priest and supported by the diocese have made churches the headquarters of the Catholic associations that were receptive to the demands of the Second Vatican Council but also continued to be involved in movements strongly advocating for social housing in the following decades.[72]



The social relevance of the church and the parish spaces for community gathering physically embody the fundamental role the parish has played in the neighborhood since its founding in 1952, being the only social institution besides the schools. It is within the pastoral activities promoted by Don Aramu that all the main recreational, social, cultural, and even entrepreneurial activities of the neighborhood are concentrated, with the committed task of steering the residents away from the grip of crime. In addition to religious associations, the parish hosts the guilds of fishermen and laborers, a sports association with several football teams, and above all the Sant'Elia Society, which over time has managed to attract numerous men – who were initially more reluctant to engage with the parish community – and even run a grocery store.[73]

## Conclusion

The episode of the town's history retold here with unpublished archive materials, attempts to demonstrate what an important page it was in the develop-

Fig. 31

Cagliari, apse of the Church of Sant'Elia with the ceramic decoration by Dino Francesco Fantini and the crucifix by Claudio Pulli (photo by the author). Fig. X

72 Santucciu, *La storia di Cagliari nel dopoguerra tra processi urbanistici e conflitti sociali*, 69-76.

73 ASEP, Historical Book of the Parish of Sant'Elia in Cagliari, 4-54.

ment of the city and its local architecture; it mirrored a more general trend at national level. While the area in question has generally been associated with its problematic social environment, its importance lies in the characteristics of interest and the dynamics connected to urban design and the evolution of the city with regard to religious architecture.[74]

If we consider the disparity in resources, starting conditions and prospects compared to other contemporary projects – such as, for example, that of Adalberto Libera in Via Pessina – the urban planning result achieved in the Sant'Elia village can be considered largely positive, in contrast to some problematic social aspects.[75] Despite the absence of a general design and despite the lack of services, the complex defines a measured and balanced urban space, in sharp contrast to the subsequent development of the neighbourhood.[76]

Despite the simplicity of the layout, the construction of the Sant'Elia village attracted the interests of large companies on the national and international scene. The initial two protagonists of the first building works, the Martelli company of Pisa and the more famous Società Generale Immobiliare of Rome, were followed by 'IBO Italia Soci Costruttori' based in Trento, which were involved in further projects in the neighbourhood at the beginning of the sixties. The fact that the IBO company had a connection with the ecclesiastical environment reiterates the importance of the Church in the dynamics of the neighbourhood; the concrete manifestation of this is the parish church designed by Rattu, which still maintains its features and centrality in the village community today. Although it was one of the last pieces of the urban complex to appear, the church of Sant'Elia rapidly became the cornerstone of the urban and social environment of the neighbourhood. The act of *plantatio ecclesiae* (church planting) took on a practical (religious but also urban and social) significance and value, as a factor that laid the foundations for the entire urban complex.[77]

---

74 Regarding sociological studies on the neighbourhood, see Enrico Maria Piras, *Sant'Elia tra appartenenza e isolamento* (Cagliari: CUEC, 2001); Raffaele Cattedra and Maurizio Memoli, "Un contro-luogo di urbanità marginale. Il quartiere di Sant'Elia a Cagliari," in *Un lungo viaggio nella geografia umana della Sardegna. Studi in onore di Antonio Loi*, ed. Marcello Tanca (Bologna: Patron, 2014), 159-173; ; Selis, *Produzione e consumo di sottoproletariato.*

75 See also the press articles of the time, particularly those published in the newspaper *L'Unione Sarda*, which were highly critical of certain social aspects of the neighbourhood.

76 Following the disagreements over housing and in compliance with law 167 of 1962, the following four complexes were built: the Favero (1979), Lame (1984-1988), Anelli (1984-2000) and Torri (1980-1999). These were gigantic accommodation structures which, on the one hand, responded to the housing demand of many needy families, on the other accentuated various critical social issues. See: Santucciu, *La storia di Cagliari nel dopoguerra tra processi urbanistici e conflitti sociali*, 63-64.

77 The theme of the *plantatio ecclesiae* is particularly significant in the foundation cities and the new cities. See Pasquale Culotta, Giuliano Gresleri and Glauco Gresleri, *Città di fondazione e plantatio ecclesiae* ecclesiae (Bologna: Compositori, 2007).

## Bibliography


Brigaglia, Manlio, and Giuseppe Podda, eds. *Sardegna 1940-45. La guerra, le bombe, la libertà. I drammi e le speranze nel racconto di chi c'era*. Cagliari: Tema, 1994.

Cadinu, Marco. "Architettura e tecnologia nelle saline di Cagliari nell'800 e nel '900." In *Il tesoro delle città*, V, 99-113. Roma: Kappa, 2007.

Cadinu, Marco. "Cagliari, il recupero dell'area orientale. Storia del paesaggio agrario e archeologia industriale." In *Recupero urbano per la città del duemila. Ricerca ed Ambiente*, edited by Vito Biolchini and Roberto Paracchini, 56-64. Cagliari: Demos, 1996.

Casu, Alessandra, Aldo Lino, and Antonello Sanna, eds. *La città ricostruita. Le vicende urbanistiche in Sardegna nel secondo dopoguerra*. Cagliari: CUEC, 2002.

Cattedra, Raffaele, and Maurizio Memoli. "Un contro-luogo di urbanità marginale. Il quartiere di Sant'Elia a Cagliari." In *Un lungo viaggio nella geografia umana della Sardegna. Studi in onore di Antonio Loi*, edited by Marcello Tanca, 159-173. Bologna: Patron, 2014.

Colavitti, Anna Maria, and Nicola Usai. *Cagliari*. Firenze: Alinea, 2007.

Costantino, Matteo. "L'opera della Sogene." In *La Società generale immobiliare Sogene: Storia, archivio, testimonianze*, edited by Paolo Puzzoli, 159-191. Roma: Palombi Editori, 2003.

Culotta, Pasquale, Giuliano Gresleri, and Glauco Gresleri. *Città di fondazione e plantatio ecclesiae*. Bologna: Compositori, 2007.

Dellapiana, Elena, and Guido Montanari. *Una storia dell'architettura contemporanea*. Milano: UTET, 2021.

Di Biagi, Paola, ed. *La grande ricostruzione. Il Piano Ina-Casa e l'Italia degli anni '50*. Roma: Donzelli, 2001.

Dodero, Giuseppe. *I lazzaretti. Epidemie e quarantena in Sardegna*. Cagliari: Aipsa, 2001.

Ibba, Maria Adele, et al. "Indagini archeologiche sul capo Sant'Elia a Cagliari." *Quaderni. Rivista di Archeologia*, no. 28 (2017): 353-386.

Longhi, Andrea, and Carlo Tosco. *Architettura, chiesa e società in Italia*. Roma: Studium, 2010.

Longhi, Andrea. *Storie di chiese storie di comunità. Progetti, cantieri, architetture*. Roma: Gangemi, 2017.

Marras, Piero. *Chiese di Sardegna*. Sassari: Delfino, 2021.

Martínez-Medina, Andres, Vincenzo Bagnolo, and Andrea Pirinu. "The church of Cristo Re in Cagliari, 1952-1963, G. Genta and S. Panzarasa: tradition and modernity in the architecture of the central sacred space." In *Digital Modernism Heritage Lexicon*, edited by Cristiana Bartolomei, Alfonso Ippolito and Simone Helena Tanoue Vizioli, 1-26. Cham: Springer, 2022.

Masala, Franco. *Architettura dall'Unità d'Italia alla fine del '900*. Nuoro: Ilisso, 2001.

Memoli, Maurizio, and Raffaele Cattedra. "Un contre-lieu d'urbanité marginale. L'exemple du quartier de Sant'Elia (Cagliari)." In *Marges urbaines et néolibéralisme en Méditerranée*, edited by Nora Semmoud, Bénédicte Florin, Olivier Legros and Florence Troin, 125-144. Tours: PUFR, 2014.

Mossa, Vico. "La ricostruzione della città." *L'Unione Sarda*, 28 ottobre 1945.

Ortu, Gian Giacomo. *Cagliari tra passato e futuro*. Cagliari: CUEC, 2004.

Ottonelli, Omar, ed. *Il piano Fanfani INA-Casa: una risposta ancora attuale*. Firenze: Polistampa, 2013.

Petti, Bernadette. *I restauri e le ricostruzioni nel secondo dopoguerra. Il caso di Cagliari a confronto con il panorama nazionale ed europeo*. Cagliari: La riflessione, 2012.

Piras, Enrico Maria. *Sant'Elia tra appartenenza e isolamento*. Cagliari: CUEC, 2001.

Piseddu, Antioco. *Le chiese di Cagliari*. Cagliari: Zonza, 2000.

Puzzoli, Paolo, ed. *La Società generale immobiliare Sogene: Storia, archivio, testimonianze*. Roma: Palombi Editori, 2003.

Ragatzu, Alessandro. *La ricostruzione e riabilitazione sotto l'egida della Allied Control Commission, Region 6. La questione degli sfollati*. Soleminis: Alisea, 2014.

Rassu, Massimo. *Cantine, Caverne, Bunkers, La protezione antiaerea a Cagliari durante la seconda guerra mondiale*. Cagliari: ARSOM, 1944.

Sanjust, Paolo. "Il nucleo edilizio di via Pessina a Cagliari." In *L'architettura INA Casa (1949-1963). Aspetti e problemi di conservazione e recupero*, edited by Rosalia Vittorini, Riccardo Capomolla and Sergio Poretti, 140-151. Roma: Gangemi, 2004.

Sanjust, Paolo. *Modernismi. Storie di architetture e costruzioni del '900 in Sardegna*. Roma: Aracne, 2017, 163-176.

Sanna, Antonello. "Il nucleo edilizio Is Mirrionis a Cagliari (1953-56)." In *L'architettura INA-CASA 1949-1963. Aspetti e problemi di conservazione e recupero*, edited by Rosalia Vittorini, Riccardo Capomolla and Sergio Poretti, 164-173. Roma: Gangemi, 2004.

Santucciu, Gavino. *La storia di Cagliari nel dopoguerra tra processi urbanistici e conflitti sociali*. Fiesole: Fondazione Michelucci Press, 2020.

Selis, Gian Mario. *Produzione e consumo di sottoproletariato. Un ghetto urbano in Sardegna. Il Borgo S. Elia a Cagliari*. Cagliari: Edizioni della Torre, 1975.

## Archives

HAMC Historical Archive of the Municipality of Cagliari
ASEP Archive of Sant'Elia Parish (Cagliari)

**Patrizia Montuori**

# Carlo Boccianti's Churches from the Maremma to the Fucino: not just Houses for the Farmers but Something Strĕnŭus

ARTICLE

*Second Post-War Period, Agrarian Reform, Ente per la Colonizzazione della Maremma Tosco-Laziale e del Territorio del Fucino, Carlo Boccianti, Churches*

**/Abstract**

**In the context of post-war reconstruction, the Agrarian Reform that began in 1950 was fundamental to the modernisation and rebirth of Italy. Thanks to the reform bodies, latifundia were expropriated in some regions of the south and in specific areas in others, and the land was distributed among farmers, creating appropriate infrastructures and housing solutions: scattered farms, but also small hamlets, usually centred around a church. An example of this are the settlements designed by Carlo Boccianti (1922-2015) for the Ente per la colonizzazione della Maremma Tosco-Laziale e del Territorio del Fucino in Tuscany, Lazio and Abruzzo. The combination of architecture, which spoke "a very simple language", almost "semi-classical", and sculpture, Boccianti's first love, which was used to "stimulate the sensitivity of the peasants" with something "strĕnŭus" (bold), animated, with more or less happy results, the church projects that the architect carried out in the Agrarian Reform areas. This essay is a sketch of this path of experimentation and research: from the first of Boccianti's churches in the Maremma, Santa Maria Goretti in Rispescia, in the province of Grosseto, where the abstract crucifix by the sculptor Alfio Castelli (1917-1922) around which Boccianti had designed the building's façade was never placed; to the church of the Cuore Immacolato di Maria in Borgo Ottomila, in the centre of Fucino: a building that, probably, housed this and other valuable works by Castelli and which, with the first nucleus of the settlement, was his only intervention in the Abruzzo area involved in the Agrarian Reform; to the church of San Giuseppe Operaio in Pescia Romana, in the province of Viterbo: one of the last that Boccianti designed for the Ente Maremma and a perfect partnership between architecture and art born, in particular, from the collaboration between Boccianti and the sculptor Pietro Cascella (1921-2008). Carlo Boccianti's churches from the Maremma to the Fucino, beyond intellectual purposes or the celebration of architecture, gave voice to the need for spirituality and not just houses of the rural communities settled there, with sensitivity to ecclesiastical needs and awareness of the social role of sacred buildings.**

**/Author**

**Patrizia Montuori**
**DICEAA, University of L'Aquila**
**patrizia.montuori@univaq.it**
**ORCID ID: 0000-0002-5789-6501**

Patrizia Montuori is associate professor of History of Architecture at the University of L'Aquila, architect and PhD in Requalification and Insediative Recovery – curriculum in Restoration and History of Architecture – (Sapienza University of Rome). She is member of the teaching board of the PhD in Civil, Building-Architecture and Environmental Engineering at the University of L'Aquila and scientific head of the university research project "Disused *Machines à guérir*' in L'Aquila and Abruzzo. Knowledge, protection, valorisation" (2023). She is the University's responsible (with S. Ciranna) in the agreement between the Argentine Embassy in Italy and the University of L'Aquila for the establishment of the 'Càtedra Argentina', and has participated in other international agreements and research (UnivAQ-University of Texas at S. Antonio; University of Rome Sapienza – Universidad Nacional de Ingenieria de Lima). She is a member of the Scientific Committee of the scientific journal DISEGNARECON. Her studies focus on the figurative and material consistency of the architectural and urban heritage between the 19th and 20th centuries and the historical-architectural and settlement evolution of urban centres and the territory, in particular, following destructive events. She is the author and editor of numerous essays and volumes including: *La migrazione italiana in Argentina. Professionisti, maestranze, storie*. (Rome: Edizioni Nuova Cultura, 2024), eds with S. Ciranna; *Intervista su Avezzano. Storia della città in sessanta risposte*. (L'Aquila: Textus 2023) with L. Saladino; *History meets Science between Abruzzo and Texas*. (Rome: Quasar, 2019) eds with S. Ciranna and A. Lombardi; *Tempo, spazio e architetture. Avezzano, cent'anni o poco più*. (Rome: Artemide, 2015) with S. Ciranna. *Lima. The Historic Center. Analysis and Restoration.* (Rome: Gangemi, 2012) eds with G. Palmerio and A. Lombardi.



CC BY 4.0
https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/19770
Copyright © 2024 Patrizia Montuori

## The Post-War Period between Reconstruction, the Search for a New Architectural Language and Agrarian Reform

At the end of the Second World War, Italy underwent a massive mobilisation for the work of reconstruction; from 1945 until the end of the following decade, in a scenario of national rebirth, architectural culture was entrusted with the important role of recomposing the image of the country devastated by war, opting to start again from the explicit renunciation of the monumental forms of the regime and the associated symbolic and scenographic apparatus.

On the contrary, a 'populist' and regionalist spirit is recovered, which well represents Italy's economic and social efforts to be reborn from the poverty and humiliation of the war. The construction of popular residential areas scattered throughout the country thus became the centrepiece of the public administration's building programme. In particular, during the fourteen years of the INA-Casa plan (1949-1963), the settlements inspired by rural villages, with houses grouped around collective, civil and religious spaces, built from the north to the south of Italy, became a fundamental reference point for architectural culture and the reconstruction, including the social reconstruction, of the country.[1] A context, the rural one, which in those same years, was also undergoing profound and rapid changes as a result of the reforms launched in various parts of Italy in 1950.[2] By 1951, the reform bodies were already operating in the eight districts identified, and in the following two years they had already completed the expropriations and land allocations, and had built, or were in the process of building, houses and villages for the assignees.

On the one hand, the redistribution of state land or large latifundia to families of agricultural workers or independent farmers has led to a change in the morphology of the places themselves, with the emergence of new settlements; the construction of residential and service villages; the creation of a basic infrastructure network to ensure communication and the provision of essential services; and the introduction of new types of farms and production methods. On the other hand, the transfer of populations from other rural areas to the areas covered by the reform created a real osmosis between the traditions, customs and production techniques of the migrating populations and those of the area in which they settled.

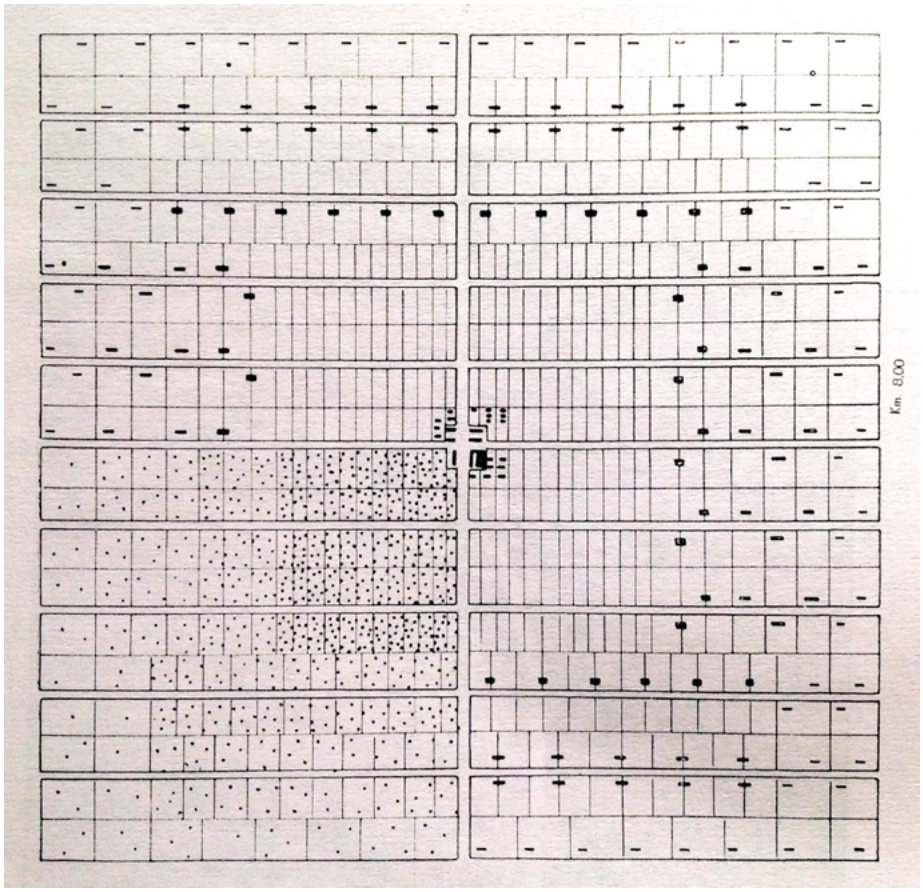
In an initial phase, for example, two areas with completely different characteristics, the Tuscan-Lazio Maremma and the Fucino area, the heart of the Abruzzi Marsica sub-region,[3] were united through the intervention of a single

---

1 See: Paola Di Biagi, *La grande ricostruzione. Il piano Ina-Casa e l'Italia degli anni '50* (Roma: Donzelli, 2001).

2 The "Sila Law" of 12 May 1950 began the process of agrarian reform in Calabria, which was then extended by the "Stralcio Law" of 21 October 1950 no. 841 (Norme per l'espropriazione, bonifica, trasformazione ed assegnazione dei terreni ai contadini – Rules for the expropriation, reclamation, transformation and allocation of land to peasants) also extended to some areas of Abruzzo, Molise, Apulia, Basilicata, Sicily and Sardinia. See: Giuseppe Barbero, *Riforma agraria italiana. Risultati e prospettive* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1960); Giancarlo Di Sandro, *Agricoltura e sviluppo economico. Il ruolo della politica agraria in Italia (1944-1982)* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2002); Emanuele Felice, *Cassa per il mezzogiorno: il caso dell'Abruzzo* (L'Aquila: Abruzzo Regional Council, 2003).

3 Thanks to the Agrarian Reform, the vast agricultural plain was expropriated to the Torlonia family, concessionaires of the land obtained after the extensive draining of the lake in the second half of the 19th century. The Fucino area was thus divided into 9,000 new plots of land, with an average size of between one and four




1

body: the *Ente per la colonizzazione della Maremma Tosco-Laziale e del Territorio del Fucino*,[4] which was responsible for the separation, division and allocation of land and for measures to ensure adequate infrastructure and housing for farmers.[5] The *Ente per la Valorizzazione del Territorio del Fucino* was established only later with Law No. 639 of 9 August 1954, which sanctioned the separation from the *Ente Maremma* and extended the area of competence in the Abruzzi territory from 16,000 to 160,000 hectares.[6]

hectares, of which the former tenants would become the owners in about thirty years, paying an annual rent of less than half of what they had paid to Prince Torlonia. See: Marcello Vittorini, *Il prosciugamento del lago e l'evoluzione del tessuto insediativo e organizzativo del Fucino, excerpt from "Fucino cento anni". 1877-1977. Atti degli incontri e dei convegni svolte per il Centenario del prosciugamento del Fucino e per il Venticinquennale della Riforma Agraria* (Avezzano: n.d., 1977). Patrizia Montuori, "Il Fucino da acqua a terra. Tracce storiche della trasformazione di un territorio, dall'antichità all'epoca contemporanea," in *La città globale. La condizione urbana come fenomeno pervasivo / The Global City. The urban condition as a pervasive phenomenon. Vol. E*, eds. Marco Pretelli, Tamborrino and Ines Tolic (Torino: AISU - Insights, 1, 2020): 490-500. Simonetta Ciranna and Patrizia Montuori, "La Marsica nel Novecento. Transformation, marginality and experimentation," *QuAD- Quaderni di Architettura e Design*, no. 3 (2020): 71-87.

4 On the *Ente Maremma*'s building activity in the Tuscan-Lazio Maremma see: Marco De Bianchi and Luca Seravalle, *Le costruzioni rurali della Riforma Fondiaria nella Maremma grossetana degli anni Cinquanta* (Grosseto: Editrice Innocenti, 2011). Valentina Iacoponi, "Case fino al limite dell'orizzonte. La riforma fondiaria attraverso i paesaggi dell'Ente Maremma," in *I paesaggi della riforma agraria: storia, pianificazione e gestione*, eds. Fausto Carmelo Nigrelli and Gabriella Bonini (Gattatico -RE-: Istituto Alcide Cervi, 2017), 249-59.

5 Over a five-year period, Ente Maremma built 5,423 homes for allottees, 66 service villages and 974 kilometres of rural roads in the Tuscan-Lazio Maremma. See: Antonio Valentino Simoncelli, *Dalla riforma fondiaria allo sviluppo agricolo. Archivio storico, 1950-1977* (Roma: Etsaf-Ersal, 1991), 45.

6 The Piani Palentini, the Altopiano delle Rocche and the Valle Roveto were also included in the new Ente Fucino area. This territorial and administrative reorganisation made it necessary to carry out a first review of the measures introduced by the reform and the subsequent actions, and above all to take specific intervention to resolve the age-old housing problem of the Fucino farmers. See: Montuori, "Il Fucino da acqua a terra. Tracce storiche della trasformazione di un territorio, dall'antichità all'epoca contemporanea," 490-500. Ciranna and Montuori, "La Marsica nel Novecento. Trasformazione, marginalità e sperimentazione," 71-87.

In the first phase, the Ente Maremma did not generally promote the creation of rural villages with houses, open spaces and services, both civil and religious, in which the assignees could live a village life. On the contrary, it preferred a form of dispersed settlement that allowed the family to live and work on the allotted land [Fig. 1]. In fact, the Ente's technicians believed that living on the farm helped to reduce travelling time and costs,[7] ensuring maximum use of the working potential of the entire family nucleus:[8] this settlement logic was clearly linked to the interpretation of the house that the Ente Maremma gave to the farmers, not only as an adequate dwelling, but also as an "essential tool for the production process to take place".[9] In general, therefore, it is only in specific cases that Ente Maremma has adopted solutions other than the dispersed model, promoting the construction of residential and service villages. In the Capalbio plain, for example, where about one hundred families who had been left without land in the Fucino area,[10] were resettled on the farms of the former S.A.C.R.A. (Società Anonima Capalbio Redenta Agricola),[11] a semi-centralised settlement was planned, better suited to the social needs of the Fucino population, who were more used to village life.

## Carlo Boccianti's Rural Churches between Maremma and Fucino

Carlo Boccianti (1922-2015) was an architect originally from Bari, but who lived and worked in Rome.[12] After taking his classical high school diploma at the Liceo Orazio Flacco in Bari, he had moved to the Capital, where he also obtained an art diploma at the high school in Via di Ripetta, driven by a passion for sculpture that would persist throughout his subsequent professional career. Encouraged by his parents to continue his studies, he graduated in Architecture[13] and registered with the Order of Architects on 9 April 1947 with a provisional qualification and registration number 572.[14] After his first professional assign-

7 The Ente Maremma's planners were inspired by the criteria of rational use, economy, decency and hygiene for the inhabitants, which Amos Edallo had already set out in 1946 in his study of "rural town planning" in the Po Valley. See: Amos Edallo, *Ruralistica- Urbanistica rurale- con particolare riferimento alla Valle Padana: il paese rurale, l'azienda rurale, la casa rurale in funzione dell'organizzazione agricola attuale e futura* (Milano: Hoepli, 1946).

8 Ente Maremma, *A.D. 1961, I borghi di servizio. Strutture periferiche* (Roma: Officina poligrafica laziale, n.d., 1961).

9 Roberto Milletti, *Nuovi progetti di costruzioni rurali e tipi di insediamento* (Bologna: Edizioni agricole,1958), 11.

10 While in the Maremma many farms were left without tenants after the redistribution of land by the Ente Maremma, in Fucino it was not possible to guarantee land for all the workers and many were forced to emigrate to the Capalbio area. See: Loreto Gigli, *I pionieri della Maremma. Storia recente di Capalbio* (Pitigliano: Editrice Laurum, 2009). Luciano Domenichelli, *Una grande generazione di agricoltori* (Pitigliano: Editrice Laurum, 2009).

11 The Società Anonima Capalbio Redenta Agricola (S.A.C.R.A.), today S.A.C.R.A. S.p.a., was founded in 1922 by a group of friends who took over the property extending from Capalbio Castle to the sea: a territory of about 9,000 square metres that was inhospitable at the time, although it had already undergone an initial reclamation in 1861, which was used for growing cereals, breeding livestock, producing coal and fishing in the lakes. See: https://sacra.it/territorio/terre-di-sacra-la-storia-del-territorio/ (last accessed December 2024).

12 For a first biographical profile of Carlo Boccianti see: "Profili biografici. Carlo Boccianti," in *Itinerari di architettura contemporanea. Grosseto e provincia*, eds. Marco Del Francia, Giovanni Tombari and Barbara Catalani (Pisa: Ets Editions, 2011), 157.

13 In a video interview kindly provided by his daughter, Boccianti talks about his training, his first assignments and his work at Ente Maremma. Videointerview to Carlo Boccianti by Antonia Genco, Irene Rosato, Francesco Salvatore Genco, 2010. Private archive of Henny Boccianti, Rome.

14 List of registered for the years 1945-56, Historical Archive of Order of Architects, Town planners, Landscapers

Fig. 1 Schematic model of a Reform Farm built on 6,000 hectares with both centralised and distributed settlements (*Esperienze urbanistiche in Italia*. Roma: Istituto Nazionale di Urbanstica – INU, 1952).

ments,[15] Boccianti began working for the *Ente Maremma* in 1950: he joined the 'Comitato per l'edilizia rurale economica' (Committee for Rural Economic Development) together with Roberto Milletti, Riccardo Medici and other leading figures from the Italian agricultural and political world, including Giuseppe Medici (1907-2000), President of the Ente and Minister of Agriculture and Forestry in 1954 and 1955;[16] in the following years he designed divisions of land, rural buildings and residential and service villages. This is architect's account of this intense human and professional journey:

> I found a job at the Ente Maremma; I was lucky, because I only knew how to be an architect and didn't know how to do anything else. It was about doing architecture. The procedure of the Ente Maremma was first of all to plan the territory, that is, to divide the plots, the houses, etc. Then, little by little, came the more social part, and therefore the rural villages, and therefore churches, schools, nurseries: only then did I thank God that I had not been a sculptor. But sculpture helped me, because instinctively I was interested in everything that had to do with volume, the volumetry of a thing rather than its functionality. But I started shyly, quietly (...). For the Ente Maremma I made 48 churches (...). Little by little I entered into a kind of psychic part, that is, the pleasure of seeing the reaction of the farmers in front of these churches, because in every church, good or bad, there was something strĕnŭus [bold].[17]




2

In fact, shortly after joining the Ente Maremma, Boccianti had already begun to think about rural building from a social, architectural and aesthetic point of view, as well as a functional one, pointing out that the new impetus in the agricultural sector, in the wake of the Agrarian Reform, was "(...) multifaceted and full of profound innovations".[18] The aim of the interventions promoted by the *Ente Maremma* could therefore be to provide not only shelter for the peasants, but also "a home for man", conceived for economic reasons as a "compromise between the perfect and the necessary" and based on "a kind of philosophy, the most natural one known to man, represented by common sense". In this way, one can be rational and, because of

and Conservators of Rome and Province, Rome. The enrolments "with provisional qualification" are those of the years in which the state examination had been suspended.

15 Boccianti reports that one of these assignments was the elevation of the Aurum liquor factory in Pescara, built in the 1930s by the architect Giovanni Michelucci (1891-1990). See: Videointerview to Carlo Boccianti by Antonia Genco, Irene Rosato, Francesco Salvatore Genco, 2010.

16 Iacoponi, "Case fino al limite dell'orizzonte. La riforma fondiaria attraverso i paesaggi dell'Ente Maremma," 252.

17 See: Videointerview to Carlo Boccianti by Antonia Genco, Irene Rosato, Francesco Salvatore Genco, 2010.

18 Carlo Boccianti, "Una casa per l'uomo: nella migliore armonia tra l'ambiente naturale, l'architettura e la necessità del lavoro dei campi," *Agricoltura: rivista mensile di attualità italiane e straniere I,* no 2, (1952): 29.

Fig. 2
Pietro Cascella, photo of the sketch made as a boundary stone in the Agrarian Reform territories (source: *Innovazione e Agricoltura*, no. 1 (III), gennaio/febbraio 2000, 43).

the close relationship between rationality and beauty, one can also solve the problem of aesthetics, which, let us not forget, is first and foremost a problem of logic".[19]

It was precisely with the aim of providing the peasants not only with land and shelter, but also with aesthetically pleasing living spaces and something *strĕnŭus* (bold) that would stimulate their reactions, that Boccianti, already in the study of the scattered appoderaments, commissioned the Pescara-born artist Pietro Cascella (1921-2008)[20] to design a sculpture to mark the boundary of the reformed territory, similar to the boundary stones that Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo of Tuscany had placed at the end of the 18th century.[21] Cascella, with whom Boccianti established an effective collaboration throughout the period in which he worked with the *Ente Maremma*, created a sketch inspired by archaic Etruscan forms [Fig. 2]. However, the proposal was ultimately unsuccessful.[22]

Following these initial, failed attempts, Boccianti was presented with the opportunity to direct his work in the Ente Maremma towards social and architectural goals in addition to the previously established bureaucratic and functional objectives. This was due to the plans for the construction of residential and service villages in the Tuscan-Lazio Maremma and the Fucino area, which included plans for churches to serve as the focal point of these communities. Indeed, in these newly constructed villages, which were situated in areas designated for agricultural use and usually uninhabited, the church served not only as a place of worship for farmers but also as a primary hub for social interaction for the residents of the hamlet and surrounding rural communities.[23]

---

19 Boccianti, "Una casa per l'uomo: nella migliore armonia tra l'ambiente naturale, l'architettura e la necessità del lavoro dei campi," 32.

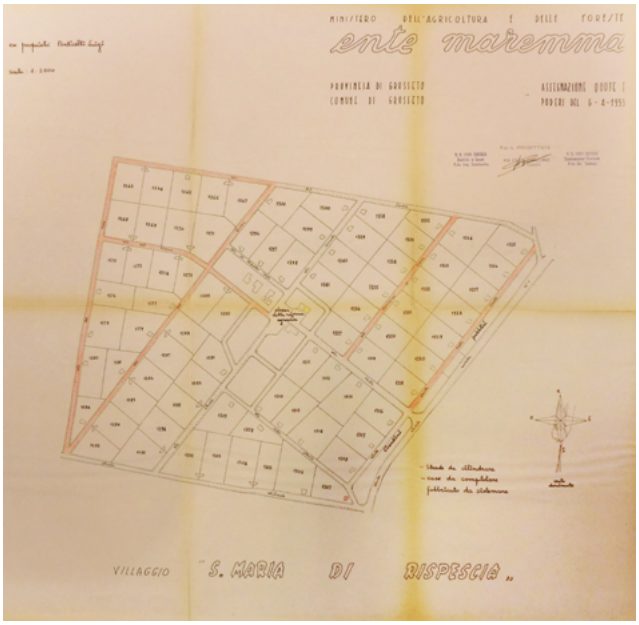
20 Pietro Cascella was born in Pescara into a family of artists. From an early age, he exhibited a similar artistic passion to that of his grandfather Basilio (1860-1950), his father Tommaso (1890-1968), his uncles Gioacchino (1903-1982) and Michele (1892-1989), as well as his brother Andrea (1919-1990). He undertook studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome (1938) and, following a period of painting, elected to pursue a career in stone and bronze sculpture from the early 1950s onwards. In the great masses of his sculptures, one discerns primordial moments of immediate expression, wherein the archaic motif is contemporized by a pervasive irony. See: Rossana Bosaglia, Mario De Micheli and Pietro Toesca, *Pietro Cascella. Le opere monumentali* (Milano: Electa, 1993). *Cascella. Pietro e la famiglia: una lunga vocazione artistica* (Parma: Guanda, 1998). Patrizia Ferretti, "'L'intelligenza nelle mani': opere inedite di Pietro Cascella per l'Ente Maremma," *Nel Lazio Guida al patrimonio storico artistico ed etnoantropologico Rivista semestrale della Soprintendenza per i Beni Storici, Artistici ed Etnoantropologici del Lazio I*, no. 2 (Gennaio/Giugno 2011): 89-99.

21 The necessity for a more exact control of the territory, associated with the reforming and modernising policy initiated in the latter half of the eighteenth century by the Tuscan government and, in particular, from 1785 onwards by Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo, resulted in a reform that also encompassed a revision of the cadastre and a comprehensive survey of the entire Grand Duchy's borders.

22 Carlo Boccianti, "Gli artisti e le architetture della Maremma," *Innovazione e Agricoltura III*, no 1 (January/February 2000): 43-45.

23 The construction of churches in the villages of the Agrarian Reform was undoubtedly influenced by the concurrent debate that took place at the National Congress of Sacred Architecture in Bologna in September 1955 and the contextual exhibition on Sacred Architecture in Italy between 1945 and 1955, despite the absence of a dedicated body of literature on the subject. These events served to reinforce the urban and social role of the church building in the planning and regeneration of peripheral areas, as well as the concept of the parish as a 'Christian citadel'. This was perceived as a strategic defensive measure against communist proselytism in marginal urban and rural areas. The concept of the church as the physical and ideal fulcrum of the nucleus of buildings necessary for the civil and social organisation of the community settled there thus became central to the projects of the new settlements realised from the 1950s onwards, both in the areas of the Reformation and in various Italian rural areas. For instance, the villages established by Adriano Olivetti in collaboration with the UNRRA-Casas (United Relief and Rehabilitation Administration – Comitato Amministrativo Soccorso Senza Tetto – Unroofed Rescue Administrative Committee) provide a case in point. In particular, the village of Borgo La Martella (1949-54) in Matera, designed by the group led by Ludovico Quaroni, is worthy of note. See: Simonetta Ciranna. "L'architettura delle chiese nell'Italia del dopoguerra. Il Convegno di Bologna del 1955," in *Le pietre e l'eterno. Architetture religiose: costruzioni e restauro*, eds. Daniela Concas and Marco Spesso (Roma: Plan Ed., 2011), 87-93, Andrea Longhi.




3 4

The initial rural village on which Boccianti was engaged was the *Villaggio del Bracciante* (Farmhand's village) in Santa Maria di Rispescia, situated within the province of Grosseto. Its inauguration occurred in December 1951, with the ceremony presided over by the Minister of Agriculture, Amintore Fanfani[24] **[Fig. 3]**. The village was intended to serve as a hub for the provision of services and a focal point for the aggregation of residents from the numerous farms and farmhouses dispersed across the expansive countryside to the south of the Ombrone river, situated between Grosseto and the hamlet of Alberese **[Fig. 4]**. The architect devised a plan comprising two distinct sections: a residential area and a central zone designated for services. The residential section was to accommodate 79 plots, each apportioned to a family and encompassing a farmhouse and 46 hectares of land. The second phase of the project was to include the construction of a church, a school, and a kindergarten; a social building with shops and offices; a barracks; a small restaurant; an area designated for shops; and an area designated for a market.

The only edifice that was ultimately constructed was the Church of Santa Maria Goretti, which was completed with the addition of several annexes. The church was consecrated for worship on 6 July 1954 by the Bishop of the Diocese of Pitigliano-Sovana[25], Monsignor Pacifico Giulio Vanni (1893-1967). Boccianti designed it in accordance with the criteria of architectural and constructive simplicity endorsed by the *Ente Maremma*, which espoused the

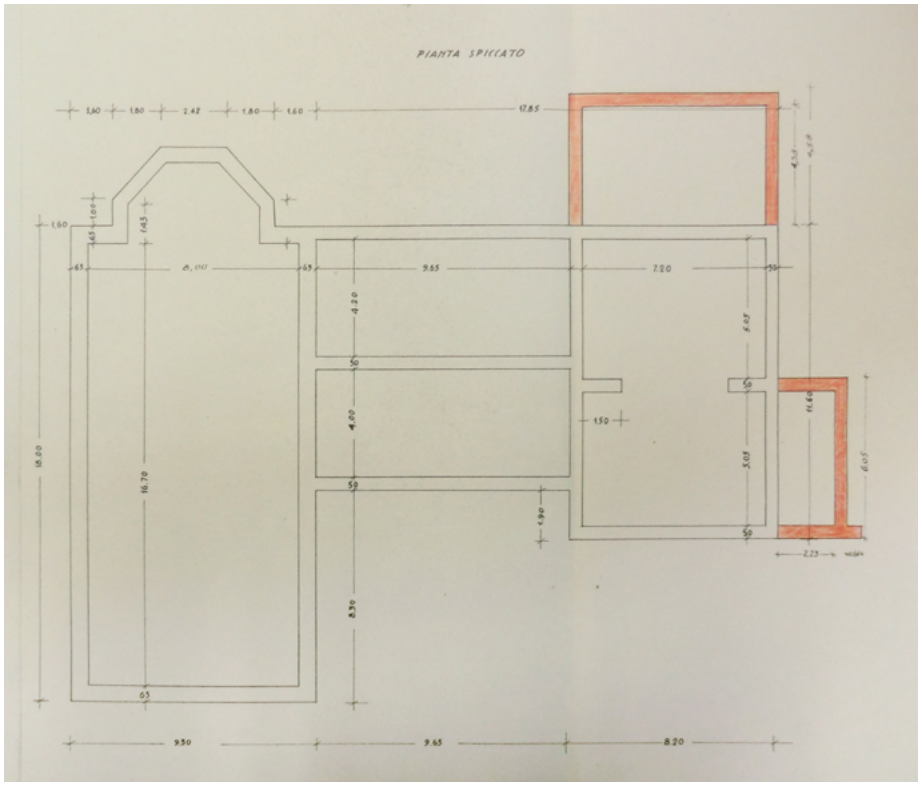
Fig. 3
The Bracciante village of Santa Maria di Rispescia during the inauguration of the Minister of Agriculture Amintore Fanfani in December 1951 (source: Archive Arsial-Luce, Rome, photo no A00180004).

Fig. 4
Ente Maremma, Village of Santa Maria di Rispescia, *allotment of shares and farms of 06.04.1953* (source: Archive of Agenzia Regionale per lo Sviluppo e l'Innovazione dell'Agricoltura del Lazio Arsial-Luce - ARSIAL -, Rome, projects, file 2043, project for the renovation of buildings and roads in the village of Santa Maria di Rispescia former Ponticelli Luigi property).

"Laboratori di Architettura per le cittadelle cristiane. Parrocchie e periferie nel dopoguerra," *Thema. Rivista dei Beni Culturali Ecclesiastici*, no. 1 (2012): 36-41; Raffaele Pontrandolfi and Adriana Raguso, *Architettura rurale e novecento: i borghi di Matera nel contesto italiano e internazionale* (Matera: Edizioni Magister, 2022).

24 The initial inauguration was presided over by Minister Fanfani on 21 December 1952. However, the final inauguration, which took place after the village had been completed, was conducted in the presence of Fanfani himself, the mayor of Grosseto, Renato Pollini, and Giorgio La Pira, mayor of Florence. The settlement was designated 'Santa Maria di Rispescia', in accordance with the dedication of the local parish church to 'Santa Maria Goretti', and was subsequently abbreviated to 'Rispescia'. See: Antonio Valentino Simoncelli, *Rispescia. Da villaggio bracciantile a borgo residenziale* (Grosseto: Editrice Innocenti, 2003).

25 The parish was initially subject to the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Sovana-Pitigliano; it was not until 1976 that it became part of the Bishopric of Grosseto.




view that "anything was fine, as long as it was cheap".[26] The religious edifice features a single hall illuminated by pairs of single-lancet windows on both side walls, culminating in an octagonal apsidal termination **[Fig. 5]**. The roof is gabled with four wooden trusses supporting purlins and prefabricated elements, with Marseille tiles affixed to the surface. The structure is masonry-based and serves to bear the weight of the building. The interior walls are entirely plastered and painted white, with the exception of the rear wall and the interior of the apse. The latter has been frescoed in 1959 by the Bergamo painter Agostino Manini (1922-1999), who depicted the Crucifix, the four Evangelists, two angels and the Eternal Father. The principal façade was also designed by Boccianti with minimalist lines, as "a kind of house, however, with a large roof and a large cross intended to hold a 1:1 human-sized crucifix"[27] **[Fig. 6]**. Indeed, the architect designed the simple yet modern asymmetrical profile with the small bell gable located at the left end with the intention of incorporating a strĕnŭus (bold) element: the crucifix, created by the Marche sculptor Alfio Castelli (1917-1992).

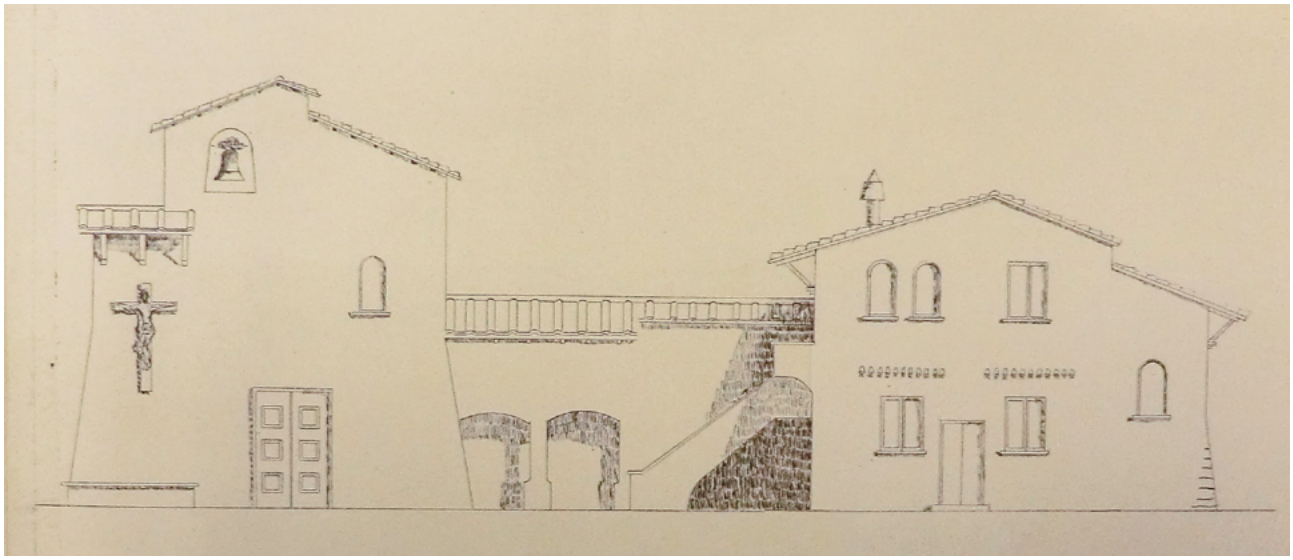
Castelli, who was already a prominent figure in the artistic community, served as the artistic advisor of the *Ente Maremma* from 1952 to 1955. During this period, he created a bronze depiction of Christ for the Rispescia crucifix, drawing inspiration from 15th-century art but employing a highly stylised, thread-like, and almost larval approach to form.[28] Monsignor Vanni, who had only been appointed

Fig. 5
Ente Maremma, Village of Santa Maria di Rispescia, parsonage church, plan, 29 March 1958 (source: Archive of ARSIAL, Rome, projects, file 3427, restoration work and church and rectory extension for the Villaggio Bracciantile di Rispescia).

26 See: Videointerview to Carlo Boccianti by Antonia Genco, Irene Rosato, Francesco Salvatore Genco, 2010.

27 See: Videointerview to Carlo Boccianti by Antonia Genco, Irene Rosato, Francesco Salvatore Genco, 2010.

28 Alfio Castelli was born in Senigallia in 1917 and was awarded a scholarship enabling him to enrol at the Institute of Fine Arts in Florence in 1933. He was subsequently awarded a second scholarship which enabled him to enrol and graduate at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome. Castelli was a prominent figure in both the Roman and international art scenes. From his inaugural solo exhibition in the Italian capital in 1940, he demonstrated



bishop of the diocese of Sovana-Pitigliano on 10 May 1952 after twenty years of apostolate in China, was not in favour of the introduction of such a work of art into a church built for a rural population. An abstract representation of Christ, in which, as Boccianti himself wrote, "not all the eyelashes and eyebrows were distinct, nor was there any trace of tears along the cheeks. Consequently, the sculpture was relocated to the warehouses of the Gallery of Modern Art [in Rome]. The church, therefore, remained with its wooden cross on the façade".[29]

The circumstances surrounding Castelli's crucifix remain uncertain. Available documentation indicates that it was never housed in either the National Gallery of Modern Art or the Gallery of Modern Art in Rome. Notably, these institutions no longer possess the crucifix. Nevertheless, a virtually identical artwork can be observed adorning the façade of another sacred edifice designed by Boccianti during the same period. This structure, the church of the Cuore Immacolato di Maria in Borgo Ottomila, is located in the Fucino area and exhibits simplified features akin to those observed in the Rispescia church.[30] Ottomila is

an affinity for the works of Marino Marini (1901-1980) and Giacomo Manzù (1908-1991). This led to a notable shift in his sculptural style, moving away from figurative representation. During a visit to Paris in 1948, Castelli was profoundly influenced by an encounter with the Swiss sculptor Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966). Giacometti's threadlike, larval figures, seemingly worn out by the air, left a lasting impression on Castelli. Nevertheless, the influence of Giacometti was only fully manifested in Castelli's work after 1952, specifically in the pieces he created for the churches designed by Carlo Boccianti in Maremma and Fucino. See: *Alfio Castelli: sculptures and drawings 1979-1987* (Roma: De Luca, 1987); Giorgio Di Genova, ed., *Alfio Castelli: works 1931-1992* (Senigallia: Sapere Nuovo, 1996); Ferretti, "'L'intelligenza nelle mani': opere inedite di Pietro Cascella per l'Ente Maremma," 89-99.

29 Boccianti, "Gli artisti e le architetture della Maremma," 43. The still-unknown affair of the Castelli crucifix recalls the similar and more famous *querelle* that arose in the same years over the crucifix created by the French sculptor Germaine Richier (1902-1959) for the church of Notre-Dame-de-Toute-Grâce du Plateau in Assy, Haute-Savoie. The church's canon, Jean Devémy, was inspired by the renovations promoted by the Dominicans Marie-Alain Couturier and Pie-Raymond Régamey through the magazine *L'Art sacré*. He called on major artists such as Henri Matisse, Pierre Bonnard, Fernand Léger, Jacques Lipchitz, Marc Chagall, Georges Braque and Jean Lurçat to participate in the decoration of the building. He entrusted Germaine Richier with the most important work, namely the crucifix on the main altar. The artist created a depiction of Christ with a minimalist physique, seemingly merged with the cross's trunk. This prompted considerable backlash and demands for its removal, ultimately leading to its relocation to a side chapel within the church. The controversy surrounding Richier's crucifix, however, initiated a broader international debate on non-figurative art, which at the time was still regarded as unsuitable by those who continued to view sacred art as 'the Bible of the illiterate', designed to instruct the people of God, and a tòpos of clerical discourse on images. See: Isabelle Saint-Martin, *Art chrétien/art sacré. Regards du catholicisme sur l'art. France, XIXe-XXe siècle* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2015).

30 The name of the village is derived from its location on land eight thousand metres from the Fucino Incile. The neoclassical structure was designed by Carlo Nicola Carnevali (1811-1885), who was Prince Torlonia's trusted architect. It serves as the monumental head and engine room of the imposing hydraulic work of draining the lake.

Fig. 6
Ente Maremma, Village of Santa Maria di Rispescia, parsonage church, elevation, 29 March 1958 (source: Archive of ARSIAL, Rome, projects, file 3427, restoration work and church and rectory extension for the village Bracciantile di Rispescia).





7 8

a village with services and a few dwellings built in 1952 on land in the centre of the agricultural plain belonging to the municipality of Celano. As local journalist Gennaro Pinelli reported, "the village marks a break in the otherwise wavy, deserted monotony of the 14,000 green hectares of the plain" and "from above and from afar (...), the village has the effect of a raft anchored in the centre of the ancient lake as a fleeting point of landing and rest. It is therefore plausible that the architect Boccianti, who drafted the preliminary design, may have observed it like this".[31] On the other hand, as a simple service hamlet built "so that the workers of Fucino, in summer and winter, could find a place to rest from their hard labour"[32] was also described by Giuseppe Medici, president of the *Ente Maremma* and then Minister of Agriculture, in the speech he gave on 6 April 1952, when the foundation stone was laid [Fig. 7]. This speech provided an account of Medici's position, which appeared to favour the adoption of scattered settlement also in the Fucino area. In fact, during the technical elaboration of the intervention, a debate arose concerning the optimal approach to settlement. On the one hand, some proponents advanced an allotment model akin to that adopted in Maremma, comprising isolated farms and farmhouses, which the nucleus with Boccianti's services would only have to support. Conversely, other supporters advocated for a centralized settlement. Those in favour of the centralised settlement model argued that the scattered model, which had already been used by Torlonia with sharecropping, would result in an unordered and discontinuous distribution of isolated houses. They further argued that this would fail to meet the social needs of the people of Marsica, who are accustomed to an associated life in villages. It was on the basis of these social, rather than functional, motivations that, in September 1954, the engineer Marcello

Fig. 7
Borgo Ottomila (AQ), photo by Giuseppe Medici during the ceremony on 6 April 1952, at the laying of the foundation stone (source: Archive ARSIAL-Luce, Rome, photo no 00175322).

Fig. 8
Marcello Vittorini, maquette of the Ottomila residential suburb to complement the existing service suburb, photo (source: Archivio di Stato dell'Aquila, Marcello Vittorini fund. In: Angela Marino, and Giulio Tamburini, eds., *Città nascenti. I borghi del Fucino*, Roma: Gangemi Editore, 2010, 84).

At this point, the external collector canal for water collection reaches its conclusion, and the underground tunnel of the Torlonia outfall, constructed between 1854 and 1876, commences. See: Simonetta Ciranna and Patrizia Montuori, *Tempo, spazio e architetture. Avezzano cento anni o poco più* (Roma: Editoriale Artemide, 2015), 170-71.

31 Gennaro Pinelli, "È sorto in località 'Ottomila' un nuovo villaggio dell'Ente Fucino," *Il Fucino*, June 15, 1955 (published in: Angela Marino and Giulio Tamburini, eds., *Città Nascenti. I borghi del Fucino* (Roma: Gangemi, 2010), 17).

32 Minister Medici's speech is quoted in Pinelli's article. See: Pinelli, "È sorto in località 'Ottomila' un nuovo villaggio dell'Ente Fucino," 17.





9 10

Vittorini (1927-2011) resumed and expanded Boccianti's project and 'Ottomila' became one of the four residential villages built by the *Ente per la Valorizzazione del Fucino* **[Fig. 8]**.[33]

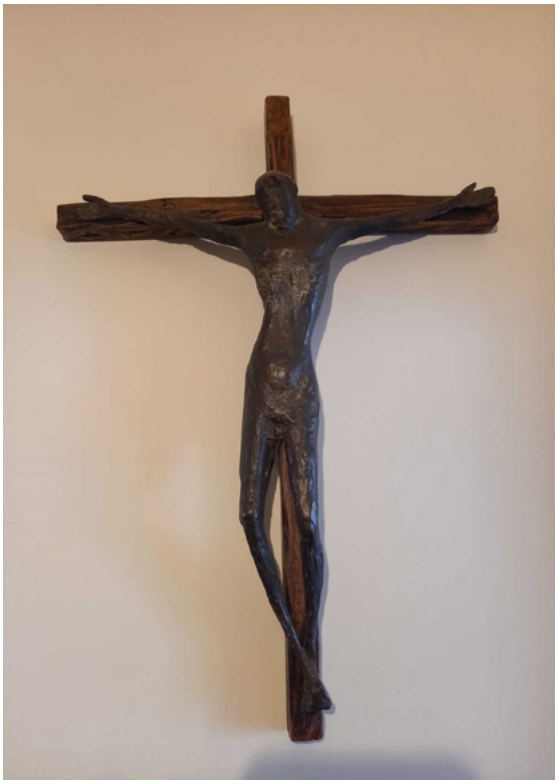
The Church of the Cuore Immacolato di Maria constituted the focal point of the initial nucleus of the village, as conceived by Boccianti. In this case, as in Rispescia, it appears that the architect sought to re-present the concept of a modest 'house of God' in the style of the surrounding rural architecture, incorporating similar 'bold' design elements that had previously been excluded from the design for the borgo in Maremma. The church in Borgo Ottomila is, in fact, even more rudimentary than that in Rispescia, both in terms of its plan and elevation. The church has a longitudinal plan in the form of a single rectangular hall with no apsidal termination. It is lit by four windows on each side and the presbyterial area is raised by one step. The masonry structure is framed with reinforced concrete and finished with plaster. The two-pitch roof consists of reinforced concrete beams and slab and overlying brick tile covering. The main façade repeats the profile of the gabled roof but is asymmetrical due to the presence of the bell gable leaning against the right side. Boccianti focused his architectural research on this façade, as he had done in Rispescia, with the intention of incorporating not only a bronze crucifix of a human scale, but also a high-quality bronze relief, which would frame the wooden entrance door **[Fig. 9]**. Although no specific documentation has been found, on the basis of the style of both artworks, characterised by stylised, threadlike figures **[Fig. 10]**, and

Fig. 9
Borgo Ottomila (AQ), Cuore Immacolato di Maria Church, architect Carlo Boccianti, façade.

Fig. 10
Rispescia (GR), Santa Maria Goretti Church, architect Carlo Boccianti, photo before December 1951, in which Alfio Castelli's crucifix is still visible on the façade (source: Archive ARSIAL-Luce, Rome, photo no 00176DED).

33 As head of the Avezzano-based technical structure of the *Ente Maremma*, from which the autonomous *Ente per la Valorizzazione del Fucino* had been detached in 1954, in addition to the extension of Borgo Ottomila, Marcello Vittorini designed *ex-novo* the Villaggio del Bracciante of San Giuseppe di Caruscino (1952) and the Borgo via Nuova (1955), in the Avezzano area, and the residential village in Trasacco (1954). See: Angela Marino, and Giulio Tamburini, eds., *Città nascenti. I borghi del Fucino* (Roma: Gangemi, 2010); Angela Marino and Valeria Lupo, eds., *Omaggio a Marcello Vittorini. An archive for the city* (Roma: Gangemi, 2012). Montuori, 'Il Fucino da acqua a terra. Tracce storiche della trasformazione di un territorio, dall'antichità all'epoca contemporanea," 490-500. Ciranna, Montuori, "La Marsica nel Novecento. Trasformazione, marginalità e sperimentazione," 71-87.

photographic comparisons with other sculptures by Castelli, including a bronze crucifix he donated to Boccianti [Fig. 11], it is possible to hypothesise that the artist from the Marche region was the author of them; indeed, it is likely that the crucifix in Borgo Ottomila is the same one initially mounted in the church of Rispescia, which was later removed at the behest of Bishop Vanni and whose traces have been lost today.[34] Boccianti's idea of constructing a sacred building that, like the others planned for the villages of the Agrarian Reform, in form and volume "speaks a very simple language and therefore I would say a 'semi-classical' language"[35] but, with the usual bold hints, was already clear in the model of the settlement, presented to the authorities during the foundation stone laying ceremony: indeed, the model of the church exhibited discernible sculptural elements that constituted the foundation for the design of the main façade. The side front was characterised by a mock arcade comprising blind, lowered arches that were affixed to scarp wall partitions. However, this design was ultimately not realised [Fig. 12]. The church's simple hall is also adorned with 14 terracotta tiles depicting the Stations of the Cross, which are likely the work of Alfio Castelli. Boccianti states that an artistic composition repeated for liturgical purposes in all churches was the Stations of the Cross. These were largely copies of an original by Castelli, who created the moulds for the 14 tiles, which were then produced in various churches using different materials, including terracotta, ceramic, and occasionally bronze.[36]



11

Bronze tiles depicting the Stations of the Cross, undoubtedly the work of Castelli, can also be found in one of the last churches designed by Boccianti for the *Ente Maremma*:[37] the Church of San Giuseppe Operaio in Pescia Romana, in the province of Viterbo. A sacred building with a more complex and sophisticated architectural design than the first ones built in the Maremma and Fucino, it is the centre of the village designed by Boccianti in 1956 and completed five years later.

In November 1950, Dr Riccardo Medici was commissioned by the Ente to study the Pescia Romana estate in order to draw up a plan for its transformation and

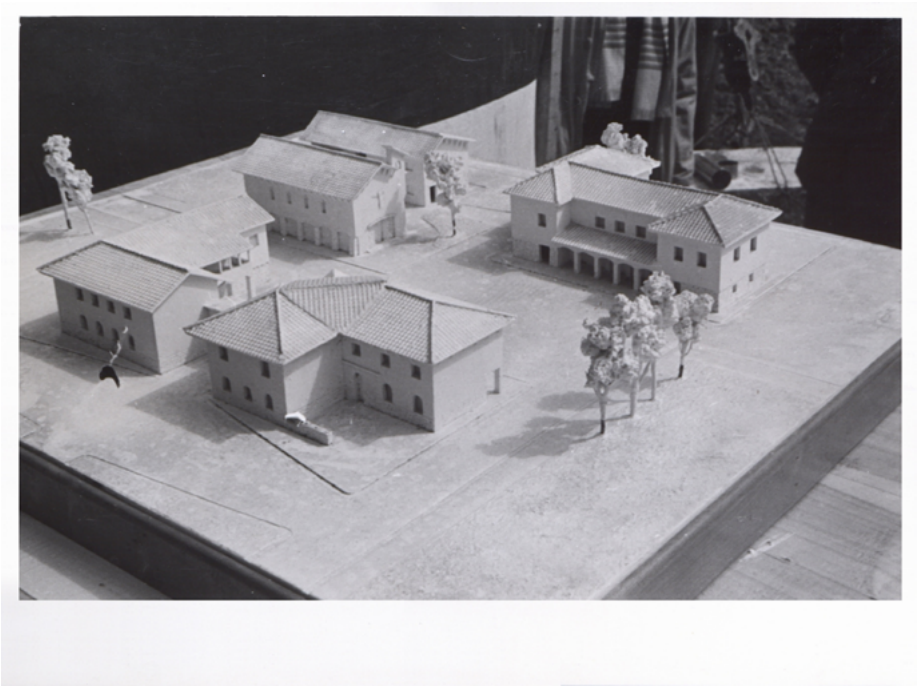
34 In one of the photographs of the Rispescia church retained in the archive of the Agenzia Regionale per lo Sviluppo e l'Innovazione dell'Agricoltura del Lazio (ARSIAL), the crucifix created by Castelli was still visible on the façade of the building. It bears resemblance to the crucifix currently mounted on the façade of the church in Borgo Ottomila. See: Photo 00176DED, Archive ARSIAL-Luce, Rome.

35 Videointerview to Carlo Boccianti during the European Heritage Days, Soprintendenza ai Beni Artistici Storici ed Etnoantropologici del Lazio, Borgo San Martino, 26-27 September 2009. Private archive of Henny Boccianti.

36 Boccianti, "Gli artisti e le architetture della Maremma," 43-45.

37 In the following years, the architect, already appreciated for the churches built for the Ente Maremma, designed several others located, mainly, in the Tuscan territory. See: Marica Rafanelli, "L'architettura genera sé stessa. Progetto di ristrutturazione della chiesa del Santissimo crocifisso a Grosseto," in *Le Ville del moderno in Toscana. Roccamare, Riva del Sole, Punta Ala. Tutela e Conservazione*, eds. Riccardo Renzi, Stefano Giommoni and Vanessa Mazzini (Florence: Didapress, 2023), 82-95; Del Francia, Tombari and Catalani, *Itinerari di architettura contemporanea. Grosseto e provincia*.

Fig. 11
Alfio Castelli, bronze crucifix donated to Carlo Boccianti. Photo (courtesy of Henny Boccianti).

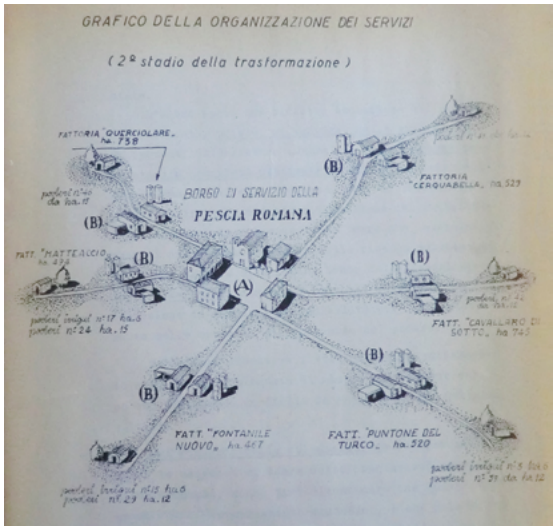


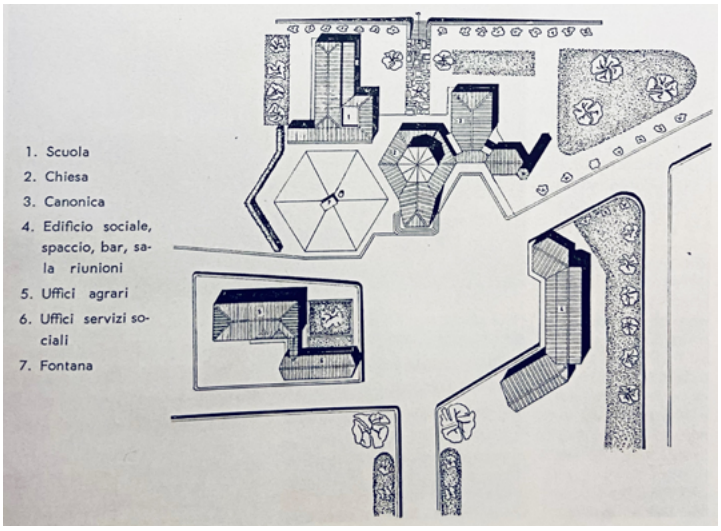
colonisation.[38] Situated in the municipality of Montalto di Castro, it was bounded from north-west to north-east by the border between the provinces of Viterbo and Grosseto, along the Chiarone river and the Abbadia road, from south-east by the Tafone river and from south-west by the Tyrrhenian Sea, crossed by the Aurelia state road (from km 118 to 123) and the Rome-Pisa railway between the stations of S. Agostino and Chiarone. According to a survey carried out by the *Ente Maremma*, the estate had a surface area of 3,735 hectares, 12 of which could be built on and used for new developments. From the 1820s until the expropriations following the Agrarian Reform, the Pescia Romana estate was owned by the Boncompagni-Ludovisi family, princes of Piombino: according to Medici, it therefore had "general characteristics that make it particularly suitable for the creation of small farms" and the task of the colonisers would undoubtedly have been simplified "by the intelligent design of the works already carried out in anticipation of future appoderament".[39] In fact, the pre-existing buildings of the estate were already grouped in four main areas: that of Pescia Romana in the central position, the centre of Fontanile Nuovo to the south-west, the centres of Matteaccio and Querciolare upstream of the Aurelia road and to the west and north-west respectively **[Fig. 13]**. With 85 dwellings, warehouses, barns, garages, workshops and carpentry workshops, and thanks to its barycentric position with respect to the other settlements, Pescia Romana was the most suitable place to assume the function of service and commercial centre of the entire estate. According to the forecasts of the *Ente Maremma*, which did not come

38 Riccardo Medici, *Project for the land transformation of the Pescia Romana Estate, January 1951*. Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS), Rome, Ministero dell'Agricoltura e delle Foreste, Direzione Generale Bonifica e colonizzazione, Progetti dell'Ente Maremma Tosco-Laziali 1951-1970, envelope 85.

39 Riccardo Medici, *Project for the land transformation of the Pescia Romana Estate, January 1951*.

Fig. 12
Carlo Boccianti, maquette of the service village in Ottomila (AQ) (source: Archive ARSIAL-Luce, Rome, photo no 001769D8).




13 14

true,[40] the new hamlet was "destined in time to become a town with its own municipal administration"[41] and, therefore, had to be prepared for a significant population growth. In the report of 21 March 1956 attached to the project for the new settlement,[42] Carlo Boccianti also pointed out that in the 3,500 expropriated hectares, already divided into 340 farms and 65 quotas,[43] lived 1,650 people, including the allottees and their families, and that this number would soon rise to 2,800, 400 of whom would live in the new nucleus to be built. According to the architect, the normal demographic growth of the area, the development that private individuals would have given to the land remaining in their possession and the improved environmental conditions guaranteed by the ongoing reclamation would have meant that this number would have reached around 5,000 in the next thirty years.[44]

This is why he designed the settlement as a first nucleus with various services, to be expanded in the future, centred around a central square "with an almost geometric shape reminiscent of a semi-hexagon",[45] on which the volume of the church of San Giuseppe Operaio, also hexagonal, protrudes. Three secondary squares open up around it, with the school and nursery on one side; the presbytery, catechism room and bell tower, also hexagonal, on the other; and, finally, the Assistance and Cooperation building, which closes the square to the north with its U-shape and portico in front **[Fig. 14]**.

40 Today Pescia Romana is still a hamlet in the municipality of Montalto di Castro, about 13 kilometres away. It has a population of 1,013. See: https://italia.indettaglio.it/ita/lazio/viterbo_montaltodicastro_pesciaromana.html (last accessed December 2024).

41 Riccardo Medici, *Project for the land transformation of the Pescia Romana Estate, January 1951*. ACS, Rome.

42 Carlo Boccianti, *Project for a Service Village in Pescia Romana. Report of 21 March 1956*. ACS, Rome, Ministero dell'Agricoltura e delle Foreste, Direzione Generale Bonifica e Colonizzazione, Progetti dell'Ente Maremma Tosco-Laziali 1951-1970, envelope 149.

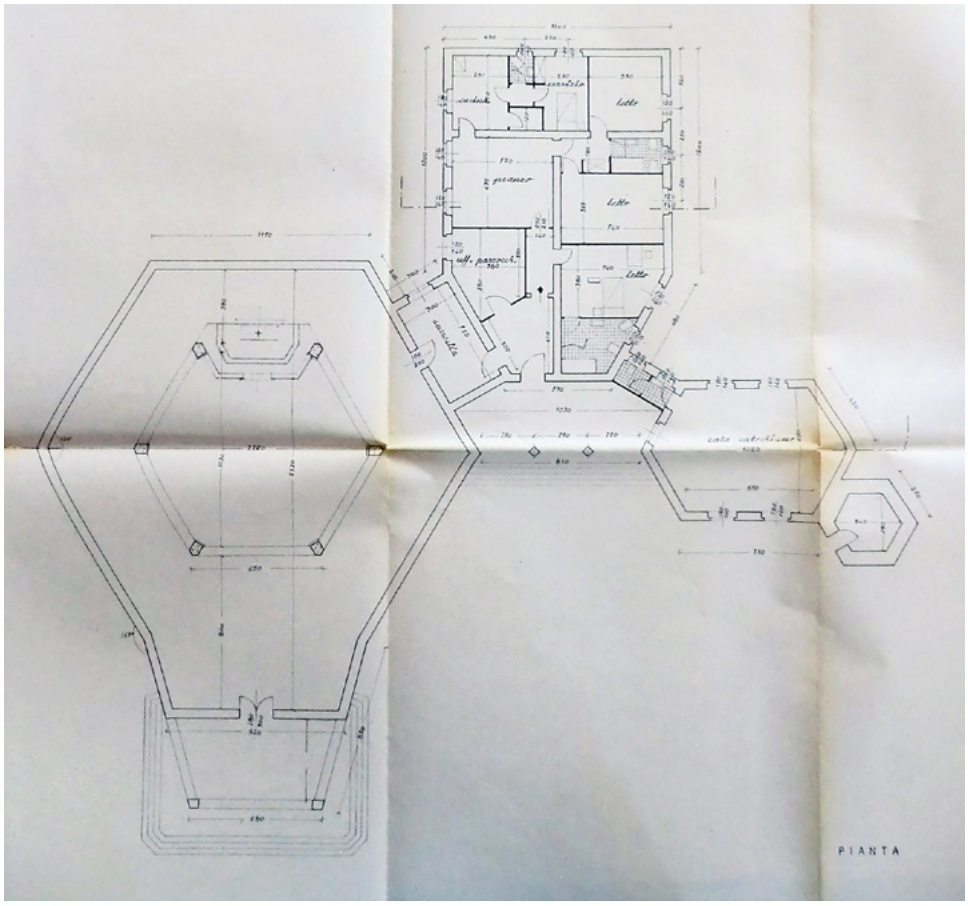
43 In the distribution of land under the Agrarian Reform, the "poderi" corresponded to self-sufficient farms, as their size (up to 15 hectares) was such that they could provide an adequate income for the peasant family, while the "quote" (usually 2 to 4 hectares) were plots of land intended only to supplement the income of peasants who might already own other land.

44 Carlo Boccianti, *Project for a Service Village in Pescia Romana. Report of 21 March 1956*. ACS, Rome.

45 Carlo Boccianti, *Project for a Service Village in Pescia Romana. Report of 21 March 1956*. ACS, Rome.

Fig. 13
Riccardo Medici, *Project for the land transformation of the Pescia Romana Estate, January 1951*, diagram of the organisation of services with the existing nuclei highlighted (source: Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome).

Fig. 14
Pescia Romana (VT)
plan of the service village designed by Carlo Boccianti (source: *Nel Lazio Guida al patrimonio storico artistico ed etnoantropologico*, no 2, I, Gennaio/Giugno 2011, 89).




Boccianti arranged the small number of buildings on the one hand as "collected volumes"[46] facing the main space, and on the other hand he left the side facing the Aurelia state road, which connects the village to Montalto di Castro and the surrounding area, more open and free of buildings, probably in order "not to give the farmer the feeling of being bound to his village as a complex where his leisure time ends, but to make him feel, through an urbanistic language, how this village is grafted to the surrounding life or to the nearest town".[47] In this skilful architectural and volumetric composition, the church of San Giuseppe Operaio is undoubtedly the central element. It was a brilliant solution by Boccianti to a difficult urban problem: a church with a longitudinal plan, which did not fit in with the overall layout of the village, would have been too long for the available space; on the other hand, the space would have been too wide for a building with a central plan, which also would have deprived the annexed buildings, the rectory and the bell tower, of their breathing space. The architect therefore designed a hexagonal church with a side length of 11.6 metres, but with a trapezoidal entrance area projecting out into the square, with walls set at 166 degrees to the adjacent walls and a portico supported by two pillars **[Fig. 15]**. Boccianti reinforced the image of the building as the 'pivot' of the village and of the complex formed by the parish house and the bell tower by articulating the basic hexagon

46 Carlo Boccianti, *Miglioramento dell'habitat rurale nel comprensorio di riforma dell'Ente Maremma, Report presented at the I Convegno Nazionale dell'Associazione Italiana d'Ingegneria Agraria, Portici, 14-15 April 1966* (Bari: Laterza, 1966), 7.

47 Boccianti, *Miglioramento dell'habitat rurale*, 8.

Fig. 15
Carlo Boccianti, Pescia Romana service village project, Viterbo, 21.03.1956. Church, plan (source: Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome).



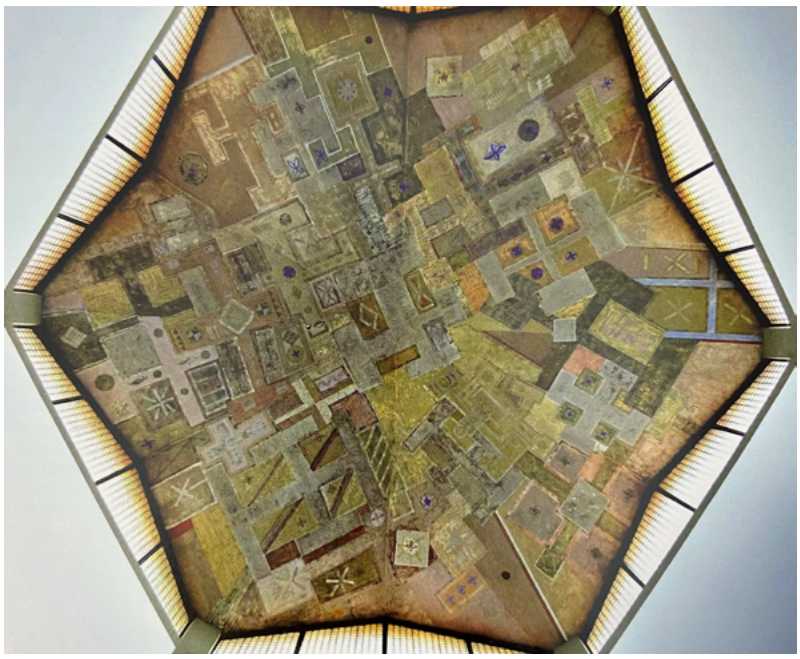

in two planimetric and volumetric areas **[Fig. 16]**: a lower area for the worshippers and a central area for the presbytery and the altar, with an exagonal drum about 16 metres high, supported by six reinforced concrete piers, covered, like the exterior, with Marciano carved stone, recalling the Etruscan remains already present in the area. The drum is closed at the top by a double-pitched roof, structurally made up of a reinforced concrete slab about 10 centimetres thick, built under the supervision of the engineer Riccardo Morandi (1902-1989),[48] under which pentagonal windows with decorated glass open, creating a crown of light inside. To enhance the rarefied space at the top of the drum, Boccianti commissioned the artist Pietro Cascella to decorate the intrados of the roof slab with a tempera mosaic of geometric and abstract motifs, which the artist conceived in collaboration with his wife, Anna Maria Sforza Cesarini (1921-2007):[49] this mosaic creates a kind of *trompe l'oeil* which, viewed from below, makes the surface of the roof, which is geometrically characterised by edges and recesses, appear to be perfectly smooth **[Fig. 17]**.[50] Boccianti, therefore, articulated the interior of the building in an almost 'baroque' way, but not with a purely intellectual purpose or a celebration of architecture. On the contrary, the solutions he adopted, although more complex than those used in the first churches of the Maremma and Fucino, had the same purpose: to give voice

48 Morandi was involved in Pescia Romana as structural consultant to the builder, engineer Michele Ruffolo, owner of S.P.E. (Strade Ponti Edilizia). *Impresa S.P.E., Chiesa Pescia Romana,1958,* ACS, Rome, Riccardo Morandi fund, envelope 247, file 808.

49 Anna Maria Sforza Cesarini was born in Trento but studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome, where in the 1940s she began to visit the studios of famous artists (Massimo Campigli, Afro Basaldella, Giuseppe Capogrossi, Carlo Carrà, Giorgio De Chirico, Gino Severini) for whom she created mosaics and collages. In 1945 she married Pietro Cascella, with whom she produced large mosaic works for a long time. See: Ferretti, "'L'intelligenza nelle mani': opere inedite di Pietro Cascella per l'Ente Maremma," 94.

50 According to Boccianti himself, this solution, of great figurative effectiveness, which he had already used in other churches built for the Ente Maremma, was also economically motivated: "In the fifties, the limited economic resources with which we had to work suggested solutions that would be absurd today, given the ease with which young artists, who were above all eager to work, could be approached: for this reason I found it convenient to cover the entire ceiling of a church with tempera cartoons by Pietro Cascella, instead of plastering and then painting it. I am referring to the church in the village of San Giovanni in Laiatico (Volterra), which is completely covered with these cartoons with Byzantine-inspired motifs [...]". See: Boccianti, "Gli artisti e le architetture della Maremma," 43.

Fig. 16
Carlo Boccianti, Pescia Romana service village project, Viterbo, 21.03.1956, perspective (source: Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome).





17 18

to the need for spirituality and not only for houses of the communities settled in rural villages, with sensitivity to ecclesiastical needs and awareness of the social role of sacred buildings.[51]

The perfect architectural and artistic collaboration between Boccianti and Cascella, author of various works both inside and outside the church, was fundamental in achieving of this goal. In addition to decorating the ceiling of the drum, the artist also created the baptismal font, made of concrete blocks and iron bars, placed next to the central presbytery **[Fig. 18]**: it stands out against the background of the Marcian stone with its size, and its form resembles an oil jar, but with ancient and archaic symbols to remind us that it contains holy water, an essential element not for earthly but for spiritual life: on the right, the X of Χριστός, inscribed in a square in the manner of the early Christians; in the centre, an elementary Greek cross, designed by a mosaic of gilded mirrors. Following the division suggested by Boccianti's architecture, therefore, it seems that Cascella wanted to follow the dialectic between the Old and the New Testament with the division between human space (low and dark) and divine space (high and bright). The works are 'tactile' on the first level (the archaic baptismal font) and 'rarefied' on the second (the abstract mosaic on the drum ceiling). The harmony between Cascella and Boccianti in the construction of the interior sacred space was so intense that it also stimulated the architect's unquenchable passion for sculpture: he himself created a holy water stoup with a clean form that perfectly matched the lines of the baptismal font **[Fig. 19]**.[52]

Fig. 17
Pescia Romana (VT), San Giuseppe Operaio Church, architect Carlo Boccianti. Pietro Cascella and Anna Maria Sforza Cesarini, terracotta slab mosaic painted in tempera on the ceiling of the exagonal drum (source: *Nel Lazio Guida al patrimonio storico artistico ed etnoantropologico*, no 2, I, Gennaio/Giugno 2011, 92).

Fig. 18
Pescia Romana (VT), San Giuseppe Operaio Church, architect Carlo Boccianti. Pietro Cascella, concrete and iron baptismal font (source: *Nel Lazio Guida al patrimonio storico artistico ed etnoantropologico*, no 2, I, Gennaio/Giugno 2011, 95).

51 "[...] the interior space, treated as a place of theophany, gives voice to a spiritual, ecstatic and contemplative need; the mystical impulse of the central space, combined with a decoration that recalls the indefiniteness and unrepresentability of the Divine, proposes a response to the general 'eclipse of the sacred' that the 20th century has dramatically brought to the fore". Ferretti, "'L'intelligenza nelle mani': opere inedite di Pietro Cascella per l'Ente Maremma," 96.

52 A similar alliance between art and architecture, present in Cascella's work in general, also characterised





19 20

Thanks to this perfect harmony between the architect and the artist, in Pescia Romana not only the church but also the open spaces became places to stimulate the spirituality and reflection of the inhabitants of the village, with the usual 'bold' cues: an example of this is the fountain made by Cascella out of concrete blocks bound with iron clamps, which Boccianti placed in the square next to the church [Fig. 20]. The space has a hexagonal shape and rises about 70 centimetres from the sides towards the centre, forming a kind of pyramid whose apex is marked by the work of the Abruzzo sculptor, who here tried his hand at a fountain for the first time. It too presents volumes with a strong archaic connotation, composed by interlocking and a precise choice of materials, subordinated to economic needs but transformed into artistic innovation. In fact, it was the Master's intention that the trickle of water flowing over a porous material such as concrete would allow the birth of small plants that would one day cover the fountain, making it a symbol and proof of cyclical nature. In addition, children leaving the neighbouring school would be able to observe, touch and experience the work as part of their lives. In short, Cascella's idea, which Boccianti takes up and amplifies by placing the fountain in the village, was that this archetypal object should remind the new community settled in the village of times gone by, but made present by its daily activity. It was Boccianti himself who, years later, gave an important reflection on the effectiveness of the 'bold' impulses that he had patiently, and often unsuccessfully, tried to spread in the Agrarian

Fig. 19
Pescia Romana (VT), San Giuseppe Operaio Church, architect Carlo Boccianti. Carlo Boccianti concrete and iron stoup (source: *Nel Lazio Guida al patrimonio storico artistico ed etnoantropologico*, no 2, I, Gennaio/Giugno 2011, 96)

Fig. 20
Pescia Romana (VT), Pietro Cascella, hammered concrete fountain and iron staples (source: *Nel Lazio Guida al patrimonio storico artistico ed etnoantropologico*, no 2, I, Gennaio/Giugno 2011, 90)

the collaboration between the Abruzzo artist and the architect Ludovico Quaroni (1911-1987): in particular, in the construction of the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Francavilla a Mare, in the province of Chieti (1948-1949), Pietro Cascella, together with his brother Andrea, created works of art that were perfectly integrated into the architectural space conceived by Quaroni. Here too, as in the Church of Pescia Romana, the division between the human space (low and dark) and the divine space (high and bright) suggested by the architecture is fully supported by the artist's works, easily readable in the former and almost elusive in the latter. See: Claudia Lamberti, "S. Maria Maggiore di Francavilla a mare: progetto, costruzione, arredo," *Bollettino ingegneri*, no. 6 (2009): 15-19.

Reform areas, from the Maremma to the Fucino, and on the success of the Pescia Romana project:

> It is difficult to say how well these works of art were received by the inhabitants of the reform territories. What is certain is that, for better or worse, they have captured their imagination, especially those that are more difficult to interpret because they are more abstract. It was enough for me to hear the reaction of a little girl coming out of the school in the village of Pescia Romana, where I had planned the location of a fountain that I wanted to be 'practicable' for the children to experience. I asked the child what it looked like to her and she replied, "It looks like something from a long time ago". She understood perfectly the primitive and timeless character of Pietro Cascella's style.[53]

53 Boccianti, "Gli artisti e le architetture della Maremma," 45.

## Bibliography


Barbero, Giuseppe. *Riforma agraria italiana. Risultati e prospettive*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 1960.

Boccianti, Carlo. "Una casa per l'uomo: nella migliore armonia tra l'ambiente naturale, l'architettura e la necessità del lavoro dei campi." *Agricoltura: rivista mensile di attualità italiane e straniere*, no. 2, 1 (1952): 29-32.

Boccianti, Carlo. *Miglioramento dell'habitat rurale nel comprensorio di riforma dell'Ente Maremma, Relazione presentata al I Convegno Nazionale dell'Associazione Italiana d'Ingegneria Agraria, Portici, 14-15 aprile 1966*. Bari: Laterza, 1966.

Boccianti, Carlo. "Gli artisti e le architetture della Maremma." *Innovazione e Agricoltura*, no. 1, III (January/February 2000): 43-45.

Bosaglia, Rossana, Mario De Micheli, and Pietro Toesca. *Pietro Cascella. Le opere monumentali*. Milano: Electa, 1993.

Cascella, Pietro. *Pietro e la famiglia: una lunga vocazione artistica*. Parma: Guanda, 1998.

Castelli, Alfio. *Alfio Castelli: sculture e disegni 1979-1987*. Roma: De Luca, 1987.

Ciranna, Simonetta. "L'architettura delle chiese nell'Italia del dopoguerra. Il Convegno di Bologna del 1955." In *Le pietre e l'eterno. Architetture religiose: costruzioni e restauro*, edited by Daniela Concas and Marco Spesso, 87-93. Roma: Plan Ed., 2011.

Ciranna, Simonetta and Patrizia Montuori. *Tempo, spazio e architetture. Avezzano cento anni o poco più*. Roma: Editoriale Artemide, 2015.

Ciranna, Simonetta, and Patrizia Montuori. "La Marsica nel Novecento. Trasformazione, marginalità e sperimentazione." *QuAD- Quaderni di Architettura e Design*, no. 3 (2020): 71-87.

De Bianchi, Marco, and Luca Seravalle. *Le costruzioni rurali della Riforma Fondiaria nella Maremma grossetana degli anni Cinquanta*. Grosseto: Editrice Innocenti, 2011.

Del Francia, Marco, Tombari Giovanni, and Catalani Barbara, eds. *Itinerari di architettura contemporanea. Grosseto e provincia*. Pisa: Edizioni Ets, 2011.

Di Biagi, Paola, ed. *La grande ricostruzione. Il piano Ina-Casa e l'Italia degli anni '50*. Roma: Donzelli, 2001.

Di Genova, Giorgio, ed. *Alfio Castelli: opere 1931-1992.* Senigallia: Sapere Nuovo, 1996.

Di Sandro, Giancarlo. *Agricoltura e sviluppo economico. Il ruolo della politica agraria in Italia (1944-1982)*. Milano: Franco Angeli, 2002.

Domenichelli, Luciano. *Una grande generazione di agricoltori*. Pitigliano: Editrice Laurum, 2009.

Edallo, Amos. *Ruralistica- Urbanistica rurale- con particolare riferimento alla Valle Padana: il paese rurale, l'azienda rurale, la casa rurale in funzione dell'organizzazione agricola attuale e futura*. Milano: Hoepli, 1946.

Ente Maremma. *A.D. 1961, I borghi di servizio. Strutture periferiche*. Roma: Officina poligrafica laziale, n.d., 1961.

Felice, Emanuele. *Cassa per il mezzogiorno: il caso dell'Abruzzo*. L'Aquila: Consiglio Regionale dell'Abruzzo, 2003.

Ferretti, Patrizia. "'L'intelligenza nelle mani': opere inedite di Pietro Cascella per l'Ente Maremma." *Nel Lazio Guida al patrimonio storico artistico ed etnoantropologico Rivista semestrale della Soprintendenza per i Beni Storici, Artistici ed Etnoantropologici del Lazio*, no. 2, I (Gennaio/Giugno 2011): 89-99.

Gigli, Loreto. *I pionieri della Maremma. Storia recente di Capalbio*. Pitigliano: Editrice Laurum, 2009.

Iacoponi, Valentina. "Case fino al limite dell'orizzonte. La riforma fondiaria attraverso i paesaggi dell'Ente Maremma." In *I paesaggi della riforma agraria: storia, pianificazione e gestione*, edited by Fausto Carmelo Nigrelli and Gabriella Bonini, 249-259. Gattatico (RE): Istituto Alcide Cervi, 2017.

Lamberti, Claudia. "S. Maria Maggiore di Francavilla a mare: progetto, costruzione, arredo." *Bollettino ingegneri*, no. 6 (2009): 15-19.

Longhi, Andrea. "Laboratori di Architettura per le cittadelle cristiane. Parrocchie e periferie nel dopoguerra." *Thema. Rivista dei Beni Culturali Ecclesiastici*, no. 1 (2012): 36-41.

Marino, Angela, and Giulio Tamburini, eds. *Città nascenti. I borghi del Fucino*. Roma: Gangemi, 2010.

Marino, Angela, and Valeria Lupo, eds. *Omaggio a Marcello Vittorini. Un archivio per la città*. Roma: Gangemi, 2012.

Milletti, Roberto. *Nuovi progetti di costruzioni rurali e tipi di insediamento*. Bologna: Edizioni agricole,1958.

Montuori, Patrizia. "Il Fucino da acqua a terra. Tracce storiche della trasformazione di un territorio, dall'antichità all'epoca contemporanea." In *La città globale. La condizione urbana come fenomeno pervasivo / The Global City. The urban condition as a pervasive phenomenon*. Vol. E, edited by Marco Pretelli, Rosa Tamborrino and Ines Tolic, 490-500. Torino: AISU (Insights, 1), 2020.

Pinelli, Gennaro. "È sorto in località 'Ottomila' un nuovo villaggio dell'Ente Fucino," *Il Fucino*, June 15, 1955. In *Città Nascenti. I borghi del Fucino*, edited by Angela Marino and Giulio Tamburini, 17-19. Roma: Gangemi, 2010.

Pontrandolfi, Raffaele, and Adriana Raguso. *Architettura rurale e novecento: i borghi di Matera nel contesto italiano e internazionale*. Matera: Edizioni Magister, 2022.

Rafanelli, Marica. "L'architettura genera sé stessa. Progetto di ristrutturazione della chiesa del Santissimo crocifisso a Grosseto." In *Le Ville del moderno in Toscana. Roccamare, Riva del Sole, Punta Ala. Tutela e Conservazione*, edited by Riccardo Renzi, Stefano Giommoni and Vanessa Mazzini, 82-95. Florence: Didapress, 2023.

Saint-Martin, Isabelle. *Art chrétien/art sacré. Regards du catholicisme sur l'art. France, XIXe-XXe siècle*. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2015.

Ceriani Sebregondi, Giorgio, Piero Grassini, Antonio Buongiorno, Nallo Mazzocchi Alemanni, Roberto Milletti, Bernardo Barotta, Adalberto Libera, Marcello Buonuomo, Giorgio Guidi, Pio Montesi and Tito Chioni. *Esperienze urbanistiche in Italia*. Roma: Istituto Nazionale di Urbanstica (INU), 1952.

Simoncelli, Antonio Valentino. *Dalla riforma fondiaria allo sviluppo agricolo. Archivio storico, 1950-1977*. Roma: ETSAF Ente Toscano Sviluppo Agricolo e Forestale, ERSAL Ente Regionale Sviluppo Agricolo nel Lazio, 1991.

Simoncelli, Antonio Valentino. *Rispescia. Da villaggio bracciantile a borgo residenziale*. Grosseto: Editrice Innocenti, 2003.

Vittorini, Marcello. *Il prosciugamento del lago e l'evoluzione del tessuto insediativo e organizzativo del Fucino, estratto da «Fucino cento anni». 1877-1977. Atti degli incontri e dei convegni svoltisi per il Centenario del prosciugamento del Fucino e per il Venticinquennale della Riforma Agraria*. Avezzano: n.d., 1977.

## Archival Sources

Carlo Boccianti, *Project for a Service Village in Pescia Romana*. In: Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome, Ministero dell'Agricoltura e delle Foreste, Direzione Generale Bonifica e Colonizzazione, Progetti dell'Ente Maremma Tosco-Laziali 1951-1970, envelope 149.

Ente Maremma, *Project for the renovation of buildings and roads in the village of Santa Maria di Rispescia former Ponticelli Luigi property Village of Santa Maria di Rispescia*. In: Archive of Agenzia Regionale per lo Sviluppo e l'Innovazione dell'Agricoltura del Lazio (ARSIAL), Rome, projects, file 2043.

Ente Maremma, *Restoration work and church and rectory extension for the Villaggio del Bracciante of Rispescia*. In: Archive of ARSIAL, Rome, projects, file 3427.

*Impresa S.P.E., Chiesa Pescia Romana,1958*, In: Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome, Riccardo Morandi fund, envelope 247, file 808.

*List of registered for the years 1945-56*. In: Historical Archive of Order of Architects, Town planners, Landscapers and Conservators of Rome and Province, Rome.

Photos of Rispescia (GR), Borgo Ottomila (AQ) and Pescia Romana (VT). In: Archive ARSIAL-Luce, Rome.

Riccardo Medici, *Project for the land transformation of the Pescia Romana Estate, January 1951*. In: Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome, Ministero dell'Agricoltura e delle Foreste, Direzione Generale Bonifica e colonizzazione, Progetti dell'Ente Maremma Tosco-Laziali 1951-1970, envelope 85.

Videointerview to Carlo Boccianti during the European Heritage Days, Soprintendenza ai Beni Artistici Storici ed Etnoantropologici del Lazio, Borgo San Martino, 26-27 September 2009. Private archive of Henny Boccianti, Rome.

Videointerview to Carlo Boccianti by Antonia Genco, Irene Rosato, Francesco Salvatore Genco, 2010. Private archive of Henny Boccianti.

**Riccardo Serraglio**

# Untopical Modernity in Neighbourhood Churches by Marcello Canino

ARTICLE

*Post-war Reconstruction, Italian Architecture, Parish Churches, Urban Design, Suburban Neighbourhoods*

**/Abstract**

**In the years of post-war reconstruction, the Italian authorities decided to expand the cities with suburban settlements for the lower classes. The popular neighborhoods had to include the essential social services, such as schools, sports facilities and parish centres. In particular, the law 18 December 1952 n. 2522 provided to allocate state funds to Italian dioceses for the construction of neighbourhood churches. For this reason, many architects and urban planners, including Marcello Canino, were commissioned to design types of ecclesiastical buildings suitables for the new popular districts.**

**In a cultural milieu characterised by contrasts between tendencies prone to either tradition or modernity, Marcello Canino is distinguished among architects who were inspired by the past in the search for new types of ecclesiastical buildings. He was a professor of architectural design from 1930 to 1969 and Dean of the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Naples from 1943 to 1952. As an interpreter of an architectural renewal in the direction of a balance between the permanence of forms derived from classicism and the introduction of the constructive rationality of the Modern Movement, he produced some interesting projects for new neighbourhood churches. During the 1950s and '60s, he chose to revisit in a modern and personal key typologies and languages derived from the Italian architecture of the Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque periods. He interpreted the history of Italian architecture in the forms of a modern classicism, distant both from the present and from the past, defined untopical modernity by his disciple Michele Capobianco.**

**/Author**

**Riccardo Serraglio**
**OrcID: 0000-0001-8362-2400**
**riccardo.serraglio@unicampania.it**

Riccardo Serraglio is Architect and PhD in the History of Architecture. He is currently Associate Professor at the University of Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli," Department of Architecture and Industrial Design. His main field of interest is the architecture of the eighteenth century, in particular the Bourbon architecture of the Kingdom of Naples. Also, he deals with the history of social architecture and in this area, he has conducted research on social housing in the 19th and 20th centuries. He participates in national and international research groups and publishes his studies in important architecture journals. He has written monographs on the Royal Site of San Leucio, the Carolino Aqueduct of Caserta and the workers' houses built in southern Italy at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

CC BY 4.0
https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/19653
Copyright © 2024 Riccardo Serraglio

## Neighbourhood Churches in Post-War Italian Reconstruction

Because of the heavy damage by Italian cities and territories during the Second World War, in the period of post-war reconstruction architects and planners faced the problem of a radical renewal of many urban and regional contexts.[1] In a period of severe social crisis worsened by a high percentage of unemployment, the political authorities decided to expand the historic cities with suburban settlements close to the new industrial districts. Thus, urban planners designing the new working-class neighbourhoods were required to provide low-cost housing for the mass of immigrants that moved to the cities from the countryside.[2] The aim was to build popular neighbourhoods where the living conditions were guaranteed to be at least dignified. Accordingly, the new suburbs had to include essential social services such as schools, sports facilities and parish centres. The presence of ecclesiastical complexes in the middle of new neighbourhoods derives from a political choice. The Italian government, led by the political party Democrazia Cristiana, pursued the goal of uniting social development to the practicing of Catholicism to avoid any dangerous propensities towards the communist ideology of the working class.[3] For this reason, was issued the law 18 December 1952 n. 2522 (Legge Aldisio), presented in National parliament by the minister of public works Salvatore Aldisio but inspired by monsignor Giovanni Costantini, from 1943 to 1956 president of the Pontificia Commissione Centrale per l'Arte Sacra in Italia.[4] The Pontificia Commissione, established in 1924 by Pope Pius XI to protect the immense heritage of Christian art, in the period of post-war reconstruction it was charged to evaluate the projects of the new parish centers, admitted to state funding only after its approval[5]. However, the Legge Aldisio did not guarantee the coverage of all construction costs, but it assigned to Italian dioceses the necessary funds for the purchase of land and to complete the structural works. As a result, the bishops and parish priests should then provide with their own resources to complete the works.

The new parish complexes, spiritual meeting points in growing and rapidly expanding cities, needed to be buildings of the highest architectural quality in suburban neighbourhoods. Consequently, some of the most important architects and urban planners of the time faced the difficult issue of designing

1 Valerio Castronuovo, "Il periodo della ricostruzione," in *Storia d'Italia Einaudi*, vol. IV, t. I. (Milano: Fabbri, 1985), 351-398; Francesco Dal Co, "La ricostruzione. Introduzione alla storia dell'architettura italiana del secondo Novecento," in *Storia dell'architettura italiana. Il secondo Novecento*, ed. Francesco Dal Co (Milano: Electa, 1997), 11-56; Paola Di Biagi, *La grande ricostruzione: Il piano Ina-Casa e l'Italia degli anni cinquanta* (Roma: Donzelli, 2010); Carlo Melograni, *Architetture nell'Italia della ricostruzione. Modernità versus modernizzazione 1945-1960* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2021); Manfredo Tafuri, *Storia dell'architettura italiana. 1944-1985* (Torino: Einaudi, 1982).

2 Giovanni Astengo, "Nuovi quartieri in Italia," *Urbanistica*, no. 7 (1951): 9-41; Pietro Bottoni, *La casa a chi lavora* (Milano: Görlich, 1945); Giancarlo De Carlo, "Il problema della casa," *Volontà*, no. 10-11 (1948): 41-49; Ernesto N. Rogers, "Una casa a ciascuno". *Il Politecnico. Settimanale di cultura contemporanea*, no. 4 (1954): 105-108.

3 *Atti e documenti della Democrazia Cristiana, 1943-1967*. vol. I (Roma: Cinque Lune, 1968), 231-254; Gabriele De Rosa, *Fanfani e la casa. Gli anni Cinquanta e il modello italiano di welfare state. Il piano Ina-Casa* (Soveria Mannelli (CZ): Rubettino, 2002).

4 Salvatore Aldisio, *Concorso dello Stato nella costruzione delle nuove chiese: legge 18 dicembre 1952, no. 2522* (Roma: Tipografia A. Staderini, 1953).

5 Daniele De Marchis, *Archivio della Commissione per l'Arte Sacra in Italia. Inventario* (Città del Vaticano: Edizioni dell'Archivio Segreto Vaticano, 2013), 1-88.

innovative shapes for new ecclesiastical buildings, while still responding to traditional types. It was decided that the new residential districts scattered among the suburbs of cities and metropolises should reflect the typical settlements of ancient Italian cities, aggregated around the churches but in a modern key. Regarding the architectural language, the designers were allowed to operate with a certain freedom of expression, but their choices were submitted for the approval of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.[6] The bishops, heads of the dioceses, were the commissioners of the new ecclesiastical buildings and could choose projects that were inclined towards either traditional or modern solutions. Once the plans of the new parishes had been drawn up according to the preferences of the bishops, they were submitted to the Commissione Pontificia that could approve, reject or request further changes.[7]

Many bishops were concerned primarily with the speed and cost of construction; a few others, endowed with a sensitivity for art and architecture, carefully paid attention to the aesthetics of the new ecclesiastical buildings, which should have been compliant with the architectural language of the surrounding environment. Among the Italian bishops who built new churches in the 1950s and '60s, Giacomo Lercaro, the archbishop of Bologna, and Giovanni Battista Montini, the archbishop of Milan, were distinguished for their interest in modern architecture. They considered the suburbs as mission lands and, in agreement with talented architects such as Giuseppe Vaccaro, Luigi Figini, Giò Ponti, Giovanni Michelucci and many others, they decided to adopt an innovative architectural language to realise ecclesiastical buildings representing the collective identity in the social housing neighborhoods at the time being built in urban suburbs.[8]

Other Italian dioceses were also carrying out interesting projects of designing new ecclesiastical complexes. Among the ecclesiastical building projects realised in the post-war reconstruction period, there is no unitary or predominant path, but it is possible to recognise some architectural works that are very different from each other. In a cultural milieu characterised by contrasts between tendencies prone to either tradition or modernity, the absence of guidelines and prevailing cultural orientations allowed architects not only to try to achieve an optimal use of the ecclesiastical space, but also to express their creativity in different forms. Decidedly, many architects embraced a modern path. Among these, some developed the aesthetic qualities of reinforced concrete structures combined with exposed brick walls, as in the nearby residential buildings. Others gave expressive autonomy to ecclesiastical buildings made of reinforced concrete frames and sails, thus differentiating them from the surrounding urban environment. On the other hand, some architects remained faithful to the fascist architecture principles by continuing to take inspiration from the classical and

---

6 Andrea Longhi and Carlo Tosco, *Architettura, chiesa e società in Italia (1948-1978)* (Roma: Edizioni Studium, 2010).

7 De Marchis, *Archivio della Commissione per l'Arte Sacra in Italia*, 1-88.

8 Beatrice Bettazzi, Giuliano Gresleri and Glauco Gresleri, eds., *Chiesa e quartiere. Storia di una rivista e di un movimento per l'architettura a Bologna (2004)* (Bologna; Editrice Compositori, 2004); Claudia Manenti, *Il cardinale Lercaro e la città contemporanea* (Bologna: Editrice Compositori, 2004); Massimo Zorzin, *Giovanni Battista Montini: Un'idea di chiesa le sue chiese* (Rome: Edizioni Studium, 2018).

ancient architecture, in the best cases managing to articulate models derived from the past into original forms.

## Education, Professional Carrer and University Teaching of Marcello Canino

Marcello Canino (Naples, 3 July 1895 – Rome, 2 October 1970) was born into an upper middle-class Neapolitan family. His father Vincenzo was an engineer employed with managerial roles in the "Società pel Risanamento di Napoli", the company founded in 1888 to rebuild the lower-city districts affected by a devastating cholera epidemic in 1885. The young Canino, after graduating from the classical high school "Antonio Genovesi", enrolled at the "Reale Scuola Politecnica", where he attended civil engineering courses. From 1915 to 1919 he interrupted his studies to participate in the First World War as an officer in air force. Finished the war, he wanted to attend the "Scuola Superiore di Architettura" founded in 1919 in Rome but he could not move from Naples. In 1922 he graduated in civil engineering from the "Reale Scuola Politecnica" of Naples, and right after began his professional apprenticeship in the study of the engineer baron Gaetano Costa.[9]

Canino approached the study of architecture as an autodidact in a period of crisis for Italian architectural culture. In fact, in the years between the First and Second World War architectural production in Italy was still dependent on a late nineteenth-century historicist eclecticism distant from advancements of the international modernism. The national widespread crisis was more serious in Naples, relegated to a marginal role in the rising debate on the renewal of Italian architecture.[10] At the time in cities and provinces of southern Italy it continued to build in the way of a neo-Renaissance eccletism introduced in Naples by the Società pel Risanamento in the late nineteenth-century.[11] In the twenties Canino tried to separeted himself from provincialism of the local scene, looking for new openings in Italy and abroad. Through a significant relationship with Gustavo Giovannoni and Marcello Piacentini, founders of the Reale Scuola di Architettura of Rome and protagonists of fascist architecture, initially he developed an architectural language influenced by a neo-baroque formalism derived from 17th century Roman architecture.[12] Subsequently, fashinated by the aesthetic philosophy of Benedetto Croce, he directed his architectural research on the principles of subjectivity and freedom of artistic expression.[13] Attentive reader of Italian and foreign architecture magazines, particularly German, he opened his exper-

9 Carola Coppo, "Biografia," in *Marcello Canino 1895/1970*, ed. Sergio Stenti (Napoli: CLEAN, 2005), 230-231.

10 Cesare De Seta, *L'architettura a Napoli tra le due guerre* (Napoli: Napoli Electa, 1999).

11 Giancarlo Alisio, *Napoli e il risanamento: recupero di una struttura urbana* (Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1980).

12 Piero Cimbolli Spagnesi, "Fino a La Sapienza: fondamenti normativi dell'insegnamento dell'architettura a Roma e in Italia, 1871-1935", *Quaderno dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura*, special issue "Le nuove sedi universitarie e la città" (Roma, L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2018), 39-64.

13 Alberto Cuomo, "Come un Gropius che ha letto Croce," in *Marcello Canino 1895/1970,* ed. Sergio Stenti (Napoli: CLEAN, 2005), 69-75.

imentations to the central European and Scandinavian rationalist architecture. He appreciated Ludvig Hoffmann and Peter Behrens, Gunnar Asplund, Sven Markelius and other exponents of architectural currents developed in northern Europe but generated by a critical reflection on Mediterranean traditions. On the other side, he studied with passion the homeland history of architecture. As a result, the best expressions of historical Italian architecture – in diachronic sequences from the classicism of ancient Rome to Romanesque tradition, and from the rationality of Renaissance to geometric experiments of Baroque – were absorbed in his architectural language not as exact quotations but as autonomous elaborations of elements coming from the past and reworked into contemporary forms.[14]

In the period of the fascist regime Canino participated, but in secondary roles, in the affirmation of a state architecture inspired by the monumentalism of ancient Rome. In 1930 he joined the fascist party and registered in the Sindacato Nazionale Fascista Architetti. Alberto Calza Bini, head of the architects' syndicate and first Dean of the Real Scuola Superiore di Architettura, founded in Naples in 1930, entrusted him with the first university teaching assignments, introducing Canino in an academic career that would lead him to main roles at the Neapolitan University. Canino, at the time a lecturer of technical architecture, in 1936 he was qualified for the role of ordinary professor partecipating in the competitions for professorships in the Univerities of Torino and Rome, controlled by Marcello Piacentini in agreement with Alberto Calza Bini and Gustavo Giovannoni. He was a professor of architectural design from 1930 to 1969 and Dean of the Faculty of Architecture from 1943 to 1952.[15] Master of Neapolitan architects born in the twenties and thirties of the twentieth century, transmitting to students his knowledge of contemporary architectural movements, in particular of Northern Europe, in the period of post-war reconstruction he led the difficult path towards the modernity of architectural culture in southern Italy.

In addition to his academic work, Canino was engaged in intense professional activity. As interpreter of an architectural renewal in the direction of a balance between the permanence of forms and languages derived from classicism and the introduction of the constructive rationality of the Modern Movement, he realised buildings of great architectural significance and urban impact. During the fascist period, he participated in the urban renewal of Naples by drafting buildings projects of the Province (1935-1936), the Financial Offices (1935-1937) and the INA Istituto Nazionale Assicurazioni (1935-1937).[16] In his project research, the rationalist component was limited and conditioned by the permanence of architectural caracters linked to the tradition. The distance of Canino from other Italian architects declared rationalists, who in 1928 founded the MIAR (Movimento Italiano per l'Architettura Razionale), found expression in Giuseppe

14 Sergio Stenti, "Un costruttore di città e di palazzi," in *Marcello Canino 1895/1970*, ed. Sergio Stenti (Napoli: CLEAN, 2005), 16-39.

15 Coppo, "Biografia", 230-231.

16 Stenti, "Un costruttore di città e palazzi",16-39.

Pagano's harsh criticism of the INA building. Prominent figure in the diffusion of rational architecture in Italy and director of the architecture magazine Casabella, Pagano defined the building designed by Canino «an example of the degrading consequences of compromises» due to the presence of twin columns and alternating arches and lintels in the main façade.[17] Canino really never renounced the use of decorative items derived from ancient architecture, however it does not seem right to reduce his project research to a simple revival of historic styles. His pupil Michele Capobianco, known as a protagonist of Neapolitan architecture of the late twentieth century and professor of design at the University of Naples, witnessed the freedom of the master in seeking a new path in his own architectural research. As Capobianco testified, during the fascism Canino chose to keep himself out of trend groups, both traditionalists and modernists, to preserve his cultural independence. As a result of his studies on the masterpieces of ancient and modern architecture and the knowledge of the architectural movements of his time, Canino developed an autonomous language, difficult to categorize. On the basis of the deep knowledge of the work of his master, Capobianco gave an appropriate definition of the architectural style of Canino, calling it "modernità inattuale".[18] It is difficult to translate the exact meaning of this expression, but it could correspond to outdated modernity or rather untopical modernity. Effectively, many buildings designed by Canino convey a sense of estrangement from any contextualization. As you will see in his neighbourhood churches built between the fifties and seventies, references to antiquity are never related to local pre-existences but derive from languages and types of past eras, taken as theoretical models and reworked in original and modern forms. Likewise, geometric shapes, colours, finishes and building materials, clearly distinguish the architectures of Canino from the surrounding environment. The distance of Canino's works from related setting, however, does not represent isolation but establishes a hierarchy based on mutual respect for roles in a rational planning of new suburban neighborhoods.

The attitude to lead demonstrated by Canino in the academic carrer was reflected in professional practice, as he headed on several occasions groups of architects in charge of newly founded neighborhoods projects. A large-scale urban intervention coordinated by Canino during the fascist period was the Mostra Triennale delle Terre Italiane d'Oltremare in Fuorigrotta suburb, in the eastern outskirts of Naples, realized between 1937 and 1940.[19] Perhaps the most significant operation of political promotion carried out by the fascist government in southern Italy, the exhibition centre was built in a large area outside the city according to the masterplan drawn up by Canino, who commissioned the best young architects trained at the Real Scuola Superiore di Architettura of Naples

17 Giuseppe Pagano, "Chi si ferma è perduto," *Casabella Costruzioni*, no. 128 (1938): 2-3.

18 Michele Capobianco, "Marcello Canino tra le due guerre o della modernità inattuale," *ArQ Architettura Quaderni*, no. 3 (1990): 7-38. Michele Capobianco, "Modernità inattuale," in *Marcello Canino 1895/1970,* ed. Sergio Stenti (Napoli: CLEAN, 2005), 40-48.

19 Aldo, Aveta Alessandro Castagnaro and Fabio Mangone, *La Mostra d'Oltremare. Ricerche storiche e restauro del moderno* (Napoli: FedOAPress and Editori Paparo, 2021).

to design pavilions and buildings that formed the settlement.[20]

His moral rectitude and distance from political extremism allowed Canino to continue without repercussions the academic and professional activities after the transition to Republican government, unlike other architects compromised with the fascist regime. As he done in the years of fascism, during the post-war reconstruction period his commitment to the profession was highly productive. The best works of this second phase of his career include the Thermae Building in Castellamare di Stabia (1946-1955) and the Bank of Italy Building (1951-1956), along with some residential buildings in Naples (1950-1953) and the Courthouse in Avellino (1962-1977). These buildings, freed from the emphasis of fascist architecture, are distinguished by the rationality of the plano-volumetric systems and the balanced composition of the façades, prospecting on public spaces of crucial importance in new urban assets.[21]

From the mid-forties to the seventies Canino directed groups of architectsd in charge of designing neighborhoods of public housing. Between 1946 and 1948 Canino designed, in collaboration with the architect Alfredo Sbriziolo, the Gemito district on the Vomero hill in Naples. Later, between 1955 and 1952, he drew the master plan of the INA Casa district of Soccavo-Canzanella (1955-1962). In 1957 the CEP (Coordinamento per l'Edilizia Popolare) commissioned him to design the masterplan of rione Traiano, a new residential district for 30,000 inhabitants that would be built in Soccavo suburb east of Naples.[22] The new settlement was to accommodate the inhabitants of the historic center, who had lost their homes due to the bombing of the United States Army Air Forces. The neighborhood masterplan foresaw a system of tree-lined avenues inspired by the Scandinavian suburbs and North American parkways. It was designed to be a modern model of low-cost social housing, but unfortunately it took on the signs of the dehumanising degradation of the worst metropolitan suburbs within a few years since its construction.

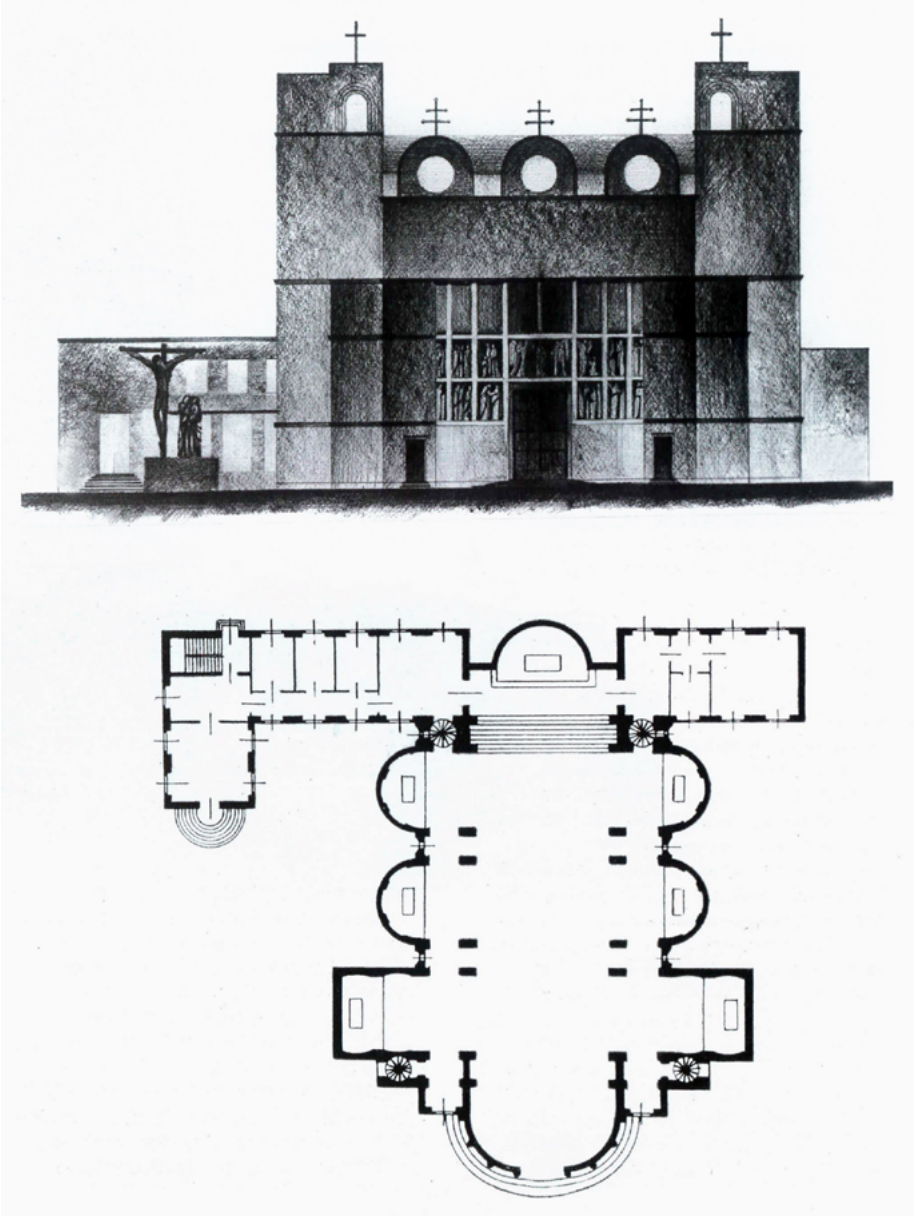
Despite the fundamental role in the university education of generations of architects and the many works realized during his long career, it must be admitted, in a final analysis, that his position as a protagonist of Italian architecture of the twentieth century is not yet adequately recognized by critics, outside the Neapolitan context. For this reason, it seems appropriate to deepen some aspects of the architectural research of Canino – in this case the design of ecclesiastical buildings – in order to affirm the relevant significance of his architectural research in a wider context.

---

20 Paolo Nicoloso, *Marcello Piacentini. Architettura e potere: una biografia* (Udine: Gaspari Editore, 2018), 197-198.

21 Stenti, "Un costruttore di città e palazzi", 16-39.

22 Carolina Cigala, "Quartieri residenziali e il villaggio al Faito," in *Marcello Canino 1895/1970,* ed. Sergio Stenti (Napoli: CLEAN, 2005), 221-228; Gianluca Frediani, "Il quartiere Traiano di Marcello Canino. Distruzione di un modello," *ArQ Architettura Quaderni*, no. 2 (1990): 67-77; Giada Limongi, "Rione Traiano," 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: TU Universitätsverlag, 2022), 102-107.



1

## Projects in Design Competitions for Ecclesiastical Buildings

During his long professional career, Marcello Canino dealt several times with the theme of ecclesiastical architecture project.[23] His first commitment in the field dates back to the period between the First and Second World War, precisely 1932, with the victorious participation in the competition for the church of Maria Maddalena in Messina.[24] At that juncture, in Italy the political rise of fascism required a radical revision of architectural style aimed at affirming the national identity, which would be concretized in buildings made in the forms of a modern classicism, mainly inspired by Roman architecture but also the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Just one year before the competition for the Maria Maddalena church, Marcello Piacentini, polemicizing against the art critic Pietro Maria Bardi,

23 Carola Coppo, "Edifici religiosi," in *Marcello Canino 1895/1970,* ed.Sergio Stenti (Napoli: CLEAN, 2005), 214-220.

24 Coppo, "Edifici religiosi", 214-220.

Fig. 1
Marcello Canino, plan and façade of the church of Maria Maddalena in Messina (Private archive of Marcello Canino)

stigmatized the Rationalist movement by calling it purposely Bolshevik.[25] It is therefore understandable that a climate of mistrust developed among italian architects towards a rationalism of Corbusian derivation, that it could have been interpreted by the fascist regime as a propensity to communist ideology. For this reason, the search for a different modernity did not seek a distance from styles and typologies of ancient architecture, as in other Western European nations.[26] In Italy, the architects engaged in the renewal of the discipline had instead tried to establish deep links with the past by revisiting in modern terms the principles of classical antiquity. However, while architectural works commissioned by the Government predominantly reflected the models of the ancient Rome, the researchs on modernization of ecclesiastical buildings were mainly inspired by Medieval and Renaissance prototypes, affirming national identity in other ways. Regarding the participation of Canino in the design competition for the church of Maddalena, he proposed an original basilical space composed of an alternation of parallelepiped, cylindrical and hemispherical extradosed bodies that, according to Carlo Cresti, revisited the forms of the Sicilian Arab-Norman cathedrals.[27] The use of a modern material, such as reinforced concrete, allowed him to create shapes derived from the past architecture, but characterized by proportions and decorative finishes decidedly untopical [Fig. 1]. In this project, he used reinforced concrete in an innovative way, because at the time load-bearing structures were often hidden in the ecclesiastical buildings by envelopes apparently according with the constructive tradition of wall surfaces plastered and decored with stuccoes or covered with precious marble slabs. In this project by Canino, on the contrary, unordinary dimensions of pillars and architraves, as well as the slender shell of vaults, demonstrated clearly the potential of new materials and construction techniques in creating innovative architectural shapes.

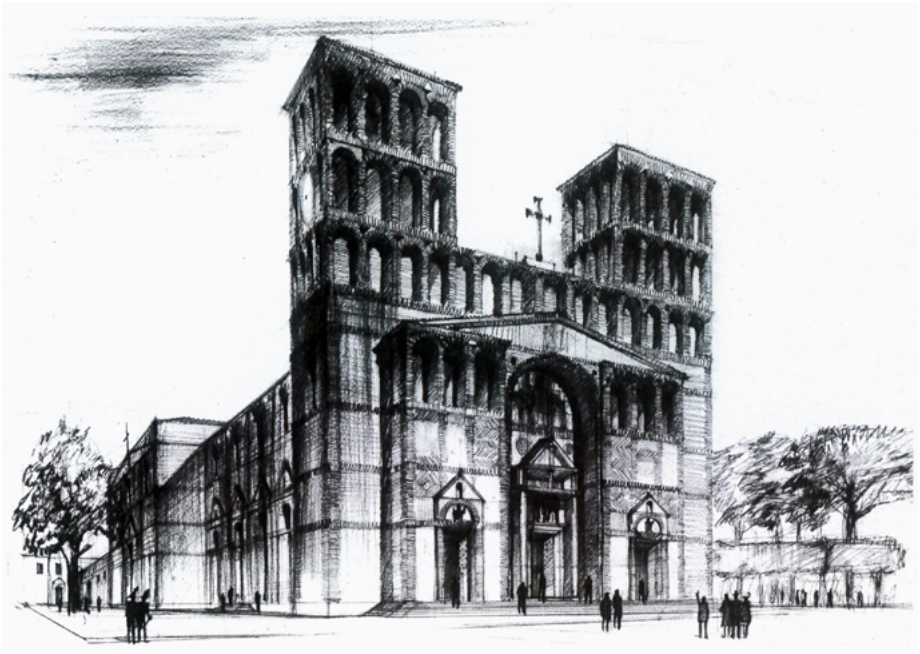
Almost twenty years later, in 1951, he participated in the design competition for the church of San Giovanni Bosco in Rome, organized by the Salesian order under the supervision of the Pontificia Commissione Centrale per l'Arte Sacra, submitting a project ranked third out of one hundred and two competitors.[28] The new church, designed to serve the community and the scholastic institute of the Salesian Fathers, was to serve as the parish church of the new Cinecittà district, inside the Tuscolano suburb. The competition call for proposals did not require a particular type or architectural style, but invited the designers to respect the noble character that distinguished over the centuries the sacred architecture of

25 Marcello Piacentini, "Difesa dell'architettura italiana," *Il Giornale d'Italia*, May 2, 1931.

26 Marcucci Laura, "Presentazione," in *L'architettura dell'"altra modernità". Atti del XXVI Congresso di Storia dell'Architettura* edited by Marina Docci and Maria Grazia Turco (Roma: Gangemi Editore, 2010) 13-15; Laura Marcucci. "Introduzione," in *L'altra modernità nella cultura architettonica del XX secolo. Progetto e città nell'architettura italiana,* Laura Marcucci, ed., vol. 2, (Roma: Gangemi Editore, 2012), 7-8; Maria Luisa Neri, "Introduzione," in *L'altra modernità nella cultura architettonica del XX secolo. Dibattito internazionale e realtà locali*, Maria Luisa Neri, ed., vol. 1, (Roma: Gangemi Editore, 2012), 7-8.

27 Carlo Cresti, *Architettura e fascismo* (Firenze: Vallecchi Editore, 1986).

28 Coppo, "Edifici religiosi", 214-220; Riccardo Serraglio, "La basilica di San Giovanni Bosco a Roma fulcro delle trasformazioni urbanistiche del quartiere Cinecittà negli anni della ricostruzione post-bellica," in *La città che si rinnova. Dal manufatto architettonico alla forma urbana edited by* Chiara Ingrosso, Elena Manzo, Luca Molinari, and Riccardo Serraglio (Napoli: La scuola di Pitagora, 2018), 33-51.



2

the Roman church. After the selection board examined all the projects, that of a basilica church surmounted by an imposing dome, presented by Sicilian architect Gaetano Rapisardi, won the competition. The project presented by Canino ranked third, behind those of Rapisardi and Vittorio Ballio Morpurgo.[29]

To compete for the project of the new church of the Salesian order, Canino designed a basilica plant covered by a big dome and characterized by a spacious trilobed transept **[Fig. 2]**, to allow the faithful to attend close to central altar the holy mass, taking into account mind the changes happening in the celebration of religious rites. In this project, as in the previous one and subsequents, the architect elaborated different influences in original forms. An exceptional visual memory allowed him to remember the shapes and features of buildings he knew well, because he seen them directly or through the books of art history he studied in the years of formation. This extraordinary ability is witnessed by the drawings of neapolitan churches, palaces and squares, outlined exclusively on his memories when in 1943 he took refuge in Sorrento for a few months with his family, to escape the bombings that devastated the city.[30] His design process merged manifold impressions of past into new forms, generating architectures that could not be defined modern but not even traditionalist. Therefore, his first plans of ecclesiastical buildings can be defined as untopical, according to Michele Capobianco,[31] or deliberately outdated, as Benedetto Gravagnuolo called other works of Canino.[32] We can try to recognize the architectural matrices of these projects but never with certainty, because probably

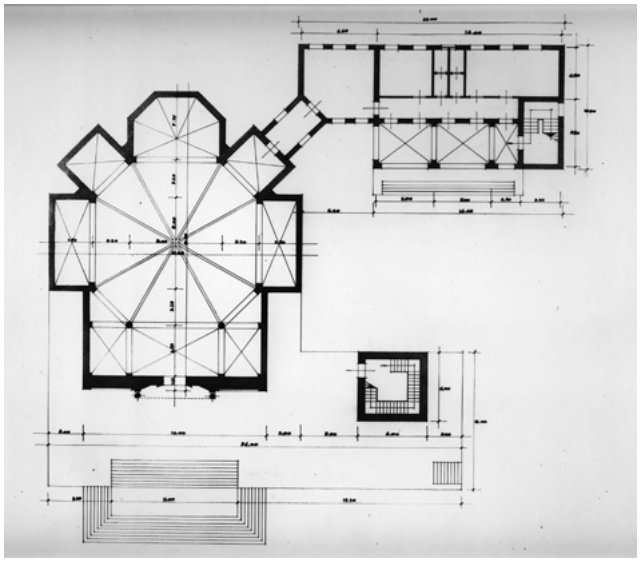
29 Serraglio, "La basilica di San Giovanni Bosco", 33-51.

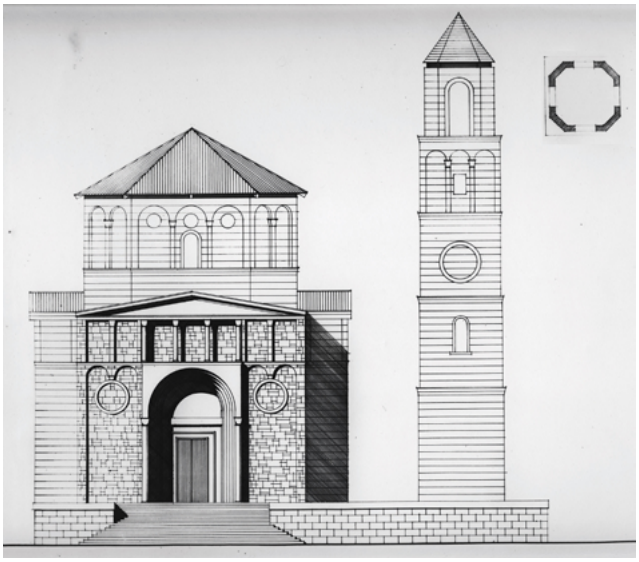
30 Marcello Canino and Riccardo Filangieri, *Napoli visioni d'arte e di vita nei disegni di Marcello Canino commentati da Riccardo Filangieri* (Napoli: ILTE Industria Libraria Tipografica Editrice, 1954).

31 Capobianco, "Marcello Canino tra le due guerre o della modernità inattuale", 7-38; Capobianco, "Modernità Inattuale", 40-48.

32 Gravagnuolo Benedetto. "L'architettura della ricostruzione tra continuità e sperimentazione," in Pasquale Belfiore and Benedetto Gravagnuolo, eds., *Architetture dal 1945 a oggi a Napoli e provincia* (Naples: Ermes Multimedia, 2004-2005), 1-26.

Fig. 2
Marcello Canino, perspective view of the church of San Giovanni Bosco in Rome (Private archive of Marcello Canino)





3 4

the architect did not think of particular cases but rather he drew inspiration from ideal models derived from reality and purified by peculiarities of the individual buildings. Thus, we cannot determine whether the façades with symmetrical side-towers were inspired by the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, the highest expression of the French Gothic, otherwise by the Cefalù cathedral in Sicily, or by the Trinità dei Monti church in Rome. In a similar way, we could recognize in the three-lobed crowning of the La Maddalena church a reworking of the façade of the San Marco basilica in Venice, and in the overlapping arcades of the San Giovanni Bosco church a memory of the Pisa cathedral, and still many other references. Perhaps Canino was inspired by these architectural masterpieces and many others, processed in his projects in autonomous and original modes. In the end, we can already recognize from these early designs the method of Marcello Canino, based on knowledge of the past reworked in forms of an untopical modernity.

## Neighbourhood Churches Projects and Achievements

After the approval of the law 18 December 1952 n. 2522, the mentioned Legge Aldisio, Canino actively participated in the design of new parish churches, developing research lines anticipated in the described competitions, based on reinterpretations in a modern and personal key of typologies and languages derived from the Italian architecture of the Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque periods. In the projects of new neighborhood churches drawn up between the fifties and sixties, he separated his personal architectural research from the prevailing National trend tending towards innovations of modernist style. On the contrary, he interpreted the hystorical models of the basilica, the central and oval plan, inspired by the tradition of Italian architecture, in the forms of a modern classicism. In fact, Canino distinguished himself among architects engaged in the renewal of ecclesiastical architecture because, unlike the others, did not want to experiment with the invention of unconventional forms. In contrast, he preferred

Fig. 3
Marcello Canino, plan of the parish church of the Vergine del Rosario in Serramazzoni (Private archive of Marcello Canino).

Fig. 4
Marcello Canino, elevation of the parish church of the Vergine del Rosario in Serramazzoni (Private archive of Marcello Canino).






5 6

to be inspired by the authority of historical architecture in the search for renewed types of ecclesiastical buildings.[33]

Unlike the competitions usually organized to select the best projects for the most important churches, the Legge Aldisio allowed the Italian bishops to directly appoint the architects in charge of drawing up the plans and quickly start construction work of the new parish centers. Documents from the archive of the Pontificia Commissione Centrale per l'Arte Sacra testify to Canino's participation in the design of about ten neighbourhood churches, from the preliminary acquisition of buildable areas to drafting of the projects submitted to the commission, which in many cases required variants.[34] Half of the neighbourhood churches projects drawn up by Canino were actually realized, but in no case he took care of the execution of the work. Consequently, while the original projects are stored in the Vatican archives, documents relating to the construction of the buildings are kept in parish and diocesan technical offices and in the provincial agencies of the Genio Civile, a public body under the authority of the Ministry of Public Works responsible for monitoring structural projects.

In the spring of 1954, on commission from the Bishop of Modena Cesare Boccoleri (Rapallo, 21 March 1875 – Modena, 31 October 1956), Canino drew up the plans for the new parish churches of San Lazzaro in Modena and the Vergine del Rosario in Serramazzoni, but only the second one was built.[35] The project of the parish of Serramazoni was probably the result of a confrontation

33 Gianluca Frediani, "Marcello Canino e il rinnovamento della tradizione. Il palazzo degli Uffici Finanziari di Napoli," *ArQ Architettura Quaderni*, no. 3 (1989): 44-50; Stenti, "Un costruttore di città e palazzi", 16-39.

34 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: Universitätsverlag der TU Berlin, 2022), 307-313; Riccardo Serraglio, "Marcello Canino progettista di chiese di quartiere nel periodo della ricostruzione postbellica", in *Città e guerra. Difese, distruzioni, permanenze delle memorie e dell'immagine urbana,* eds. Francesca Capano, Emma Maglio and Massimo Visone (Naples: Federico II University Press, 2023), 1425-1435.

35 Vatican Secret Archive, Archives of the Commissione per l'Arte Sacra in Italia, Diocesi di Modena, *Serramazzoni: Nuova chiesa parrocchiale e locali di ministero parrocchiale*, Folders 3-4, 1954-1957; Private archive of Marcello Canino, *Progetto della chiesa parrocchiale della Vergine del Rosario a Serramazzoni*, undated drawings.

Fig. 5
Vintage picture of the parish church of the Vergine del Rosario in Serramazzoni (Private archive of Marcello Canino).

Fig. 6
Interior of the parish church of the Vergine del Rosario in Serramazzoni (photograph by Riccardo Serraglio).

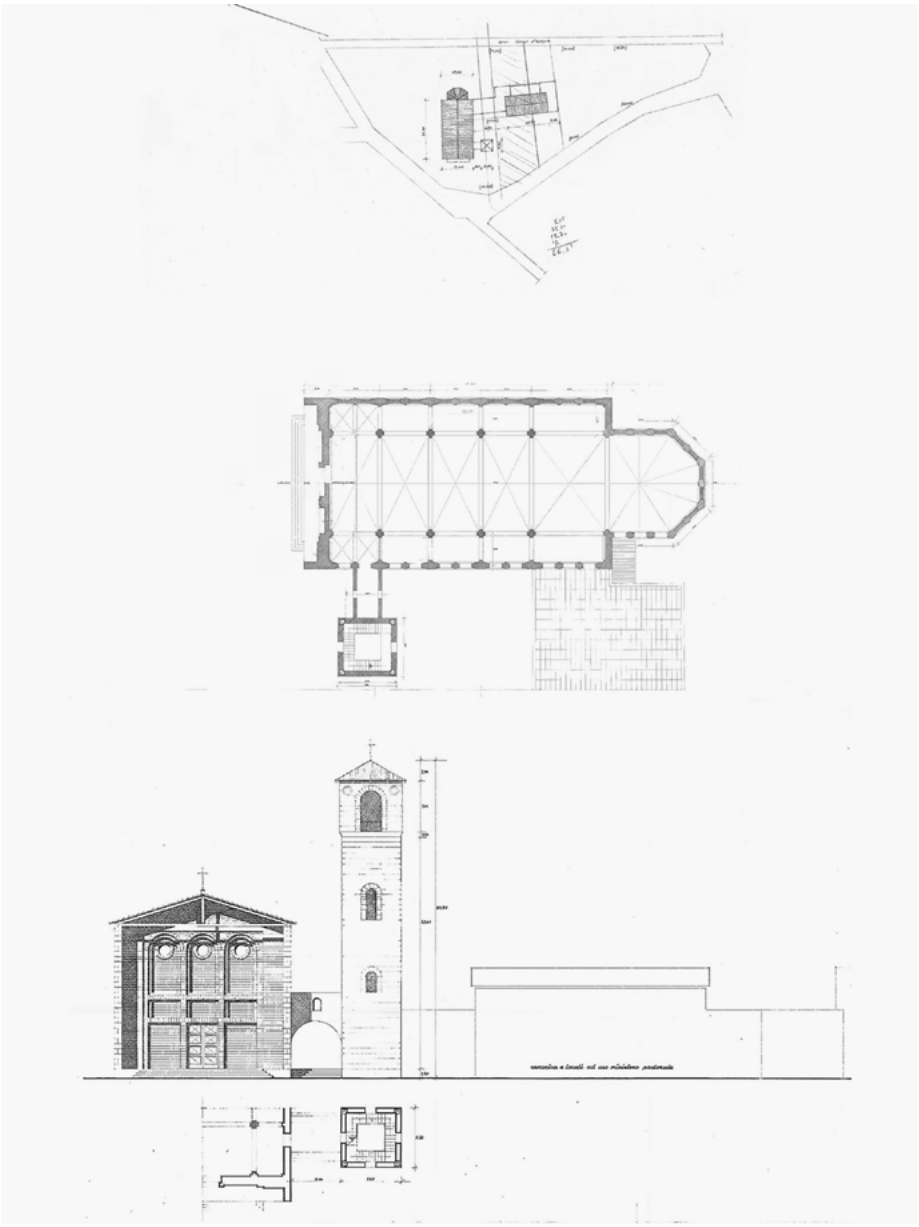
between the bishop and the architect. Monsignor Boccoleri, refined intellectual of the upper middle class in Liguria, he had actively participated in the "Terza settimana d'arte sacra per il clero" (Ferrara, 13-20 October 1935) with a report on the cathedral churches, whose high-quality architecture had to be appropriate to the social relevance of episcopal sees.[36] He shared with Canino a previous adherence to fascism government and, in the post-war period, a moderate diffidence towards excessive modernity, in the renewal of the civil society as well as the architectural culture. It is worth mentioning that in 1907 Boccoleri entrusted the Milanese architect Gaetano Moretti with the rebuilding of the Romanesque basilica of Saints Gervasio and Protasio in Rapallo (Genova) heavily damaged by a flood at the end of the eighteenth and partially restored in the fifties of the nineteenth century.[37] In the renovated basilca church, disarticulated parts were unified around the imposing new dome, erected over an unusual octagonal tambour with length of oblique sides equal to half of the straights. It can be reasonably assumed that the composition designed by Canino for the new parish church in Serramazzoni, it derived from the geometry of the unusual layout of the renewed basilica in Rapallo. The architect indeed composed a central octagonal space lengthwise dilated, preceded by a narthex at the entrance and ended by a polygonal apse on the opposite side [Fig. 3, 4, 5, 6]. The visual perception of a central-plan church, disturbed by the elongation of the medial octagon, whose oblique sides in this case measured just over half of the other four, it was partially recovered by the symmetrical radial chapels arranged laterally to the ecclesiastical hall. It can be assumed that the singular layout of this small parish church, tending towards the typological hybridisation between the central and longitudinal scheme, it was aimed at an efficient setup of the architectural space to allow the assembly of the faithful to congregate close to the main altar. As for the architectural language, it does not seem correct to look for references to famous historical monuments near the new church, such as the Romanesque cathedral of Modena, but also in this case it is possible to recognise a personal interpretation by the architect of typical elements of medieval and Renaissance Italian architecture.

On commission from the Bishop of Caserta, Bartolomeo Mangino (Pagani, 2 December 1883 – Caserta, 25 May 1965), Canino designed the parish church of San Biagio in the small rural village of Limatola, starting in 1952.[38] The new parish centre, composed of the church, the oratory and the rectory, was to be built in a rural area, at that time devoid of housing settlements. Around the church, conceived as the community center, a new neighborhood would have developed between the sixties and eighties of the last century, downstream from the ancient village below the baronial castle on the hill of Gallo Piccolo.

36 Cesare Boccoleri, *La cattedrale nella vita religiosa e civile del popolo* (Spoleto: Arti grafiche Panetto & Petrelli, 1936).

37 Matteo Capurro and Daniele Sanguineti, eds., *Santi Gervasio e Protasio a Rapallo. Il patrimonio artistico della basilica* (Genova: Sagep, 2020).

38 Vatican Secret Archive, Archives of the Commissione per l'Arte Sacra in Italia, Diocesi di Caserta, *Limatola: Nuova chiesa parrocchiale di San Biagio, casa canonica e locali di ministero pastorale*, folders 1-2, 1953-1959.



7

Without any conditioning by the bishop and using a costruction area totally free, Canino chose to rework the traditional typology of a three-nave basilica ended by a polygonal apse, with a lateral bell-tower separed from the church **[Fig. 7, 8, 9]**. In the internal space, bounded by symmetrical arcades and covered by cross vaults, the architect revisited in contemporary forms structural and decorative elements inspired by the architecture of medieval churches. In this way, the stone ribs of cross vaults and polystile pillars were replaced by concrete curbs. The church hall is completed by a series of classical aedicules, arranged on the side walls, and the presbytery, embellished by blind stone-arches on the inner walls of the apse, in an architectural composition characterized by proportions and ornamental motifs that can be defined as untopical. Similar considerations can be applied to the main façade, characterized by three large arches, and also to the bell tower and exterior walls, decorated with sequences of double and triple arch windows. As regards possible references to known architectural models, it can be recognize in the plan of the church a distant memory of the

Fig. 7
Final project of the parish church of San Biagio in Limatola (Archive of the Genio Civile di Benevento).





8 9

basilica of abbot Desiderio in Monte Cassino (1058-1087), which became an architectural model adopted in the abbey church of Sant'Angelo in Formis, in the cathedral of Casertavecchia and in many other medieval churches in Campania. The polygonal apse rather recalls the Angevin church of Sant'Eligio al Mercato in Naples, but also geographically more distant examples such as the cathedral of Milan or the basilica of San Francesco d'Assisi in Palermo. The exposed tuff stones masonry of external walls represents a significant link with local building traditions. In 1957, the architect drew up the final design but the construction of the church required several structural modifications due to the instability of the foundation soil.[39] The building was completed in 1962 but, due to lack of financial resources, finishing work lasted until 1965, when the church was opened to the faithful.

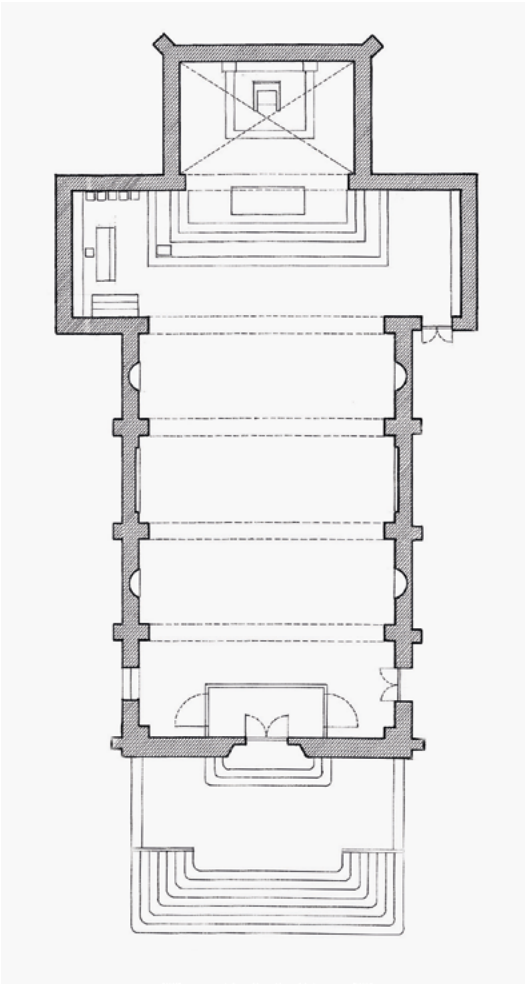
In Frasso Telesino, not far from Limatola, during the episcopate of Monsignor Costantino Caminada (Melegnano, 21 July 1962 – Ferentino, 6 November 1972), Canino designed the church of Santa Giuliana, built between 1958 and 1964 after the demolition of an earlier fifteenth-century church.[40] It is known that in 1960 Monsignor Caminada was transferred from Sant'Agata de' Goti to Syracuse as auxiliary bishop to oversee the construction of the Madonna delle Lacrime sanctuary, designed in 1957 by the French architects Michel Andrault and Pierre Parat following an international competition. Because of its unusual shape and extraordinary dimensions, the sanctuary of Syracuse has been a work discussed by critics with controversial judgments. However, there is no reason to assume a relationship between the construction of this building and the previous collaboration between Canino and Monsignor Caminada. In FrassoTelesino, the availability of a large building area allowed the architect to design a larger single-nave church rotated ninety degrees compared to the existing, concluded by a spacious rectangular apse covered with a cross vault **[Fig. 10, 11, 12]**. As in the church of San Biagio in Limatola, the architectural language of the new

Fig. 8
Internal view of the parish church of San Biagio in Limatola (photograph by Riccardo Serraglio).

Fig. 9 External view of the parish church of San Biagio in Limatola (photograph by Riccardo Serraglio).

39 Archive of the Genio Civile di Benevento, *Progetto strutturale della chiesa di San Biagio a Limatola*, uncatalogued documents, 1953-1962.

40 Vatican Secret Archive, Archives of the Commissione per l'Arte Sacra in Italia, Diocesi di Sant'Agata de' Goti, *Frasso Telesino: Nuovo complesso parrocchiale di Santa Giuliana*, folders 1-3, 1957-1967; Archive of the parish church of San Giuliana in Frasso Telesino, plan of the church in its current state.





parish church manifests a historicist matrix elaborated by simplifying stylistic elements referring to Romanesque and Renaissance architecture [Fig. 13]. The middle bell-gable with a double-arched window and the double order of overlapping archedes, assembled in the façade in an unorthodox manner, demonstrate an architectural composition inspired by antiquity but free from preconceived ideas. Inside the church, the ecclesiastical hall is divided by a regular sequence of transverse arches whose reduced section states the use of reinforced concrete. Within the apse's center, the classical altar recalls the forms of the Tuscan Renaissance, while the geometrical pattern outlined on the wall surfaces it seems to be inspired by the Romanesque façades of San Miniato al Monte church and San Giovanni Baptistery in Florence.

In 1966, during the episcopate of Monsignor Vito Roberti (Matera, 11 September 1911 – Matera, 1 August 1998), Canino presented the final project of San Pietro in Cattedra church in rione Tescione, a social housing district in Caserta [Fig. 14, 15, 16]. To be precise, the commitment of the architect to design a new parish church on the outskirts of town dates back to the early fifties, on account of the aforementioned bishop Bartolomeo Mangino. Between 1953 and 1961 Canino presented preliminary designs of a parish church for rione Patturelli, a social housing district built in the same years east of the city center, but the

10 11

Fig. 10
Plan of the parish church of Santa Giuliana in its current state (Archive of the parish church of San Giuliana in Frasso Telesino).

Fig. 11
External view of the parish church of Santa Giuliana in Frasso Telesino (photograph by Riccardo Serraglio).

project was not carried out due to the lack of a buildable area.[41] However, in 1961 the diocesan curia of Caserta identified a free area, close to the mentioned rione Tescione on the northern outskirts of the city, suitable for the construction of a new neighbourhood church. As a consequence, the final project of the San Pietro in Cattedra church was probably a resumption of the previous ones.[42] Moving the building from one housing project to another was not a problem, because the architect designed it without looking for close relationships with the surrounding environment. Indeed, the choice of an elliptical plan demonstrates the intention to design a building cleary different from others composing the neighborhood. The interpretation in a modern way of the elliptical plan establishes an interesting relationship in design research between Canino and the famous architect Marcello Piacentini. As previously noted, Piacentini esteemed Canino since the time of fascist government, when he supported him in the appointment to the position of ordinary professor in the Univerity of Naples, in 1936, and in the assignment of the Mostra d'Oltremare masterplan, in 1937. As is known, in 1947 Piacentini designed an elliptical chapel for the Città Universitaria La Sapienza in Rome.[43] Consequently, Canino was aware that he would have to confront the work of Piacentini during the conception of his project. However, while the two buildings presents a aesthetic assonance in the use of exposed brickwork on external walls, their respective floor plans were layouted in opposite ways [Fig. 17]. Indeed, while in the church designed by Piacentini the altar was installed at the end of the major axis of the ellipse, on the contrary in that designed by Canino it was placed at the end of the minor axis. In both cases the adoption of the elliptical system probably responded to the need to gather the faithful near the celebrant during the holy mass, but while Piacentini elaboratated a reduction of longitudinal development of a basilica scheme, on the contrary Canino worked on lengthening the horizontal side of a central plant. It is possible that both were inspired by masterpieces of the Roman baroque: Piacentini from the church of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, Canino form that of Sant'Andrea al Quirinale [Fig. 18]. In the first, Francesco Borromini placed the main altar at the end of the long axis of the elliptical plant, just as Piacentini would have done in the chapel of the Divina Sapienza. In the second, Gian Lorenzo Bernini placed it at the end



12

Fig. 12
Internal view of the parish church of Santa Giuliana in Frasso Telesino (photograph by Riccardo Serraglio).

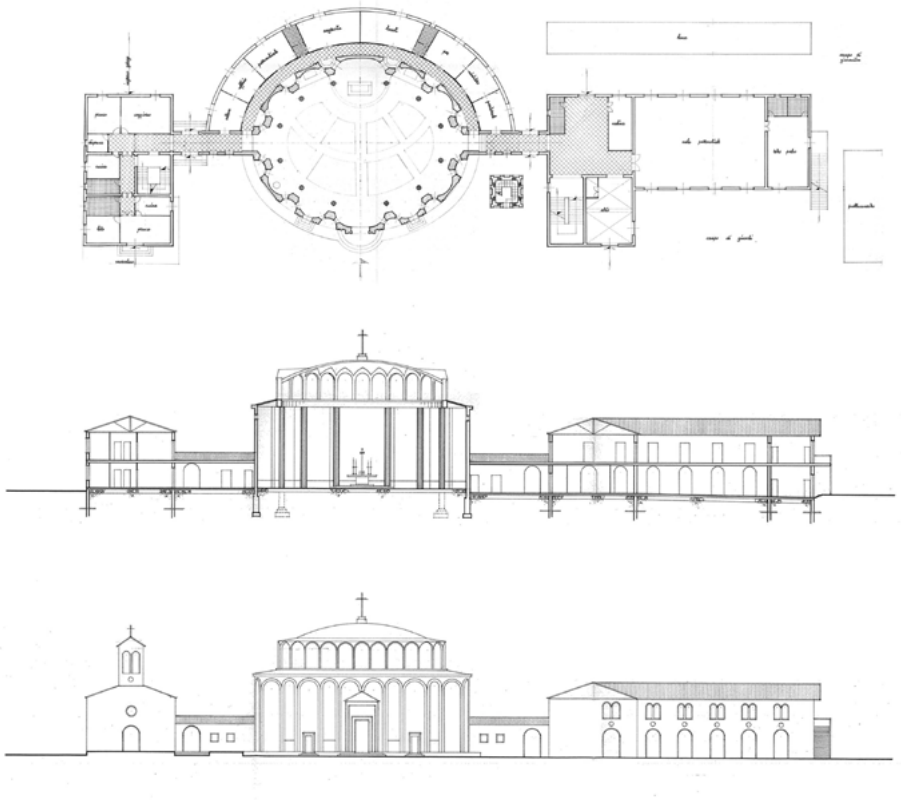
41 Vatican Secret Archive, Archives of the Commissione per l'Arte Sacra in Italia, *Diocesi di Caserta, Caserta: Nuova chiesa parrocchiale di San Pietro in Cattedra, casa canonica e locali di ministero pastorale*, folders 1-2, 1961-1966.

42 Archive of the Ufficio Tecnico della Diocesi di Caserta, *Progetto del complesso parrocchiale di San Pietro in Cattedra*, drawings, 1966.

43 Sandro Benedetti, ed. *La Cappella della Divina Sapienza* (Roma: Gangemi Editore, 1998).



13



14

of the short axis, as he would have done Canino in the neighborhood church of San Pietro in Cattedra. Significant relationships between the San Pietro in Cattedra project and the Berninian model of Sant'Andrea al Quirinale were not limited to the shape of floor plan, but they also concerned the structure of the windowed dome and, consequently, the lighting from above of the internal space. More than in other neighbourhood churches he designed, in that of San Pietro in Cattedra Canino assembled in original forms heterogeneous architectural elements. The masonry of exposed bricks of external walls, observed in the mentioned churches of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane and Sant'Andrea al Quirinale, it represents a significant link with the Roman baroque architecture. The sequence of blind arches and niches that articulate the wall perimeter inside and outside the church, it can be considered a reference of the Tempietto di San

Fig. 13
Comparison between the façades of the cathedral of Pisa and the parish church of Santa Giuliana in Frasso Telesino (graphic presentation by Riccardo Serraglio).

Fig. 14
Final project of the parish complex of San Pietro in Cattedra in Caserta (Archive of the Ufficio Tecnico della Diocesi di Caserta).





15 16

Pietro in Montorio by Donato Bramante, reproduced in the architecture treatises by Sebastiano Serlio, Andrea Palladio and Pietro Cataneo.[44] On the other hand, the slender circular columns arranged around the ecclesiastical hall, similar in their features to the pilotis invented by Le Corbusier, can be interpreted as a rare quotation from the famous Swiss architect in the architecture of Canino.

The church of rione Traiano in Naples, dedicated to San Giovanni Battista, is distinguished by the urban significance of the surrounding settlement. The new district indeed was built under the oversight of the Comitato per l'Edilizia Popolare (CEP), a public body established in 1954 to coordinate the Institutes – Iacp, Incis, Unrra Casas, Ina Casa – appointed by the Italian State to develop social housing projects during the post-war reconstruction period. The Piano Regolatore Generale, approved by the City Council of Naples in 1958 but then rejected by the Ministry of Public Works, allocated to the new district an area of about 130 hectares near the rural village of Soccavo, in the eastern suburb of the city.[45] Canino was commissioned to design the masterplan of rione Traiano, one of the thirty-one self-sufficient settlements programmed for Italian cities by the CEP. He took inspiration from northern European models of the 1950s, in particular from the completely indipendent Vällingby district, built in a green area about 20 km from Stockholm on project of Sven Markelius according to the 1952 city masterplan. Canino developed a project strongly influenced by the

Fig. 15
External view of the parish church of San Pietro in Cattedra in Caserta (photograph by Riccardo Serraglio).

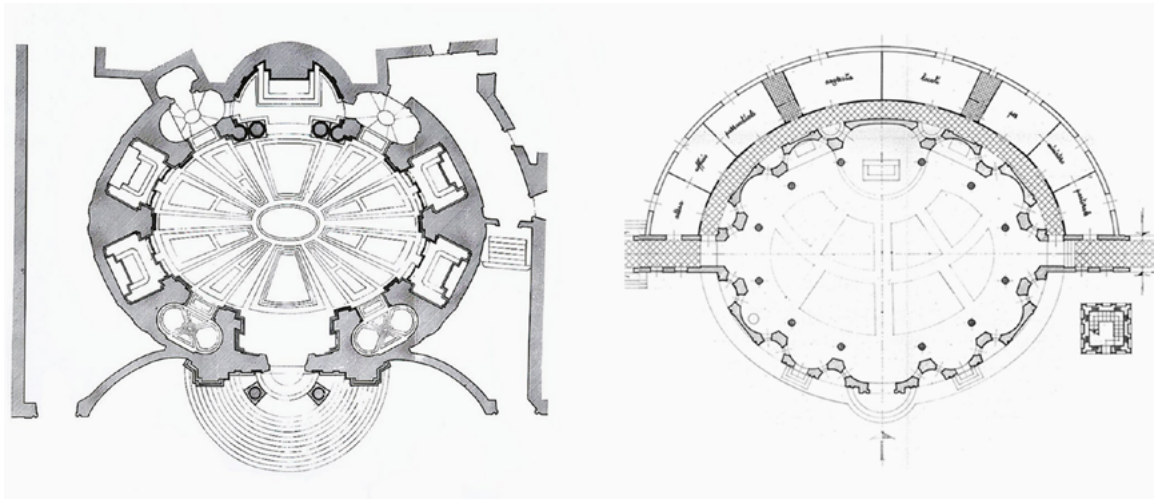
Fig. 16
Internal view of the parish church of San Pietro in Cattedra in Caserta (photograph by Riccardo Serraglio).

44 Flavia Cantatore, ed., *Il tempietto di Bramante nel Monastero di San Pietro in Montorio* (Roma: Quasar, 2017).

45 Cigala, "Quartieri residenziali e il villaggio al Faito", 221-228; Frediani, "Il quartiere Traiano di Marcello Canino," 67-77; Limongi, "Rione Traiano", 102-107.



17



18

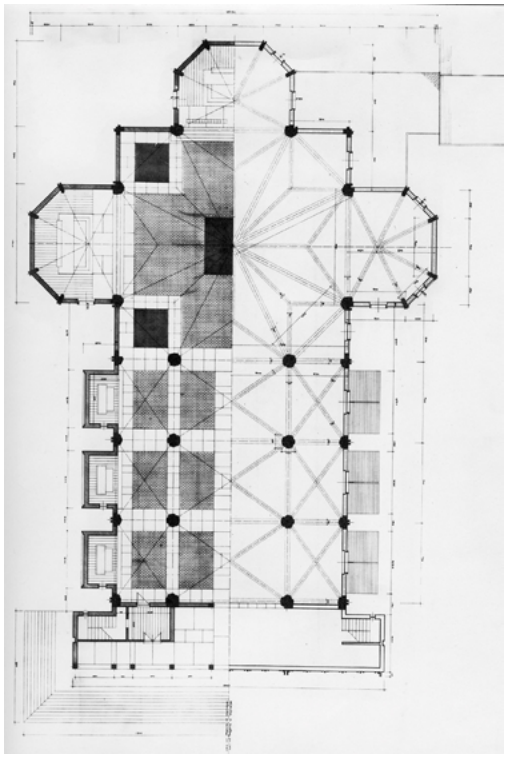
morphological complexity of territory, composed by a directional center located in a middle flat zone, comprising the church, the public offices and social actvities, and seven residential units surrounded by greenery, arranged on the areas delimitad by the existing and deep rills that cross the site. Due to the failure to approve the aforementioned Piano Regolatore Generale, the number of inhabitants in the rione Traiano was reduced from 30,000 to 24,000, in order to achieve a lower urban density. As a result, in 1959 the initial project was scaled down and in 1961 also the central area, where the church should have been built, was redesigned by Canino. In 1966 the architetct finally designed the neighbourhood church, in collaboration with his former student Filippo Alison.[46] The parish complex, located in the middle of the urban settlement, in the intentions of Canino should have divided the surrounding area into a system of two squares, commercial and religious, according to a separation of social functions typical of Italian tradition.

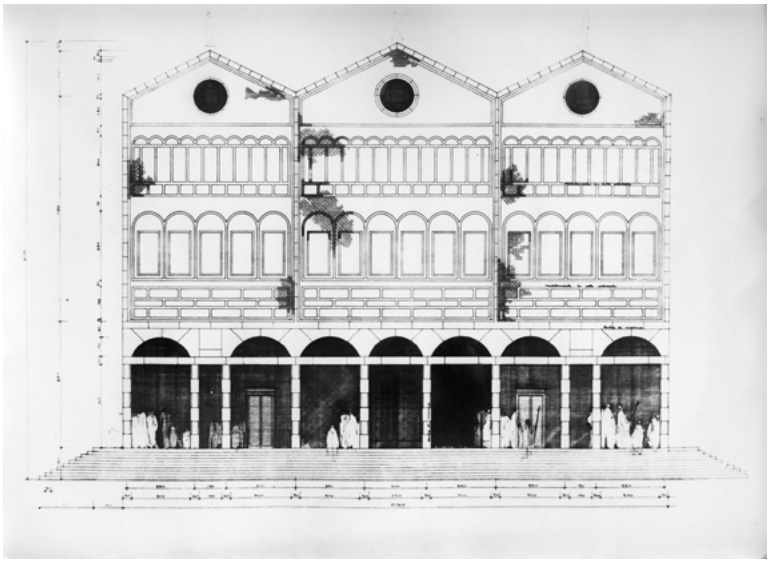
The design of the San Giovanni Battista church can be considered the full expression of a research on the classical three-nave basilica type carried out by Canino since the competition projects for La Maddalena churche in 1930s. The project graphs [Fig. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25], preserved by the heirs of Canino, exhibit a

Fig. 17
Comparison between the façades of the chapel of Divina Sapienza in Rome and the parish church of San Pietro in Cattedra in Caserta (graphic presentation by Riccardo Serraglio).

Fig. 18
Comparison between the plants of the church of Sant'Andrea al Quirinale in Rome and the parish church of San Pietro in Cattedra in Caserta (graphic presentation by Riccardo Serraglio).

46 Vatican Secret Archive, Archives of the Commissione per l'Arte Sacra in Italia, *Diocesi di Pozzuoli, Napoli: Chiesa madre del quartiere Traiano*, folder 9, 1960; Private archive of Marcello Canino, Progetto della chiesa parrocchiale di San Giovanni Battista al Rione Traiano, undated drawings.

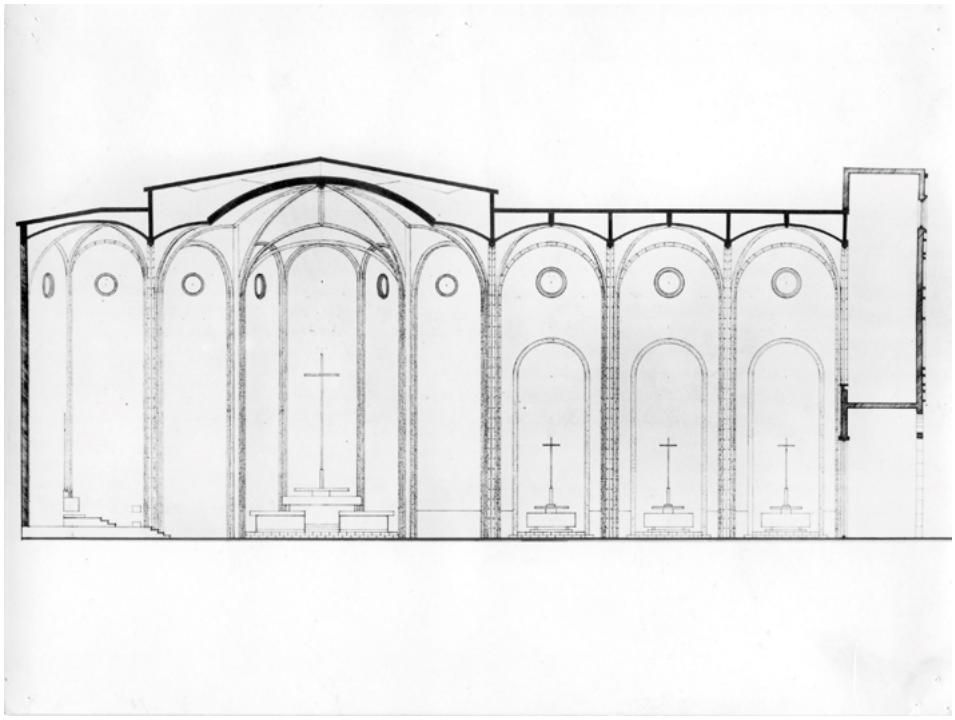




20

19

21



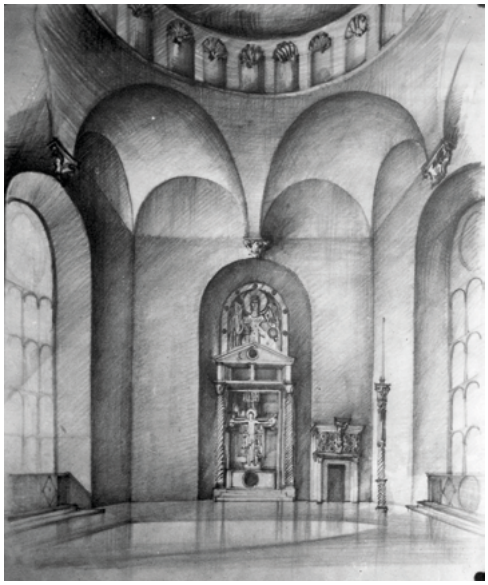
basilicale plant with three naves concluded by a large size presbytery, bordered by deep polygonal apses. As well as for the projects commented above, also in this case the search for design references leads to recognize heterogeneous elements, extrapolated without an apparent logical thread from masterpieces of Medieval and Renaissance architecture and reassembled in an original and autonomous way. In the neighbourhood church of San Giovanni in rione Traiano, the plan seems to be a reworking in reduced size of that of the Milan cathedral [Fig. 26]; the ribbed vault of the presbytery could be a quotation from the hall of barons in the Maschio Angioino castle in Naples, attributed to the Majorcan

Fig. 19
Marcello Canino, plan of the parish church of San Giovanni Battista in rione Traiano (Private archive of Marcello Canino).

Fig. 20
Marcello Canino, façade of the parish church of San Giovanni Battista in rione Traiano (Private archive of Marcello Canino).

Fig. 21
Marcello Canino, longitudinal section of the parish church of San Giovanni Battista in rione Traiano (Private archive of Marcello Canino).





22 23

architect Guillermo Sagrera [Fig. 27]; the façade with three cusps recalls that of the San Giorgio cathedral in Ferrara [Fig. 28]; the geometrical pattern outlined on the external wall surfaces could have been inspired by the Romanesque façades of San Miniato al Monte church and San Giovanni Baptistery in Florence [Fig. 29]; the isolated bell tower, characterized by exposed brick planes outlined with frames in travertine stone, it seems to be a reduction in modern forms of that in Piazza San Marco in Venice [Fig. 30]. The memories evoked by this building, in a final analisys, expresse a deep knowledge of the architecture history, even more than other projects of neighboarhood churches commented on earlier. At the same time, the unusual dimensions of traditional elements manufactured in reinforced concrete and the apparently illogical combination of differen styles, they merged with each other and produced the complete expression of a research path that generated, according to Michele Capobianco,[47] the untopical modernty of Marcello Canino architecture.

## Conclusions

Although in the catalog of his architectural pruduction they are unjustly considered as minor works, the neighbourhood churches designed by Marcello Canino are significant testimonies of his project research. As we said, these apparently modest buildings represent the result of a long-standing experimentation on the design of ecclesiastical project aimed to achieve a balance between the permanence of types and languages derived from classicism and the introduction of the constructive rationality of Modern Movement. Each of these works expresses the deep culture of the author and his independence from the prevailing trends in the italian architecture in post-war reconstruction period. They convey, perhaps, more clearly than other buildings he designed, the sense of untopical modernity that Michele Capobianco recognized in the works of his

47 Capobianco, "Marcello Canino tra le due guerre o della modernità inattuale", 7-38; Capobianco, "Modernità Inattuale", 40-48.

Fig. 22
Marcello Canino, project photomontage of the parish church of San Giovanni Battista in rione Traiano (Private archive of Marcello Canino).

Fig. 23
Marcello Canino, perspective sketch of the interior of the parish church of San Giovanni Battista in rione Traiano (Private archive of Marcello Canino).

24



25



26

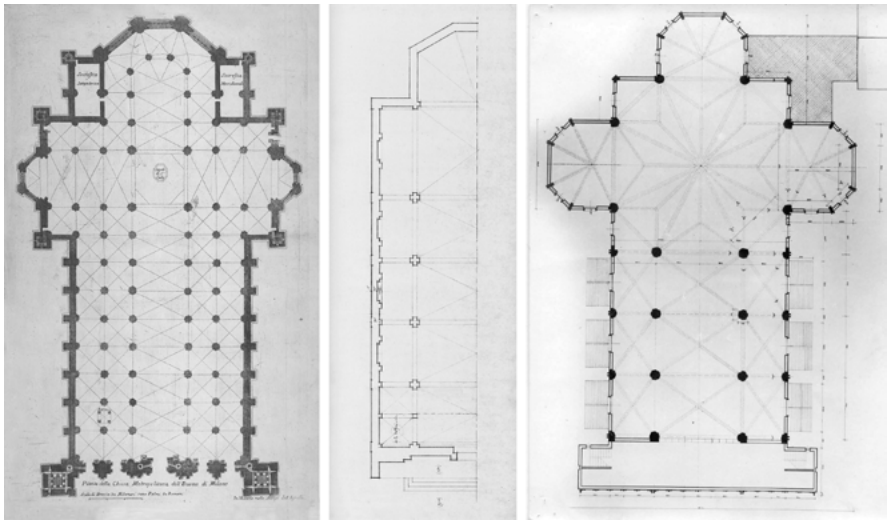


Fig. 24
Internal view of the parish church of San Giovanni Battista in rione Traiano (photograph by Riccardo Serraglio).

Fig. 25
External view of the parish church of San Giovanni Battista in rione Traiano (photograph by Riccardo Serraglio).

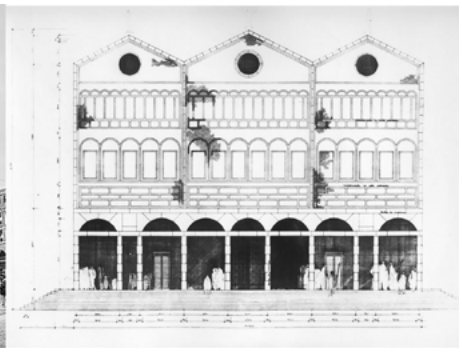
Fig. 26
Comparison between the plants of the cathedral of Milan, the parish church of San Biagio in Limatola and the parish church of San Giovanni Battista in rione Traiano (graphic presentation by Riccardo Serraglio).





27





28





29





30

Fig. 27
Comparison between the ribbed vaults of the hall of barons in the Maschio Angioino castle in Naples and the parish church of San Giovanni Battista in rione Traiano (graphic presentation by Riccardo Serraglio).

Fig. 28
Comparison between the façades of the cathedral of San Giorgio in Ferrara and the parish church of San Giovanni Battista in rione Traiano (graphic presentation by Riccardo Serraglio).

Fig. 29
Comparison between the façades of the church of San Miniato al Monte in Florence and the parish church of San Giovanni Battista in rione Traiano (graphic presentation by Riccardo Serraglio).

Fig. 30
Comparison between the bell towers of the cathedral of San Giorgio in Ferrara and the parish church of San Giovanni Battista in rione Traiano (graphic presentation by Riccardo Serraglio).

master. The distinctly self-referential architectural language and the perception of distance from other buildings composing the built environment of urban suburbs, they reflected the personality of Canino, who his daughter Isabella remembered as a silent man unwilling to dialogue and confidential attitudes.[48]
Unfortunately, economic difficulties during construction sometimes required a downsizing of the original plans, because the mentioned Legge Aldisio financed exclusively the structural works. Therefore, the completion of buildings was the responsibility of parish priests, who had to raise the necessary funds through donations from the faithful. Because of this, in many cases costly or unneeded works were replaced with cheaper ones, decorative elements were eliminated, and low quality furniture was selected to complete the decoration of the neighbourhood churches. For example, in Limatola and rione Traiano churches the bell towers were built smaller than the projects. In other cases, as in Serramazzoni and Limatola churches, the bas-relief panels that should have embellish the façades were not realized. In many parish centers, church service buildings and community facilities – oratories, gyms and sports fields, libraries, theaters etc. – were not or only partially carried out.
After the construction, the current use of the parish churchs for more persons than initially planned required in many cases changes or additions that modified their original layout. However, despite the under construction reductions due to limited budgets, and later modifications often made without respect for the original configuration, these works still reflect architectural characters consistent with the original projects. Perhaps, even today the clergy and the population, usual users of these buildings, and especially the institutions responsible for the preservation of architectural heritage, they do not recognize that the neighbourhood churches designed by Marcello Canino represent important testimonies of the Italian ecclesiastical architecture of the twentieth century. For this reason, their cultural value must be affirmed first of all within the scientific community, so that they can be properly protected and valorised by regulations and legislative measures aimed at their conservation.

48 Isabella Canino, "Mio padre," in *Marcello Canino 1895/1970*, ed. Sergio Stenti (Napoli: CLEAN, 2005), 151-156.

## Bibliography


Aldisio, Salvatore. *Concorso dello Stato nella costruzione delle nuove chiese: legge 18 dicembre 1952, no. 2522*. Roma: Tipografia A. Staderini, 1953.

Alisio, Giancarlo. *Napoli e il risanamento: recupero di una struttura urbana*. Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1980.

Astengo, Giovanni. "Nuovi quartieri in Italia." *Urbanistica*, no. 7 (1951): 9-41.

*Atti e documenti della Democrazia Cristiana, 1943-1967*. vol. I, 231-254. Roma: Cinque Lune, 1968.

Aveta, Aldo, Alessandro Castagnaro, and Fabio Mangone. *La Mostra d'Oltremare. Ricerche storiche e restauro del moderno*. Napoli: FedOAPress and Editori Paparo, 2021.

Benedetti, Sandro, ed. *La Cappella della Divina Sapienza*. Roma: Gangemi Editore, 1998.

Bettazzi, Beatrice, Giuliano Gresleri, and Glauco Gresleri, eds. *Chiesa e quartiere. Storia di una rivista e di un movimento per l'architettura a Bologna (2004)*. Bologna; Editrice Compositori, 2004.

Boccoleri, Cesare. *La cattedrale nella vita religiosa e civile del popolo*. Spoleto: Arti grafiche Panetto & Petrelli, 1936.

Bottoni, Pietro. *La casa a chi lavora*. Milano: Görlich, 1945.

Canino, Isabella. "Mio padre." In *Marcello Canino 1895/1970*, edited by Sergio Stenti, 151-156. Napoli: CLEAN, 2005.

Canino, Marcello and Riccardo Filangieri. *Napoli visioni d'arte e di vita nei disegni di Marcello Canino commentati da Riccardo Filangieri*. Napoli: ILTE Industria Libraria Tipografica Editrice, 1954.

Cantatore, Flavia, ed. *Il tempietto di Bramante nel Monastero di San Pietro in Montorio*. Roma: Quasar, 2017.

Capobianco, Michele. "Marcello Canino tra le due guerre o della modernità inattuale." *ArQ Architettura Quaderni*, no. 3 (1990): 7-38.

Capobianco, Michele. "Modernità inattuale." In *Marcello Canino 1895/1970*, edited by Sergio Stenti, 40-48. Napoli: CLEAN, 2005.

Capurro, Matteo and Daniele Sanguineti, eds. *Santi Gervasio e Protasio a Rapallo. Il patrimonio artistico della basilica*. Genova: Sagep, 2020.

Castronuovo, Valerio. "Il periodo della ricostruzione". *Storia d'Italia Einaudi*. vol. IV, t. I, 351-398. Milano: Fabbri, 1985.

Cigala, Carolina. "Quartieri residenziali e il villaggio al Faito." In *Marcello Canino 1895/1970*, edited by Sergio Stenti, 221-228. Napoli: CLEAN, 2005.

Cimbolli Spagnesi, Piero. "Fino a La Sapienza: fondamenti normativi dell'insegnamento dell'architettura a Roma e in Italia, 1871-1935", *Quaderno dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura*, special issue "Le nuove sedi universitarie e la città". Roma, L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2018, 39-64.

Coppo, Carola. "Edifici religiosi." In *Marcello Canino 1895/1970*, edited by Sergio Stenti, 214-220. Napoli: CLEAN, 2005.

Coppo, Carola. "Biografia." In *Marcello Canino 1895/1970*, edited by Sergio Stenti, 230-231. Napoli: CLEAN, 2005.

Cresti, Carlo. *Architettura e fascismo*. Firenze: Vallecchi Editore, 1986.

Cuomo, Alberto. "Come un Gropius che ha letto Croce." In *Marcello Canino 1895/1970*, edited by Sergio Stenti, 69-75. Napoli: CLEAN, 2005.

Dal Co, Francesco. "La ricostruzione. Introduzione alla storia dell'architettura italiana del secondo Novecento." In *Storia dell'architettura italiana. Il secondo Novecento*, edited by Francesco Dal Co, 11-56. Milano: Electa, 1997.

De Carlo, Giancarlo. "Il problema della casa." *Volontà*, no. 10-11 (1948): 41-49

De Marchis, Daniele. *Archivio della Commissione per l'Arte Sacra in Italia. Inventario*. Città del Vaticano: Edizioni dell'Archivio Segreto Vaticano, 2013, 1-88.

De Rosa, Gabriele. *Fanfani e la casa. Gli anni Cinquanta e il modello italiano di welfare state. Il piano Ina-Casa*. Soveria Mannelli (CZ): Rubettino, 2002.

De Seta, Cesare. *L'architettura a Napoli tra le due guerre*. Napoli Electa: Napoli, 1999.

Di Biagi, Paola. *La grande ricostruzione: Il piano Ina-Casa e l'Italia degli anni cinquanta*. Roma: Donzelli, 2010.

Frediani, Gianluca. "Marcello Canino e il rinnovamento della tradizione. Il palazzo degli Uffici Finanziari di Napoli." *ArQ Architettura Quaderni*, no. 3 (1989): 44-50.

Frediani, Gianluca. "Il quartiere Traiano di Marcello Canino. Distruzione di un modello." *ArQ Architettura Quaderni*, no. 2 (1990): 67-77.

Gravagnuolo, Benedetto. "L'architettura della ricostruzione tra continuità e sperimentazione." In *Architetture dal 1945 a oggi a Napoli e provincia*, edited by Belfiore, Pasquale and Benedetto Gravagnuolo, Naples: Ermes Multimedia, 2004-2005, 1-26.

Limongi, Giada. "Rione Traiano." 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*, edited by Antonello Scopacasa, Berlin: TU Universitätsverlag, 2022, 102-107.

Longhi, Andrea, and Carlo Tosco. *Architettura, chiesa e società in Italia (1948-1978)*. Roma: Edizioni Studium, 2010.

Manenti, Claudia. *Il cardinale Lercaro e la città contemporanea*. Bologna: Editrice Compositori, 2004.

Marcucci, Laura. "Presentazione." In *L'architettura dell'"altra modernità". Atti del XXVI Congresso di Storia dell'Architettura*, edited by Marina Docci, Maria Grazia Turco, Roma: Gangemi Editore, 2010, 13-15.

Marcucci, Laura. "Introduzione." In *L'altra modernità nella cultura architettonica del XX secolo. Progetto e città nell'architettura italiana*, edited by Laura Marcucci, Roma: Gangemi Editore, 2012, 7-8.

Melograni, Carlo. *Architetture nell'Italia della ricostruzione. Modernità versus modernizzazione 1945-1960*. Macerata: Quodlibet, 2021.

Neri, Maria Luisa. "Introduzione." In *L'altra modernità nella cultura architettonica del XX secolo. Dibattito internazionale e realtà locali*, edited by Maria Luisa Neri, Roma: Gangemi Editore, 2012, 7-8.

Nicoloso, Paolo. *Marcello Piacentini. Architettura e potere: una biografia*. Udine: Gaspari Editore, 2018, 197-198.

Pagano, Giuseppe. "Chi si ferma è perduto." *Casabella Costruzioni*, no. 128 (1938): 2-3.

Piacentini, Marcello. "Difesa dell'architettura italiana." *Il Giornale d'Italia*, May 2, 1931.

Rogers, Ernesto N. "Una casa a ciascuno". *Il Politecnico. Settimanale di cultura contemporanea*, no. 4 (1954): 105-108.

Serraglio, Riccardo. "La basilica di San Giovanni Bosco a Roma fulcro delle trasformazioni urbanistiche del quartiere Cinecittà negli anni della ricostruzione post-bellica." In *La città che si rinnova. Dal manufatto architettonico alla forma urbana*, edited by Chiara Ingrosso, Elena Manzo, Luca Molinari, and Riccardo Serraglio, Napoli: La scuola di Pitagora, 2018, 33-51.

Serraglio, Riccardo. "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*, edited by Antonello Scopacasa, Berlin: Universitätsverlag der TU Berlin, 2022, 307-313.

Serraglio, Riccardo. "Marcello Canino progettista di chiese di quartiere nel periodo della ricostruzione postbellica", in *Città e guerra. Difese, distruzioni, permanenze delle memorie e dell'immagine urbana*, edited by Francesca Capano, Emma Maglio, and Massimo Visone, Naples: Federico II University Press, 2023, 1425-1435.

Stenti, Sergio. "Un costruttore di città e di palazzi." In *Marcello Canino 1895/1970*, edited by Sergio Stenti, Napoli: CLEAN, 2005, 16-39.

Tafuri, Manfredo. *Storia dell'architettura italiana. 1944-1985*. Torino: Einaudi, 1982.

Zorzin, Massimo. *Giovanni Battista Montini: Un'idea di chiesa le sue chiese*. Rome:Edizioni Studium, 2018.

**Angeliki Bara**

# The Shell of Faith in the City. The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Gio Ponti

ARTICLE

*Gio Ponti, Form, Shell, Faith, Serenity*

**/Abstract**

**To design a church is to redesign religion, as to redefine religion, noted Gio Ponti in his text entitled Architettura e Religione. The evolution of Christian church building in the 60s paved new design paths for many reasons. One of the accents of the Second Vatican Council (1965) was the relationship of the Church of Rome with art and culture. Through a broader reform a modernized ecclesiastical planning was promoted. The perception of the shell as a characteristic of the temple is revised by design, weaving a new web of relationships.**

**Churches are buildings whose life is longer than the life of other utilitarian buildings. Gio Ponti designed subversive shells that were aesthetically innovative and that could respond to future social perceptions. The research focuses on the architectural shell, as the applied feature of Ponti's architecture, associated with the transcendental content that governs the ontology of the ecclesiastical temple. The shell expressed the new regime of free choices associated with both technological developments and its personality and positions regarding the relationship between architecture and faith. At the same time, the morphology of the shell contributed to the reformation of the identity of the church building, but also of the city itself. The essential dynamic expression of faith through the clear lines of the shell, combined with the balance interrupted by the complexity of the surface, combines the sacredness and play of Ponti's form, creating an open dialogue that subverts the inner meaning of faith.**

**/Author**

**Angeliki Bara**
**Athens School of Fine Arts**
**ORCID: 0009-0004-5815-7542**
**vertcrane@yahoo.gr**

Angeliki Bara is a Ph.D. candidate at the Athens School of Fine Arts, supported by a scholarship from the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation. Her research is based on an interdisciplinary and multicultural approach to the history of architecture through the history and theory of fine arts, art criticism and other sciences. She graduated from the Athens School of Fine Arts, where she studied History and Theory of Fine Arts, and holds a master's degree in "Gnoseology of Architecture" from the National Technical University of Athens. In 2024, she was awarded second prize in the inaugural Aesthetics Essay Competition on "Current aesthetic challenges of theory-practice in the 21st century" by the Hellenic Society of Aesthetics. Since 2021, she has participated in international conferences and published in scientific journals.



CC BY 4.0
https://doi.org/110.6092/issn.2611-0075/19655
Copyright © 2024 Angeliki Bara

The evolution of Christian church building in the 20th century was linked to disengagements concerning the dogma's relationship with society and institutions through an effort to attract believers to a new framework of free exchange of ideas. The Second Vatican Council (1963-1965), as part of a wider reform, promoted the modernization of ecclesiastical buildings through a series of architectural competitions, highlighting the relations of trust between the Church of Rome and modern culture. At the conclusion of the Council, an attempt was made to separate a body of immutable liturgical rules from objects of theological interpretation that could change over time, such as the church building. The initiative to conduct architectural competitions triggered reflection with very interesting results and indications of a substantial renewal, with the church building acquiring new urban signage and a new cultural role, such as the urban capacitor.

The church building is an issue of architectural design, which is of particular importance in the composition of the identity of the city's fabric. It is a design theme, whose specificity highlights a capacity for dialogue and organic integration into the urban or natural context. It is worth emphasizing that it has always had a prominent public character and a special cultural and spiritual role.[1] The construction of a church was not only about technical parameters, but rather focused on the question of spiritual duration. In the first decades of the 20th century, the design of a church was not just an enclosed application of predetermined rules, especially regarding the built shell. The overall perception of the predetermined character of the shell reveals a different relationship between the architect and the community of believers. A ceremony can be conducted regardless of its building commitment, as Faith is not the same as the building shell.[2]

A shell structure, as the name suggests, is defined as a convex, often asymmetrical form, which in many cases resembles a shell. As a form it distributes external forces as methodical load-bearing structures. It is the borderline between aesthetic and structural stability, presenting a complete material and physical experience through shapes and surfaces that touch certain sensations or memories of sensations. In the case of ecclesiastical architecture, the shell expresses a sense of freedom to members of the religious community, as it produces a spiritual dialogue. Each shell is subject to a specific valuation each time, due to its lively, participatory and interactive nature. The shell, in these cases, is reduced to a spiritual fact, through the personal thoughts it forms in the citizens.

As a form, it is at the same time a code of communication, as well as the church building itself, which is not just the institution that hosts a ceremony, but conveys its inner meaning. Faith may not have a form or it may have infinite forms. Similarly, the church building can be a room with four walls and a ceiling

1 Edward Sövik, *Architecture for worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1973), 116.

2 Andreas Giacumacatos, *Η αρχιτεκτονική και η κριτική – Architecture and Criticism* (Athens: Νεφέλη, 2018), 139-141.

with the necessary elements to perform a ceremony, but it can also have the form of a "unique object of architecture" under the thought of Jean Baudrillard. According to Baudrillard, the unique objects of architecture are structured objects in which "architecture expresses, means, renders a kind of complete, tectonic form".[3] They are unique pieces that cannot be interpreted through conventions. They are not products of visual seduction, they connect, mediate and project meanings.[4]

It is customary for architectural projects to be treated according to their functionality, but also whether they promote or hinder the purposes they will serve. From this perspective, the church, theoretically, can have infinite forms, and each shell could be suitable for this purpose, since it projects spiritual values in the place where a sacred service takes place. The church building begins to develop independently of a control that has to do with a commonly accepted design logic or that conventionally responds to the generally accepted religious sentiment associated with conservative adherence to standards that distance church building from contemporary design concerns.

In his text *Architettura, Religione* (Architecture, Religion), the Italian architect Gio Ponti emphasizes the need to abandon superficial theological and religious conventions in general that are the result of "spiritual inertia".[5] Design-wise, he proposed new typologies, based on the subversive capabilities of the building shell. The range of possibilities of the shell was combined with both the technological developments of the time and Ponti's personality, while taking into account the characteristics of the built environment that each project would be part of.

This paper attempts to present and interpret the morphological vocabulary of the church shell designed by Ponti, through the architect's positions on architecture and religious architecture in particular. The architectural shell is interpreted as an applied feature of Ponti's architecture, linked to the transcendental content that governs the ontology of ecclesiastical structure. At the same time, it explores the idea of synesthetic experience and the paradoxical ability of the shell of Faith to externalize and internalize a contemplative feeling, through a morphological dialogue within the city, but also through the spiritual monologue that each believer inspires to develop.

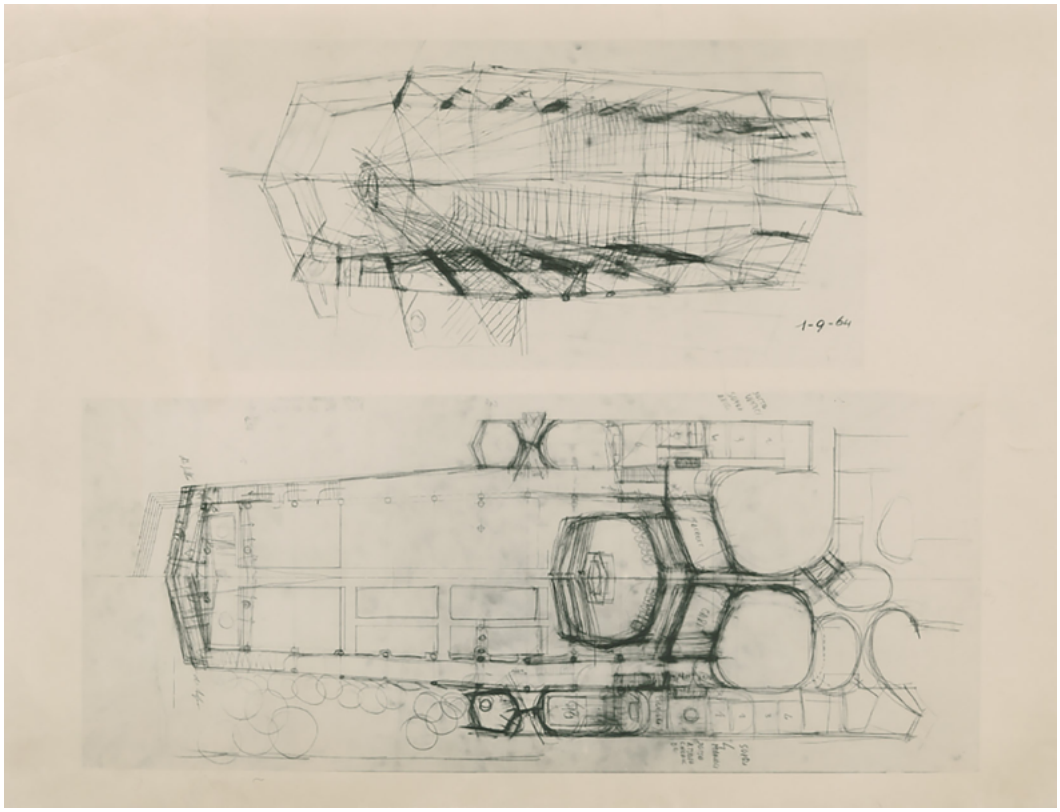
## The Shell as a Crystal

With the expansion of cities and urban centers, Christian churches adopted the methods and construction styles of the area and era they addressed. They were inspired by the city itself and its characteristics in order to be able to express spiritual values that they would reward with lasting beauty. Ecclesiastical archi-

3 Jean Baudrillard and Jean Nouvel, *Τα μοναδικά αντικείμενα – The Unique Objects*, trans. Νίκος Ηλιάδης (Athens: Futura, 2005), 14.

4 Jean Baudrillard, *The system of objects,* trans. James Benedict (London: Verso, 1996), 91-93.

5 Gio Ponti, *Amate l' Architettura* (Genova: Società Editrice Vitali e Ghianda, 1957), 261.



1

tecture did not have a single technical style, nor was it based on any particular method of construction. The importance that would be given to decoration or the emphasis on a material was not something that would absolutely determine the monumentality of the building. An overemphasis on material aspects began to be an element that could reduce spiritual aspects. This was a concern that preoccupied the architects of the time, as well as Ponti, who tried to respond to the concerns of his time regarding the depiction of the church, but also the way of expressing true spiritual emotion, through the search for a recognizable and valid form.[6]

The fifties were for Ponti a period of experimentation, research and expression. Ponti sought its finite form and functional materiality through multiple visual connections that would emphasize architectural experience through element interactions. The finite form with the functional orientation, was a form with unity and coherence, that would give meaning to architecture and was expressed through the building envelope. The shell was a form that expressed the unique relationship between architecture and sacredness. In an attempt to approach Infinity, Ponti attempted to approach the Unlimited through permeability.[7] In one of the theoretical texts he wrote, *L'architettura è un cristallo (Architecture is a Crystal),* Ponti stated that "the cathedral is a diamond"[8]. Before we analyze this phrase further, the starting point of this special and inspiring finding is of particular interest. The idea of the image of an "Architecture as a crystal" was

Fig. 1
Gio Ponti, Sketch of the diamond shaped flour plan of the Church of San Francesco d'Assisi al Fopponino (© Gio Ponti Archives / Archivio Storico Eredi Gio Ponti).

6 Richard Mellor, *Modern Church Design* (London: Skeffington & Son, 1948), 10-14.

7 Nathan H. Shapira, "The Expression of Gio Ponti," *Design Quarterly*, no. 69/70 (1967): 8.

8 Ponti, *Amate l' architettura*, 40.

more of a prediction, which would be expressed as an ideal of essence.[9]

The analogy with crystal, from a simple conceptual metaphor, evolved into a literal one, through its design practice and especially through ecclesiastical architecture. According to Ponti, the likening of architecture to crystal concerns the essence of architecture, as an image that combined purity with order, stillness with the endless silence and charm.[10] In the case of ecclesiastical architecture, he combined the spiritually (divinely) "eternal" with human order and rigor, through closed forms, complete by thought. The coexistence of the divine with the human is the starting point for the design of ecclesiastical buildings, but at the same time it is at the point of communication between the ecclesiastical shell and the city.

Architecture as crystal, is a pure architecture, pure in the crystal sense, that is, penetrating, but at the same time closed and exclusive, due to the shape it carries. As Ponti states, openness and absoluteness rest on the fact that architecture rejected unfinished forms because "Architecture begins and ends".[11] The nature of architecture is such, according to Ponti, that it represents something definitive in time and matter. Like a crystal, it appears among the space that surrounds it, while time continues to pass and remain stable **[Fig. 1, 2]**.[12]

In Paul Valéry's essay *Les coquillages* (The Shells) it is stated that

> A crystal, a flower, or a shell stands out from the ordinary disorder that characterizes most perceived things. They are privileged forms that are more comprehensible to the eye, though more mysterious to the mind than all the others we see indiscernibly.[13]

The poet in this passage understands crystal as an aesthetic category. The concept of crystal expresses a material dimension of architecture. The crystal is transparent and the transparency also marks the reflection of the surface and the forms that permeate the architectural form. It is characterized by a transparency that marks the city in a different way. At the same time, it presents the paradoxical ability of architecture to be simultaneously reflective and at the same time mysterious and closed. The crystalline image, that he presents can be explored in different ways in his work, as light, as reflection, transparency, but also as a closed form connected to nature or as a vessel for internal reflections or, better, reflections concerning Faith, in the case of ecclesiastical architecture.

Crystal is one of the characteristic shapes found in the architectural shells of the facades of the churches of Ponti. In the shell of the church of San Francesco al Fopponino (1961-1964), the crystal in the shape of a diamond is used as a geometric opening that surrounds and almost isolates parts of the sky. The area where it was built was unexploited and the shell contributed to the

9 Ponti, *Amate l' architettura*, 428.

10 Ponti, *Amate l' architettura*, 38-40.

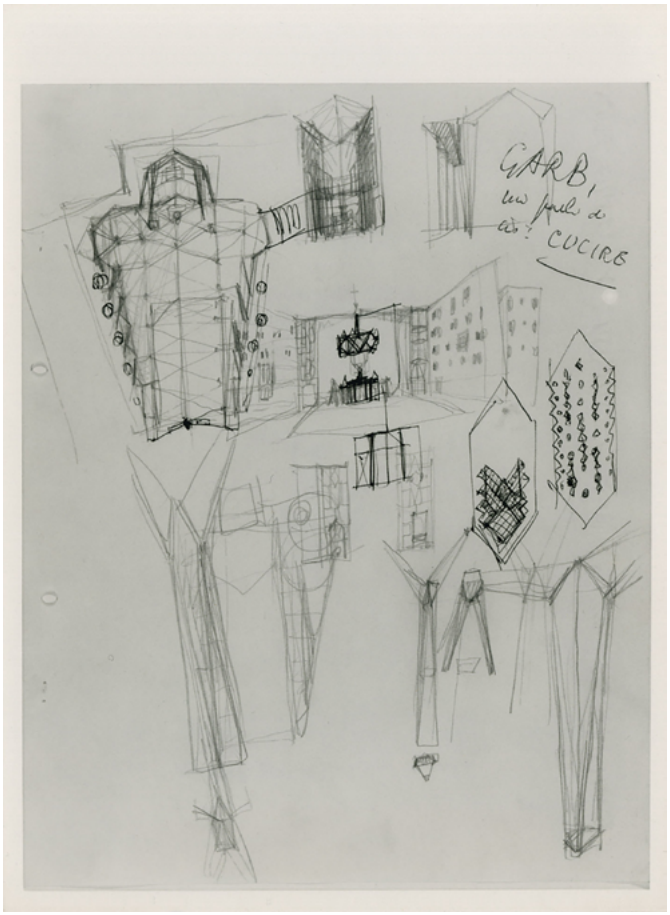
11 Ponti, *Amate l' architettura*, 29.

12 Ponti, *Amate l' architettura*, 41.

13 Gaston Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 92.

smooth integration of the church into the urban area, which was under development. At that time, Milan was more exposed than other cities to the transformations of modernity.

The asymmetrical shell combined with the hexagonal floor plan invoked the concept of finite form. The shell extends beyond the boundaries of the building by connecting the church with the adjacent buildings of the parish, allowing Ponti to form an image of an urban scene of religious character, thereby intensifying the interaction of the different elements. Geometric figures are used to welcome believers both physically and spiritually. At the top, they are piercing and lead to the sky, while at the bottom, they lead visitors indoors. They are arranged in such a way as to project an overall experience. The shell has two different sections, the central one that includes the diamond-shaped openings and is like an independent section and the extensions left and right that are built at a lower height compared to the central part. The openings contrast with the weight borne by the size, giving a feeling of lightness. At the same time, these openings create a play with light and shadow, both internally and externally, with the shape of the diamond reflected as a shadow when light passes through it. The result is even more impressive indoors with the use of stained glass. According to Lisa Licitra Ponti, Ponti perceived each figure he designed differently. Each form of the work had its own distinct expressiveness and was the result of a "structural invention".[14] In the case of a church in San Francesco, the heart of the work was defined through the contrast of transparency/opacity as the one between the "outside world" and the place of worship.[15] Ponti attempted to convey to the interiors the feeling of being inside the crystal. Every surface he uses is clean and geometric, with the roof built through levels highlighted by geometric corners. Crystal-shaped windows reflect and refract light, and as we move through the space, we can notice an ever-changing color palette as white light disintegrates. The stained-glass windows create the feeling of prism through the spectrum of colors they reflect. The light patterns are shaped by the shell, which with its openings, conveys the feeling of day and day in space. There is the liveliness and ephemerality of the day, but at the same time there is the sense of absolute and constant, due to the strict geometry which creates an almost supernatural atmosphere.



2

Fig. 2
Gio Ponti, Sketch of the Church of San Francesco d'Assisi al Fopponino. The sketch presents the crystal shaped ceiling along with diamond shaped windows with some details on them and the a depiction of the shell (© Gio Ponti Archives / Archivio Storico Eredi Gio Ponti).

14 Lisa Licitra Ponti, *Gio Ponti The Complete Work 1923-1978* (Cambridge – Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1990), 143.

15 Licitra Ponti, *Gio Ponti The Complete Work 1923-1978*, 200.





3 4

When it comes to decoration, according to Lisa Ponti, Ponti believed that decorating a church is a living process that is constantly being reformed. Possibly, part of this living process is the light itself. Ponti, towards the end of his life, wanted to make some interventions in the decoration. He wanted to place light papier-maché figures, which would float in the air and around the altar, aquariums among the greenery and flowers.[16]

Architecture, as crystal, is a mirror of natural laws. This is the role of the diamond motif, which extends to the adherent parish buildings, creating an effect that expands the space on the one hand and on the other conveys penetrating what is happening in the sky, offering the very "precision ecstasy" in the sense of illusion. The diamond shape is repeated in the windows designed by Christoforo De Amicis in the seventies. An effect is created by vertical slits that accentuate the shapes of diamonds which are framed by coated diamond-tipped ceramic tiles made by Ceramica Joo, producing multiple reflections through the smooth grey glass surface **[Fig. 3, 4]**.

In the text "Experience and Poverty" (1933) Walter Benjamin refers to the modernist aesthetics that gave rise to glass as reflective, visible, functional but also dark. Ponti transforms the geological reference to the crystal into an artistic and architectural reference through the unique charm of transparency, light and the immaterial that it potentially expresses. In this sense, crystal unravels worlds that are not visible, constituting a subversive source of inspiration. Glass, like crystal, are "enemies of lies" and property, Benjamin says, quoting Andre Gide "who wished he owned to become opaque".[17] This could be another symbolization of the crystal in its use in Ponti's ecclesiastical architecture, presenting Faith as a refuge to truth, which is immaterial and exists beyond any material good, beyond any technological, scientific and tangible reality.

Ponti tried to connect three facades into a single one through the shell, attempting to form a spectacular pattern that appropriates the sky.

16 Licitra Ponti, *Gio Ponti The Complete Work 1923-1978*, 218.

17 Walter Benjamin, "Experience and Poverty/Gesammelte Schriften," *Die Welt im Wort*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, (December 1933): 213-219, https://platypus1917.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/benjamin_experience.pdf.

Fig. 3
The shell of the Church of San Francesco d'Assisi al Fopponino's church, Milan (© Gio Ponti Archives / Archivio Storico Eredi Gio Ponti).

Fig. 4
San Francesco d'Assisi al Fopponino, Milan. Details that present the ceramic plates by Ceramica Joo (© Gio Ponti Archives / Archivio Storico Eredi Gio Ponti).





5 6

At the same time, he used the material from the ceramic tiles in such a way that it "looks lighter" but also larger than it actually looks, through the use of large openings. At the same time, ceramic tiles in combination with the use of openings transform the work into "Autoluminous", that is, that it itself has its own lighting.[18]

In the architectural shell the image of the crystal oscillates between the monumental, the natural expression of crystal shapes, the gloss and permeable, but also the symbolic. For Ponti "architecture is made to be looked at".[19] He designed the shell of the temple in such a way that it is a visible part of the city, but at the same time summarizes its character and meaning within the city. In the case of the architectural shell, the work, the crystalline image has a double meaning, on the one hand it is a reflecting surface and on the other it is a surface with depth. Ponti concludes that one meaning merges the other, embodying the different ways of perceiving Faith, between the subjective and the religion-predetermined view of Faith.

We could say that it is a way to re-approach the concept of "synesthesia" as expressed by Baudelaire, that is, to shape a personal experience, inviting the one who sees the church to enter into a spiritual creative process that unites many senses together. "Synesthesia" is a phenomenon that characterizes experiences in which certain senses belong to a sense, or a way that connects certain senses and occurs regularly under specific stimuli. It is, that is, the production of a reaction when receiving a stimulus to another sense, such as the sensation of a color when smelling a perfume.[20] Through crystal, the expression of Faith is prism, both through the play of light and shadow, as well as the empty and the complete, the subjective and the objective, the divine and the human. As Ponti says: "Ideas are reflections in ourselves of a universe of ideas, reflections of

Fig. 5
San Francesco d'Assisi al Fopponino, Milan. The interior of the Church. The altarpiece "The Canticle of the Creatures", 1975, oil and tempera on canvas, 12x8 m, accompanied in the central nave by 8 triptychs made on panels measuring 3.95 x 2.90 m between 1979 and 1984, painted by Francesco Tabusso (© Archivio Francesco Tabusso).

Fig. 6
San Francesco d'Assisi al Fopponino, Milan. The altar of the Church. The altarpiece "The Canticle of the Creatures" presents itself as a new and fresh interpretation where the beauty and the height of the message of the "Poverello" are expressed above all through "Franciscan" things: the undergrowth that with its luxuriance alludes to life, the vibrant mirror of the stream that is the projection of its conscience, the trees that cut the entire vision; in the middle of the large painting, with that absorbed (© Archivio Francesco Tabusso).

18 Licitra Ponti, *Gio Ponti The Complete Work 1923-1978*, 226.

19 Licitra Ponti, *Gio Ponti The Complete Work 1923-1978*, 207.

20 Charles F. Roedig, "Baudelaire and Synesthesia," *Kentucky Foreign Language Quarterly*, no. 5-3 (1958): 123.

the past and the present, reflections of what we see"[21] [Fig. 5, 6].

The shell presents elements of the tectonic dimension of architecture. Kenneth Frampton, arguing for this dimension, explained that the term tectonic did not refer to a structural and material application, but to a poetics of construction as it could be applied to the visual arts. According to Frampton, the tectonic object appears in two ways. The first includes the structural element, which emphasizes its static role and cultural status, and the second includes the representation of a structural element. The tectonic dimension concerns the morphoplastic application of the presence of a structural element, which is the essence of the architectural form.[22]

In explaining his argument, Frampton referred to Marco Frascari's position on detail as presented in *The Tell-the Tale Detail* (1984). Dictionaries may define detail as a small part relative to a larger size, but in architecture, such a definition is contradictory. In the details, the possibilities of innovation are developed, because they can be material joints or even connections. According to Frascari, details are the direct result of the multiple reality of functions in architecture. Of particular interest is his view that "the art of detail is really the union of materials, elements, components and structural parts in a functional and aesthetic way".[23] The complexity of this art of joining is such that a detail that performs satisfactorily in one building can fail in another for very subtle reasons.

The shell, acting as a carrier of meaning, connects with the senses and rewards the visual, tactile and direct and indirect experiential experience. Textures, tectonic volumes and materialities unfold a network of meanings. Ponti harnesses the materiality and physical and symbolic potential of crystal to present mutating sensations of the movement of light and shadow. In other words, the detail is crucial for how the work will be interpreted. To realize this in its full entirety, the work must be observed from different angles and at different moments of day and light. Ponti approaches architecture as an applied art, with the shell being his personal statement, through the morphoplastic vocabulary



7

Fig. 7
San Francesco d'Assisi al Fopponino, Milan. Interior detail showing the characteristic diamond shaped windows and the way light comes through the stained glass creating a prismatic effect (© Archivio Francesco Tabusso).

21 Gio Ponti, *In Praise of Architecture*, trans. Giuseppina and Mario Salvadori (New York: F. W. Dodge Corporation, 1960), IX.

22 Kate Nesbitt, ed., *Theorizing a New Agenda in Architecture. An Anthology of Architectural Theory, 1965-1995* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 519-521.

23 Nesbitt, *Theorizing a New Agenda in Architecture*, 501-502.



8

of crystals. Form a harmonious bond between the existing ancient presence of the 17th century, with the new cult structures, the imposing character of the shell and the buildings facing it. He subversively interpreted through the shell the Romanesque-Lombard culture of the Aeolian facades, utilizing the three-day shape of the shell and the hexagonal shape of the diamond. In this way, Ponti utilizes the shell as an element of dynamic interaction and interactions, between the present, the past and the future [Fig. 7].

The shell may not only be treated as a visual unit of *gestalt*, but can also be seen as a result of collaborations. Seen as a detail, as set by Frascari, it concerns the union of materials, elements, components and structural parts in a functional and aesthetic way. At San Francesco al Fopponino each element blends with the other, through a network of collaborations. Understanding the shell occurs at different levels of sensations. The shell acts as a mediator or even as a direct expression of Faith. From structure to expression, its interpretation becomes a way of producing signs.

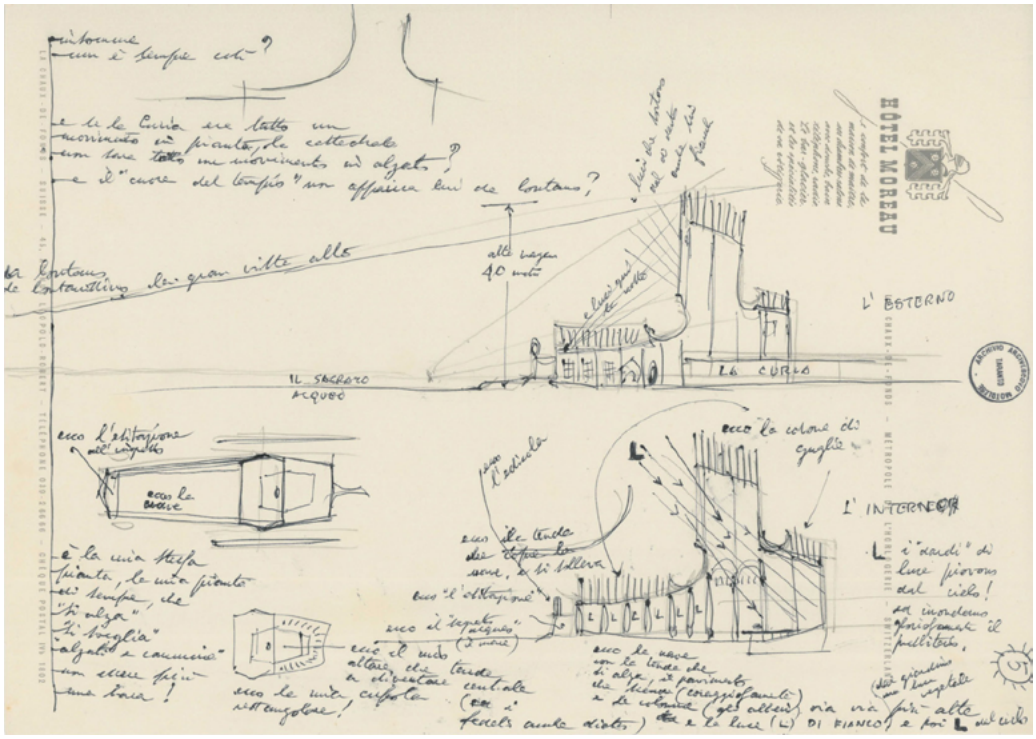
## The shell as Transcendence

Examining its mediating role, it can on the one hand be the borderline between dualisms. According to Ponti, "the church is divine and human," while religion belongs to the wonderful, which happens naturally.[24] Ponti concludes that religious art, perhaps even religious architecture, is not a fact of art, but a fact of religion.

The shell is utilized by Ponti as a purely expressive element, bearing signs

Fig. 8
La Concattedrale Gran Madre di Dio in Taranto, 1970 (© Ufficio Diocesano per i Beni Culturali Ecclesiastici dell'Arcidiocesi di Taranto).

24 Ponti, *Amate l' architettura,* 262.




and point systems to bring out new traces of spiritual orientation. In 1971, Gran Madre di Dio Cathedral in Taranto (1964-1970) was completed on the city's new expansion axis. Ponti sought a design language that would combine the tradition of the strict Romance churches of Apulia with his personal style. He ended up designing a cathedral, with a white plaster shell, inspired by the Mediterranean habit of plastering houses. At the same time, because he has connected the Divine, with the elements of nature, air, water and green vegetation, he attempted to revive the experience of the place of spirit. To evoke even more of a place of spiritual gathering, he excluded the use of complex morphological materials, such as the ceramic tiles he had used in other churches. Through the use of reinforced concrete, he attempted to make a modern interpretation of the bare Romanesque stone used in religious buildings, but also in the city [Fig. 8].[25]

Ecclesiastical architecture is designed for the present and the future, even when it elaborates on ideas of the past, with the aim of defining the eternal. Thus, Ponti opposes the temporary character of a technologically advanced material construction. He designs a shell, where his materiality is abstract, i.e. without material references, aiming at an expression of the "eternal". It builds the time, with architecture transcending use. As mentioned above, Ponti sought the intersection between function and substance, where form is finite and its existence rests more on the values it professes than on its function. In "Amate l' architettura", he says that reinforced concrete architecture is pure as crystal, because it is a clear mirror of natural laws. It is the result of an on-site processing of natural elements, such as water [Fig. 9].[26]

Fig. 9
Gio Ponti, Sketch showing various views of the temple with notes surrounding it., The sketch was presented in the exhibition "Gio Ponti e la Concattedrale di Taranto 1970-2020" (© Ufficio Diocesano per i Beni Culturali Ecclesiastici dell'Arcidiocesi di Taranto).

25 Mauro Pratesi, *Gio Ponti, Vita e percorso artistico di un protagonista del XX secolo* (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2015), 130-132.

26 Ponti, *Amate l' architettura, 42.*



10



11



12

Fig. 10
Photo during technical work inside the temple (© Gio Ponti Archives / Archivio Storico Eredi Gio Ponti).

Fig. 11
The main altar is made of stone. The part facing the faithful is covered in green painted iron, so as to recall the seabed. The apse painting,depicting the theme of the Annunciation, with the images of the Madonna and the Archangel Gabriel, are painted by Gio Ponti himself (© Gio Ponti Archives / Archivio Storico Eredi Gio Ponti).

Fig. 12
Detail from the interior of the Church that presents the way that light is reflected from the openings of the shell (© Gio Ponti Archives / Archivio Storico Eredi Gio Ponti). Fig. X

Ponti's Cathedral is characterized by a rectangular building, divided into two parts, the "ship" and the "castle". The "ship" is the lower part of the cathedral, while the "castle" is the shell, which is the most distinctive element of the building even from afar. Ponti raised the shell like a sail form, with about 80 windows in the hexagonal shape of the diamond, with openings flooding it with light. Light is presented as a moral value, as a call for spiritual thought or even contemplation, in order to "illuminate" the soul by the light of Faith.[27]

Ponti uses many different references to design the shell. It invites the visitor to experience a series of elements in their full material essence, both from the first level of observation and on a spiritual level. Through the shapes, it draws the attention of sight. Assigning a privileged position to vision does not mean at the same time rejecting the rest of the senses. Instead, Ponti uses vision, through the penetration of the gaze and the contemplation of natural elements, to stimulate the other senses. The material that bears the shell and the way it is structured on it can be treated as a unit of meaning, promoting a system of meanings that is multiple, varied and contradictory. The contradiction may also concern the external-internal relationship of the building itself, contributing to the plurality of meanings. Due to the presence of elements acting simultaneously. According to Robert Venturi, multi-level simultaneous perception can form a more vivid perception **[Fig. 10, 11, 12]**.[28]

Gaston Bachelard in his work *Poetics of Space* (1958) states that dynamic forms are supported through a dialectic of the hidden/obvious. The exterior and interior in combination with the use of geometry activates fields of perception of the form.[29] The unexpected coexistence of entities and relationships, the selective change of scale and the unpredictable discontinuities are some of the techniques in which Ponti attempts through the shell to make the church building a subversive aesthetic factor of the narrative of a city (historical, social, cultural, economic). In this way, the phenomenon of a multifaceted and vibrant city is enhanced, developing a dialectic with incompatible terms between its elements, interweaving levels that emphasize on-site conjunctural conceptual variations. The shell visualizes a double code of meaning. The first concerns the construction in contradictory conceptual terms with the external environment, while the second is related to a closed, almost self-referential, communicative system concerning the morphological field without narrative and material continuities.

In the text *L'architettura e il tempo* (Architecture and Time), Ponti argues that architecture is judged through the passage of time, so special attention should be paid to the material. The architect must predict the course of the project in time, because the project does not actually end when it is built, because it has an

27 Pratesti, *Gio Ponti, Vita e percorso artistico di un protagonista del XX secolo*, 132-133.

28 Robert Venturi, *Η πολυπλοκότητα και η αντίφαση στην αρχιτεκτονική (Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture) (Athens:* Αρχιτέκτονας Σωκράτης Κατσούλης), 1977, 27.

29 Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 108.

active role in the city. Through the shell, it transforms and extracts meanings.[30] Time is an element of work and these meanings. The significance of the shell as an architectural gesture in Ponti's ecclesiastical architecture can be fluid. In other words, it evolves into a field of open transformation, through morphological systems of self-regulation, openly in progress. The essence of the "House of God" does not change, what is essentially changed is "the Shell of Faith", whose vision is changed by the evolution of society over the years. The form of the shell can emerge as a factor capable of contributing to the evolving character of the city. It is, perhaps, one of its self-regulating mechanisms, which visualizes a specific system of architectural language of each architect, which converses with the existing environment of the city, organizing a sensory experience.

In the summer of 1984, Ponti, in a letter to Allesandro Mendini, complained about the outcome of the Concattedrale di Taranto.[31] Although on the day of the cathedral's inauguration, residents supported Ponti's vision to cover both the shell and the surrounding area with plants and trees, over time, it was as if the original idea had been forgotten.[32] Now, instead of seeing the sky through the shell, the gaze falls on the emerging buildings. At the same time, the water mirror, which once radiated the shell on, was now empty, and until recently, there were graffiti on it. Time has evolved as a corrosive mark on this work, which for years has been ravaged, introducing social rather than religious concerns. In 2017, Lisa Licitra Ponti told La Reppublica that her father's wish was not to remember him for the Pirelli skyscraper, but for Concattedrale, which was his last architectural project.[33]

In 2019, an attempt was made to return the church to its former glory through a series of years of restorations.[34] The shell is now emerging through residential buildings and parking lots that have surrounded the area in recent years. However, the Concattedrale continues to stimulate the imagination, remaining in Bachelard terms, "a haven for daydreams" that invites those who see it "to seek to define existence and in this way, to transcend all situations, to render a situation of all situations" that of Faith.[35]

## Conclusion

Ponti wrote that "Designing a church is a bit like redesigning religion, redefining its essence."[36] It seems that for Ponti, the place of worship is shaped by the

30 Andrea Canziani, "Gio Ponti: architettura, tempo, materia," *Restauro Archeologico 30*, no. 1 (2022): 76.

31 Licitra Ponti, *Gio Ponti The Complete Work 1923-1978*, 278.

32 Licitra Ponti, *Gio Ponti The Complete Work 1923-1978*, 250.

33 Lorenzo Madaro, "Taranto, sos per la Concattedrale di Gio Ponti: 'Il capolavoro è divorato dal degrado'," *La Repubblica*, August 30, 2017, https://bari.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/08/30/news/taranto_sos_per_la_concattedrale_di_gio_ponti_il_capolavoro_e_divorato_dal_degrado_-174162882/

34 Constanza Rinaldi, "La Concattedrale di Gio Ponti riemerge dopo il restauro," *Corriere della Serra, Living*, March 6, 2019, https://living.corriere.it/architettura/concattedrale-gio-ponti-taranto/

35 Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 155.

36 Ponti, *Amate l' architettura*, 266.

Fig. X

meaning of the rituals towards approaching faith and approaching the divine.[37] The question of the construction of the shell of faith is undoubtedly complex and demanding for the architect, who is confronted with both history and the strong tradition of religion. The image of the "House of God" had already been formed, and this is one of the challenges Ponti had to face. Ponti was called upon to give insight into something very personal and esoteric, at a time when individuality was treated with seriality. The church was perhaps the only institution that treated the individual as a whole and not as a mass. As Luigi Moretti had stated, the church is an intangible structure, "the rest, the place of assembly and presbytery, the attached buildings are indispensable accessories of people in their everyday, worn-out life and religiosity."[38]

The shell was used as a bond between beauty and God's love. Through the geometry of the crystal and the symbolism entrusted to him by Ponti, he expressed a "pure" and "transparent" spiritualism, creating a new environment for communication with God, rooted in the past. Each element communicated this connection, while as a whole it transmitted spiritual and material union. The hexagonal shapes combined with the use of material, expressed clear, pure images of worship with a "timeless" content, that is, without special information that would disorient. Architecture as a crystal presents an aspect of architecture as a new form of order in the universe, which creates urban and spiritual bonds, not in the way predetermined by religious tradition, but through the formation of subjective and personal codes of communication.

In the article *Il Fastigio della Cattedrale (The Pinnacle of the Cathedral),* Moretti states:

> Still to read on the horizon of man's destiny the possibility of serenity and to raise its image in our cities is an act of poetry, of high religious feeling, I might even call it Christian charity. It is not by proliferating and distorting still further the grey images of today's world in apocalyptic mirrors that we can lend a hand to those who suffer. Hope always points to a goal and often reaches it.[39]

Architecture as a crystal may be an act of Faith for Ponti, turning the geometry of the shell into the birthplace of spiritual experience. As he wrote in his article *La Religione, Il sacro*, *(The Religion,The sacred)* "Religious architecture belongs first to religion and then to architecture: this is what I have always believed"[40]. Ecclesiastical architecture was not only treated as an expression of the collective needs of the faithful in the field, but also as a personal, individualized need of the believer that has more to do with the unfolding of the soul. The "sacred space" escapes recourse to a typology, giving space to the observer for his own,

37 Andreas Giacumacatos, ""Η μορφή της πίστης στην εποχή μας – The form of faith in our era," *Το Βήμα*, September 29, 2024, https://www.archetype.gr/blog/arthro/i-morfi-tis-pistis-stin-epochi-mas.

38 Luigi Moretti, "Il Fastigio della cattedrale," *Domus*, no. 497 (April 1971): 11.

39 Moretti, "Il Fastigio della cattedrale," 12.

40 Gio Ponti, "La Religione, Il Sacro," *Domus*, no. 497 (April 1971): 15.

Fig. X

personal and more direct dialogue with God. As Ponti stated, "The architect should participate in the creation of an architectural expression, that I believe should be pure, without decorative implements that might disturb the meeting between man and God."[41]

The shell of Faith in the city marks the point of hidden hope expected from communication with the Divine. According to Read Herbert, "The artistic activity might therefore be described as a crystallization from the amorphous realm of feeling, of forms that are significant of symbolic."[42]

It is on the verge of symbolic discourse, religion and art, and its interpretation is a consequence of one's personal way of thinking.

41 Gio Ponti, In *Praise of Architecture,* trans. Giuseppina and Mario Salvadori (New York: F. W. Dodge Corporation, 1960), 255.

42 Read Herbert, *The Icon and the Idea: The Function of Art in the Development of Human Consciousness* (Berlin: Schocken Books, 1965), 18.

## Bibliography


Bachelard, Gaston. *Poetics of Space*. Translated by Maria Jolas. New York: Penguin Books, 2014.

Baudrillard, Jean. *The system of objects.* Translated by James Benedict. London: Verso, 1996.

Baudrillard, Jean, and Jean Nouvel. *The unique objects – Τα μοναδικά αντικείμενα.* Translated by Νίκος Ηλιάδης. Athens: Futura, 2005.

Benjamin, Walter. "Experience and Poverty/ Gesammelte Schriften." *Die Welt im Wort*, (December 1933): 213-219, translated by Rodney Livingstone. https://platypus1917.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/benjamin_experience.pdf.

Canziani, Andrea. "Gio Ponti: architettura, tempo, materia." *Restauro Archeologico 30*, no. 1 (2022):76.

Giacumakatos, Andreas. *Η αρχιτεκτονική και η κριτική – Architecture and Criticism*. Athens: Νεφέλη, 2018.

Giacumakatos, Andreas. "Η μορφή της πίστης στην εποχή μας – The form of faith in our era." *Το Βήμα*, September 29, 2024. https://www.archetype.gr/blog/arthro/i-morfi-tis-pistis-stin-epochi-mas.

Herbert, Read. *The Icon and the Idea: The Function of Art in the Development of Human Consciousness*. Berlin: Schocken Books, 1965.

Licitra Ponti, Lisa. *Gio Ponti The Complete Work 1923-1978*. Cambridge – Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1990.

Madaro, Lorenzo. "Taranto, sos per la Concattedrale di Gio Ponti: 'Il capolavoro è divorato dal degrado'." *La Repubblica*, August 30, 2017. https://bari.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/08/30/news/taranto_sos_per_la_concattedrale_di_gio_ponti_il_capolavoro_e_divorato_dal_degrado_-174162882/.

Mellor, Richard. *Modern Church Design*. London: Skeffington & Son, 1948.

Moretti, Luigi. "Il Fastigio della cattedrale." *Domus*, no. 497 (April 1971): 11-12.

Nesbitt, Kate, ed. *Theorizing a New Agenda in Architecture. An Anthology of Architectural Theory*, 1965-1995. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996.

Ponti, Gio. *Amate l' Architettura*. Genova: Società Editrice Vitali e Ghianda, 1957.

Ponti, Gio. *In Praise of Architecture*. Translated by Giuseppina and Mario Salvadori. New York: F. W. Dodge Corporation, 1960.

Ponti, Gio. "La Religione, Il Sacro." *Domus*, no. 497 (April 1971): 15.

Pratesi, Mauro. *Gio Ponti, Vita e percorso artistico di un protagonista del XX secolo*. Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2015.

Rinaldi, Constanza. "La Concattedrale di Gio Ponti riemerge dopo il restauro", *Corriere della Sera*, March 6, 2019. https://living.corriere.it/architettura/concattedrale-gio-ponti-taranto/.

Roedig, Charles F. "Baudelaire and Synesthesia." *Kentucky Foreign Language Quarterly*, no. 5-3 (1958): 123.

Shapira, Nathan H. "The Expression of Gio Ponti." *Design Quarterly*, no. 69/70 (1967): 8.

Sövik, Edward. *Architecture for worship*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1973.

Venturi, Robert. *Η πολυπλοκότητα και η αντίφαση στην αρχιτεκτονική – Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*. Athens: Αρχιτέκτονας Σωκράτης Κατσούλης, 1977.

**Rosa Maria Marta Caruso**

# Churches by Enzo Fortuna (1921-1979) in Eastern Sicily between 1955 and 1970: Design Processes, Influences and Outcomes

ARTICLE

*Eastern Sicily, Madonna delle Lacrime, Competition, Churches, Design*

**/Abstract**

**The piece focuses on the design of sacred architecture in Siracusa and in its surroundings through the study of the professional activity of Enzo Fortuna (1921-1979). The architect completed his studies in Rome in the late 1940s, and he worked in Sicily. Through Enzo Fortuna's projects, such as the project for the competition for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime* (1957), co-authored by Mario Tedeschi (1920-2005), and the design for the church of *San Giuseppe in Cassibile* (1957-1959) and the one of *Cristo Re* in Lentini (1959-1977), we recognize the vibrant discourse around sacred architecture during those years. Even smaller centers were not excluded from this discussion. The focus on architects operating in medium-small centers during the Reconstruction years provide insights into a series of historical-critical concepts traditionally based on exceptional samples. By examining the design processes of the selected projects, we identify references to contemporary famous architects, as well as significant changes in the design of sacred spaces due to the Second Vatican Council in 1962.**

**/Author**

**Rosa Maria Marta Caruso**
**Politecnico di Torino**
**rosa.caruso@polito.it**

Rosa Caruso, architect and PhD. She graduated in 2018 from the University of Catania (Special Didactic Structure of Architecture in Siracusa). Her research interests focus on the History of Contemporary Architecture and on the History of Construction. In 2023, she obtained her Doctor of Research title from the University of Rome "La Sapienza". Since February 2024, she has been a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the Polytechnic University of Turin (Department of Architecture and Design).

CC BY 4.0
https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/18773
Copyright © 2024 Rosa Maria Marta Caruso

## Introduction

After the Second World War, the cities of eastern Sicily were subjected to significant changes due to urban expansion. Analyzing a selection of sacred architecture projects carried out in that area between 1955 and 1970 allows us to reread the design processes pursued by local architects and engineers. They were used to follow influences coming from the largest Italian centers, where the most renowned designers were active.

Enzo Fortuna (1921-1979) was one of the architects active in those years in Siracusa:[1] at the end of the 1940s, he completed his training in Rome, where he attended the course of "History and Styles of Architecture"[2] by Prof. Vincenzo Fasolo (1885-1969). After his studies in Rome, Enzo Fortuna returned to Sicily, as often happened to many Sicilian architects, who showed a strong "rootedness" towards their homeland. The young architects usually brought to their homeland some of the "winds" of change that were modifying the appearance of Italy after the Second World War. "Enzo Fortuna" fund is preserved in the Project Archive of the Special Didactic Structure of Siracusa,[3] and it contains studies that best represent his design approach to the theme of sacred architecture. Enzo Fortuna's *curriculum vitae* and the inventory of his Archival Fund contain seven projects of sacred architecture. The design choices made by Enzo Fortuna are different during his career: his first professional experience in designing sacred architecture, the sanctuary of *Santa Maria Regina di Fatima* (Siracusa, 1947), has an eclectic language. In 1957, Enzo Fortuna participated with architect Mario Tedeschi (1920-2005) in the competition for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime* (1957). After the competition, Fortuna received the assignment for the project of the parish church of *San Giuseppe* in Cassibile (1957-1959) and later the one for the church of *Cristo Re* in Lentini (1959-1977). During the 1960s, Fortuna worked on the church of *Santa Lucia* in Floridia (1963), on the church for the popular district of *San Focà* in Melilli (1965-1975), and on the church of *Sant'Antonio* in Piazza Armerina, dated between the 1960s and the 1970s.

The paper focuses on the proposal for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime* in Siracusa, co-authored by the architect and designer Mario Tedeschi from Milan, and it also focuses on the projects for the churches of *San Giuseppe* and *Cristo Re*, built respectively in the small towns of Cassibile and Lentini, which demonstrate a shift in the design of sacred spaces after the Second Vatican Council

1 Paola Barbera, Zaira Barone, and Maria Rosaria Vitale, "Enzo Fortuna: i progetti di Restauro e allestimento per il Museo di Palazzo Bellomo a Siracusa 1952-1970," *AAA Italia*, no. 16 (2017): 35; Rosa Maria Marta Caruso, "La lettura dell'antico nella formazione degli architetti siciliani a Roma. Studi e progetti di Giuseppe Marletta (1906-1988) e Enzo Fortuna (1921-1979)", in *Forme dell'abitare a Roma. Echi dell'antico nell'architettura del primo Novecento*, ed. Simona Benedetti, F. Benfante, I. Benincampi, D. Bigi, L. Kosmopoulos (Roma: Gangemi Editore, 2023), 419-427; Rosa Maria Marta Caruso, *L'archivio di Enzo Fortuna. Uno scorcio sulla professione di architetto nella seconda metà del Novecento in Sicilia* (Master Degree Thesis, University of Catania, 2018).

2 Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 153, Notes of Vincenzo Fasolo's courses *Storia e stili dell'architettura greca* and *Storia e stili dell'architettura romana.*

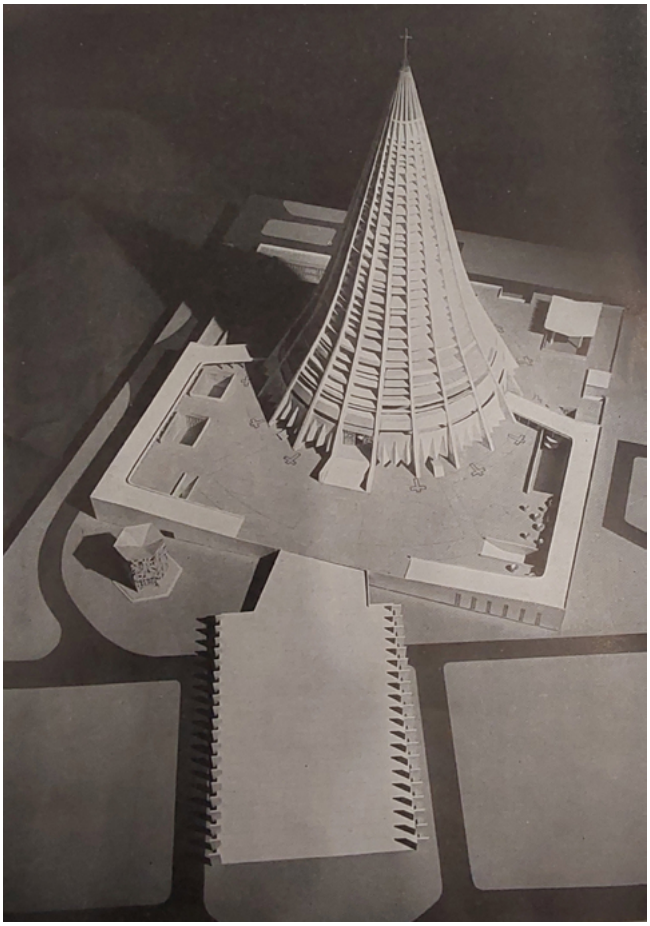
3 I want to express my gratitude to Prof. Luigi Fortuna (University of Catania), son of Arch. Enzo Fortuna, for donating me the book by G. E. Kidder Smith, *Nuove Chiese in Europa* (Milano: Edizioni di comunità, 1964). This book once belonged to Enzo Fortuna and reflects his interest in the design of sacred architecture.

of 1962. Out of all the projects, these two are exceptionally well-documented. The archive not only preserves the executive drawings, as it happens for the church in the *San Focà* district, but also the hand sketches, offering a comprehensive insight into the creative process. The hand sketches also represent an occasion to reflect on the possible references to design solutions by renowned architects active in Italy.

## The International Competition for the Sanctuary of Madonna delle Lacrime in Siracusa

In June 1955, the international competition for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime*[4] emerged among the limited number of competitions aimed at constructing sacred buildings.[5] Hugo Schnell, art historian and director of the magazine "Das Münster", spent some words in the issue of "Fede e Arte" dedicated to the competition, and he wrote: "One cannot think of any century in the European history where so many contrasting expressions of form have been proposed on a single theme. These range from historicism to romantic attitudes and even to the boldest aerodynamic shapes… churches with architectural motifs from almost all styles coexist, blending ancient and modern conceptions".[6]

The premise for the design of this significant place of worship is rooted in a historical and emotional event that profoundly impacted the faithful: the tear-shedding of a small effigy of the *Madonna*. This event held immense significance, and consequently, as noted by architect Vincenzo Passarelli, consultant for the Pontifical Central Commission for Sacred Art in Italy, it should not have appeared "strange, irreverent, or incongruous with the location"[7] that the symbol of this event "was meant to be as striking as the Eurialo castle or the Greek theater".[8]



1

Therefore, the winning project was the one by the French architects Michel Andrault (1926-2020) and Pierre Parat (1928-2019) [Fig. 1]: they envisioned

4 Martina Anfuso, *Il Santuario della Madonna delle Lacrime di Siracusa* (Master Degree Thesis, University of Catania, 2011).

5 Giancarlo Santi, *Nuove chiese italiane (1861-2010). Sette lezioni* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2011), 37, 57.

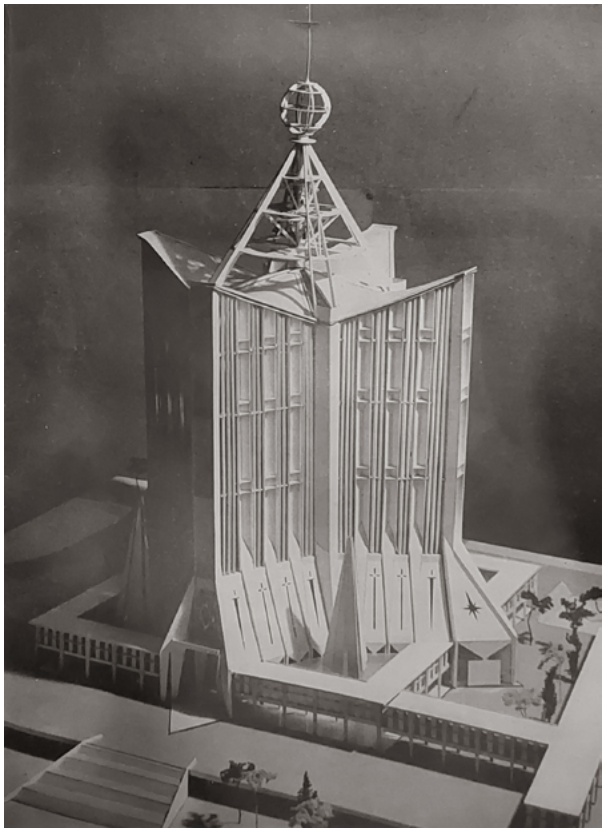
6 Hugo Schnell, "L'esposizione dei progetti: rassegna indicativa", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 249.

7 Vincenzo Passarelli, "Punto di partenza", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 246.

8 Passarelli, "Punto di partenza", 246.

Fig. 1
Michel Andrault, Pierre Parat, *Corona con nove raggi bianchi in campo azzurro*, 1957 (source: *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9, 1957, 266).



2 3

a spire dedicated to the *Madonna*, serving as a poignant reminder of the tear-shedding event in the skies above Siracusa and the Mediterranean.[9]

The competition guidelines did not provide formal instructions on preparing the project. The only requirement to be met was that the sanctuary should accommodate 20.000 faithful, and the project should include the necessary service spaces and buildings related to the sanctuary.[10]

From an urban planning perspective, the city of Siracusa faced a complex situation. Its core, located on the island of Ortigia, was too decentralized compared to the potential urban expansion area. The competition thus became an opportunity to envision a new center, moved to an inland area on the mainland **[Fig. 2]**.[11] The winning project was based on a circular plan, ensuring good alignment with *Piazza della Vittoria*.[12] It addressed the main requirements of the competition. However, it was not the only project with a central plan. Other projects with a central plan were the second prize, *Turris Davidica*[13] **[Fig. 3]** by Guillaume Gillet (1912-1987) and René Sarger (1917-1988), and *Alma Mater*[14] **[Fig. 4]** by Vittorio

9 Passarelli, "Punto di partenza", 246.

10 "Bando di concorso internazionale per il progetto del Santuario della Madonna delle Lacrime e delle opere annesse in Siracusa", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 256.

11 Rudolf Schwarz, "Il problema dell'architettura sacra", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 252.

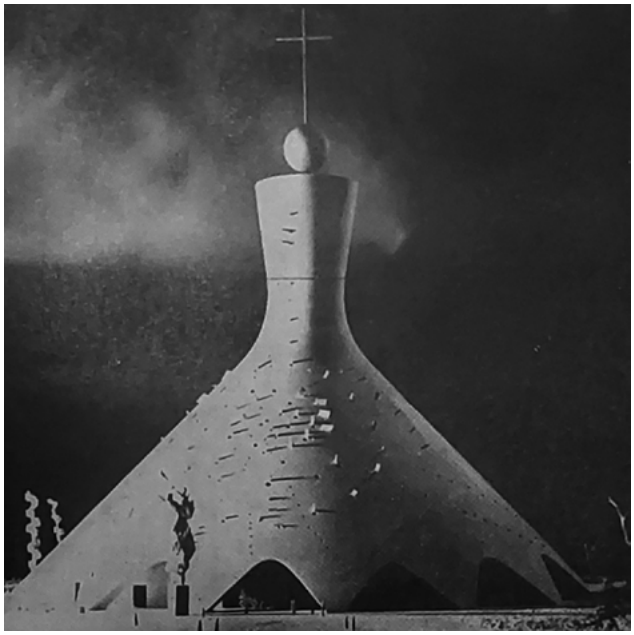
12 Michel Andrault and Pierre Parat, "Corona con nove raggi bianchi in campo azzurro", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 264-273.

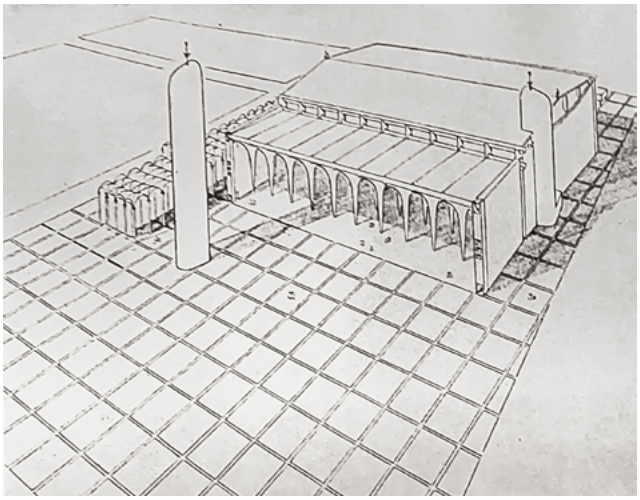
13 Guillaume Gillet and René Sarger, "Turris Davidica", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 274-279.

14 Vittorio Gandolfi and Mario Righini, "Alma Mater", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9

Fig. 2
*Site plan for the sanctuary of Madonna delle Lacrime*. In *Madonna delle Lacrime* bulletin, 1956. (Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund).

Fig. 3
Guillaume Gillet , René Sarger, *Turris Davidica*, 1957 (source: *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9, 1957, 275).





4

5

Gandolfi (1919-1999) and Mario Righini. Beyond their planimetric layout, these projects share the volumetric modeling evoking the ascensional character of ancient cathedrals.

The third prize, awarded to *314253*[15] **[Fig. 5]** by the German architect Erwin Schiffer, highlights "the mystical sense and value of the interior space, determined by the community of the faithful who participate in the Eucharistic celebration, rather than by the monumental forms of the building".[16] This project proposes a large hall with minimal emphasis on the exterior, where the congregation gathers around the altar.[17] The basilica-like layout evoked the expressions of local sacred architecture.

Other projects presented innovative spatial and compositional solutions, reflecting ongoing research during those years. For example, *Aretusa*[18] **[Fig. 6]** by Pasquale Carbonara (1910-1998), co-authored with two architects from Siracusa, Carmelo Minniti and Gaetano Santuccio, conceived a complex formed by the aggregation of different elements. On the other hand, *Stella Mattutina*[19] **[Fig. 7]** by Eugenio Montuori (1907-1982) featured an elaborate roof made of reinforced concrete segments with varying directions of inclination, creating a dynamic effect within the building. Additionally, *"ad aula"* church solutions became common, such as *Ex fletu tuo salus mea*[20] **[Fig. 8]** by Michele Zerbi

(1957): 284-287.

15 Erwin Schiffer, "314253", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 280-283.

16 Schwarz, "Il problema dell'architettura sacra", 253.

17 Schwarz, "Il problema dell'architettura sacra", 253.

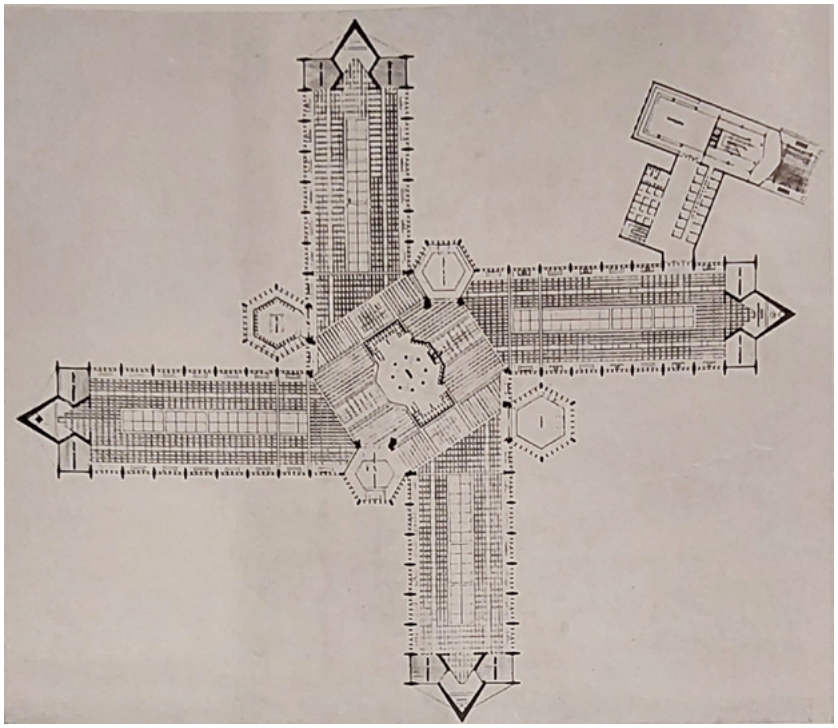
18 Pasquale Carbonara, Carmelo Minniti andGaetano Santuccio, "Aretusa", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 288-295.

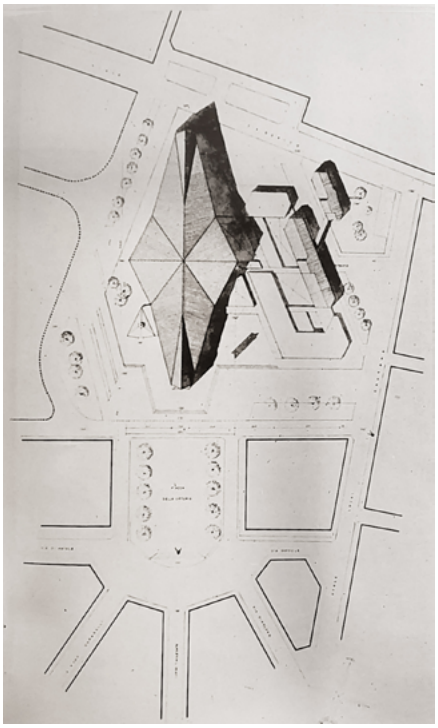
19 Eugenio Montuori, "Stella Mattutina", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 299-302.

20 Michele Zerbi and Antonio Martinelli, "Ex fletu tuo salus mea", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 342; Michele Zerbi and Antonio Martinelli, *Progetto presentato al concorso internazionale per l'erigendo Santuario della "Madonna delle Lacrime" di Siracusa* (Sovrano Ordine di Malta, 1960).

Fig. 4
Vittorio Gandolfi, Mario Righini, *Alma Mater*, 1957 (source: *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9, 1957, 285).

Fig. 5
Erwin Schiffer, *314253,* 1957 (source: *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9, 1957, 282).





6 7

and Antonio Martinelli, based on a circular sector plan, drawing inspiration from the experiments in sacred architecture[21] by Cesare Cattaneo (1912-2015) and Mario Radice (1898-1987).

The competition, therefore, represented a meeting point for new ideas on perceiving and reproducing spaces destined for sacred architecture. Recognizable names of designers active in Italy and abroad were involved, together with contributions from local designers. Most projects followed the design paths that emerged during the conference on sacred architecture in Bologna in 1955. The international competition for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime* was announced on that occasion.[22]

No specific requirements were necessary to participate in the competition[23] and most of the local designers involved were very young. Among them was Enzo Fortuna, who saw the competition as an opportunity to improve his skills in designing sacred architecture.

Fortuna participated in the competition for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime* alongside architect and designer Mario Tedeschi, with the project entitled *F.T. 38*.[24] The architects met in Rome, where they shared part of the educational journey. The invitation to this collaboration came directly from Tedeschi,[25]

21 Sandro Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano* (Milano: Jaca Book, 2000), 22; Luciano Caramel, ed., *L'arte e L'ideale. La tradizione cristiana nell'opera di Cesare Cattaneo e Mario Radice* (Milano: Mazzotta Editore, 1988).

22 Centro Studi Architettura e Arte Sacra, ed., *Dieci anni di architettura sacra in Italia, 1945-1955* (Bologna: Ufficio tecnico organizzativo arcivescovile, 1956): 46.

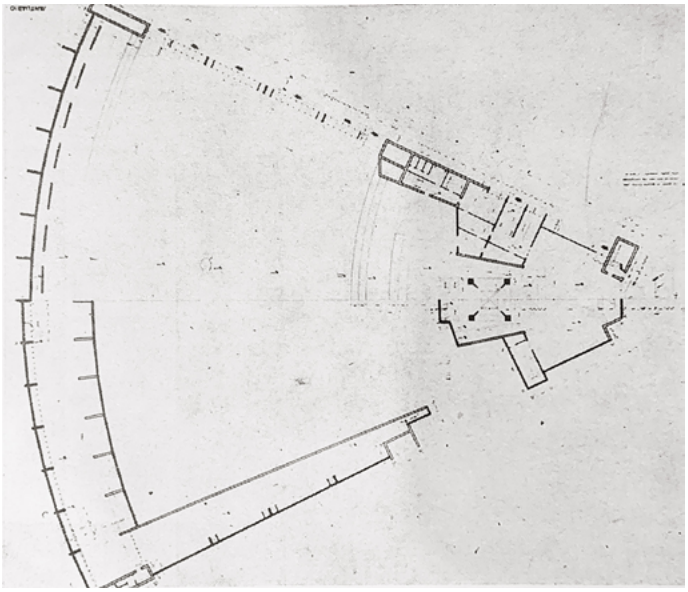
23 Schwarz, "Il problema dell'architettura sacra", 251.

24 "F" and "T" indicated the capital letter of the surnames "Fortuna" and "Tedeschi"; "1938" was the year when they met in Rome.

25 Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 48, file 1, Correspondence – 10/12/55.

Fig. 6
Pasquale Carbonara, Carmelo Minniti, Gaetano Santuccio, *Aretusa*, 1957 (source: *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9, 1957, 288).

Fig. 7
Eugenio Montuori, *Stella Mattutina*, 1957 (source: *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9, 1957, 299).





8 9

who saw his colleague as an essential support for the project due to his deeper understanding of the urban context of Siracusa.

The designers, who had respectively returned to Siracusa and Milan after their studies, had different professional opportunities in the design of sacred architecture. Between the late 1940s and early 1950s, Enzo Fortuna worked on restoration projects for the churches of *San Giovanni Battista*, *San Pietro*, and *San Martino* in Siracusa. His only experience in designing new sacred spaces was related to the small sanctuary of *Maria Regina di Fatima* in Siracusa (1947). On the other hand, Mario Tedeschi collaborated with Vico Magistretti (1920-2006) on the design of the church of *Santa Maria Nascente* in Q.T.8 in Milan (1955).[26] He also designed the church of *Santa Marcellina and San Giuseppe* at the *Certosa* in Milan[27] **[Fig. 9]**, consecrated in 1958.

From the beginning of their correspondence about the competition for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime*, Mario Tedeschi presented to his colleague from Siracusa a list of issues to clarify: the site survey, the examination of the competition panel and the initial ideas for the design.[28] Enzo Fortuna replied by describing the area designated for the construction of the new religious architecture and the urban situation in Siracusa during those years. He wrote that the environmental characteristics were not binding because the area was "already

26 Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano,* 43-44; Centro Studi Architettura e Arte Sacra, *Dieci anni di architettura sacra in Italia, 1945-1955*, 296-301; Andra Longhi, Carlo Tosco, *Architettura, Chiesa e società in Italia (1948-1978)* (Roma: Edizioni Studium, 2010), 152; Andrea Longhi, "Architetture per il battesimo: memoria, liturgia, progetti", in *Casa di Dio. Progettazione e adeguamento di chiese nel terzo millennio*, ed. Michele Anderlee (Firenze: Centro Di, 2005): 63-64; 66; Maria Manuela Leoni, "Chiesa di Santa Maria Nascente (Milano)", in *Architettura in Lombardia dal 1945 a oggi,* https://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/architetture900/schede/p4010-00242/ (last accessed November 2024).

27 Maria Feraboli, "Mario Tedeschi. Arte, interni e architettura in un archivio ritrovato", *Recupero e conservazione*, no. 147 (2018): 12-20; Laura Lazzaroni, ed., *La diocesi di Milano e le nuove chiese 1954-2014* (Segrate: Digital Print Service srl, 2016); Fulvio Irace, Luca Pietro Nicoletti, ed., *Carlo Ramous. Scultura, Architettura, Città. Sculpture, Architecture, City* (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2017).

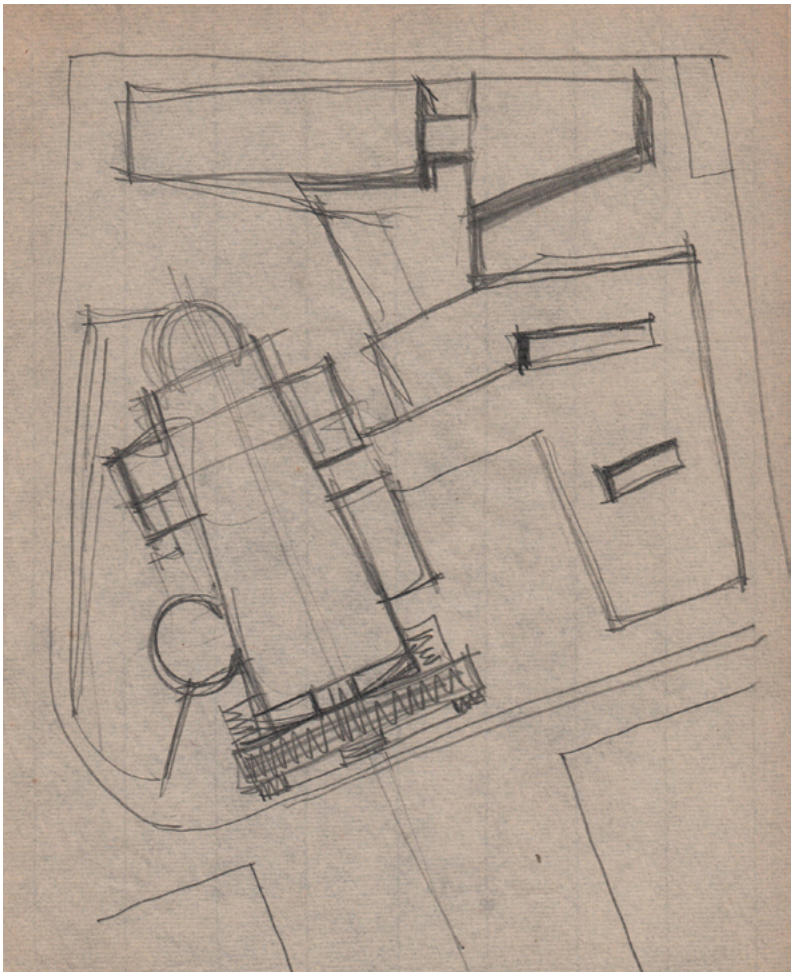
28 Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 48, file 1, Correspondence – 15/12/55.

Fig. 8
Michele Zerbi, Antonio Martinelli, *Ex fletu tuo salus mea*, 1957 (source: *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9, 1957, 342).

Fig. 9
Mario Tedeschi, *church of Santa Marcellina and San Giuseppe alla Certosa*, Milan (source: Google Earth).

(unfortunately) compromised by popular constructions, by monstrous architectures".[29]

As can be seen from the project sketches, Fortuna and Tedeschi carefully planned the positioning of the complex even though it was in an urban context lacking relevant characteristics that were able to drive specific design choices. The layout and urban planning were the main reasons why the project stood out among the others[30]. The main axis for setting up the church was determined by the inclination of the road along *Piazza della Vittoria* [Fig. 10]. Moreover, the church and the annexed buildings were designed on a base to connect the sanctuary with the surrounding city.



10

The only sketches preserved in Enzo Fortuna's archival fund represent the organization of the area, and it is possible to assume that Fortuna worked mainly in the general planimetric organization of the project. Mario Tedeschi worked on the sanctuary's composition, but he maintained his colleague's proposal in plan. The Latin cross was designed according to some of the characteristics that matured at the end of the 1940s, namely 'the extreme formative simplification' and 'the highlighting of the presbyterial area', "within which the altar, purified from the adjectives of the previous centuries, becomes the protagonist and towards which the renewed perspective and processional sequences converge"[31] [Fig.11, 12].

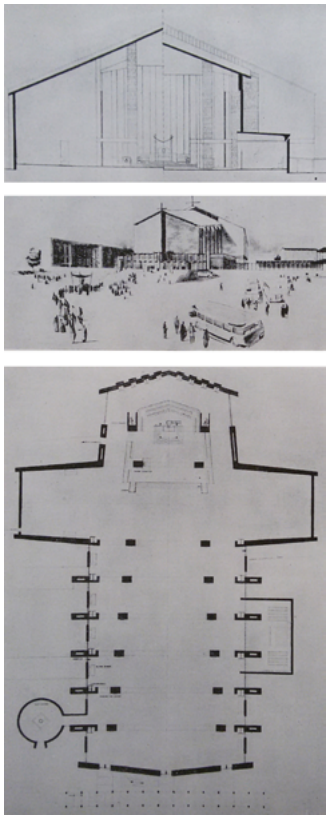
The facade loses the representative role used to have in the past, and it appears almost like a section, repeated with increasing dimensions to create a telescopic structure that allows focus on the presbytery area while remaining consistent with the choice to align the transept roof in the same direction as the main nave. The vertical cut on the facade, also intended as an entrance to the sanctuary, is innovative compared to the traditional division into horizontal sections typical of sacred architecture. The small volume variations between the nave and the transept and the exposed pillars on the side facades create a play of light and shadow on the elevations, lending a dynamic aspect to the result.

29 Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 48, file 1, Correspondence – 15/12/55.

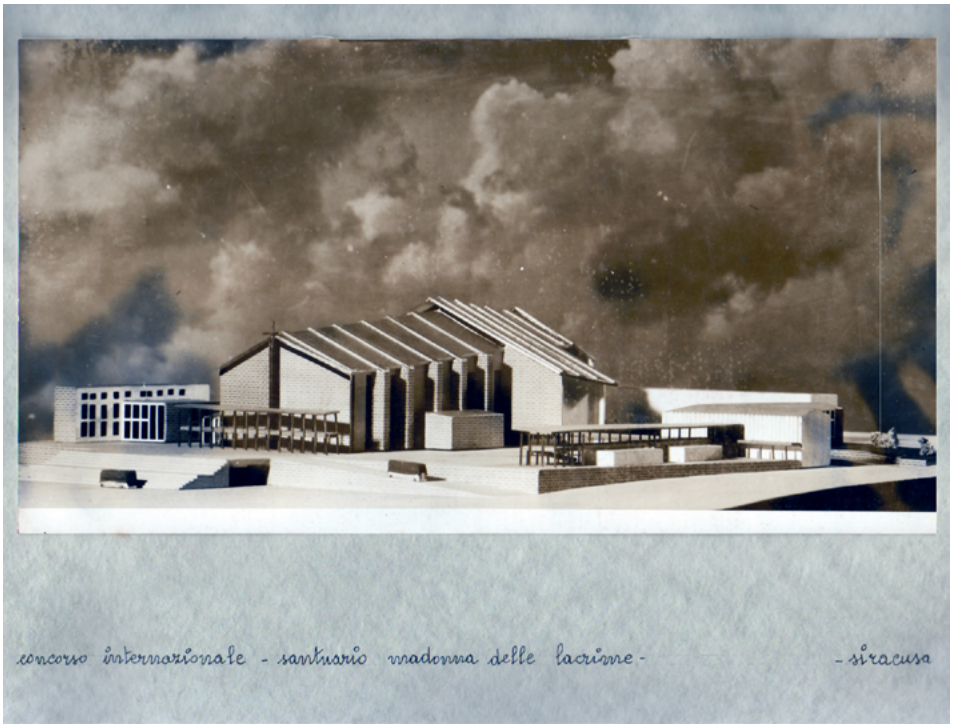
30 Fortuna, Tedeschi, "F.T. 38", 314.

31 Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano,* 19.

Fig. 10
Enzo Fortuna, study sketch for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime*, Siracusa, 1956 (source: Project Archive of the "Struttura Didattica Speciale" of Architecture, Siracusa,"Enzo Fortuna" fund).



11




12

The project's dynamism is influenced by the juxtaposition of the "mass" with the entrance *portico* frame, reminiscent of rationalist architecture and echoed in the spaces adjacent to the sanctuary, intended to house its facilities.

*F.T. 38* shows that the designers wanted to maintain the characteristics closer to the tradition they were called to engage with: Fortuna and Tedeschi aimed to maintain a conscious connection with popular culture without straying too far from the sacred architecture already in the territory.[32]

Despite the outcome of the competition for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime*, Enzo Fortuna probably gained visibility thanks to the project co-authored with Mario Tedeschi: after 1957, he received several commissions for the construction of sacred buildings near Siracusa, including the church of *San Giuseppe* in Cassibile (1957-1960) and that of *Cristo Re* (1959-1977) in Lentini.

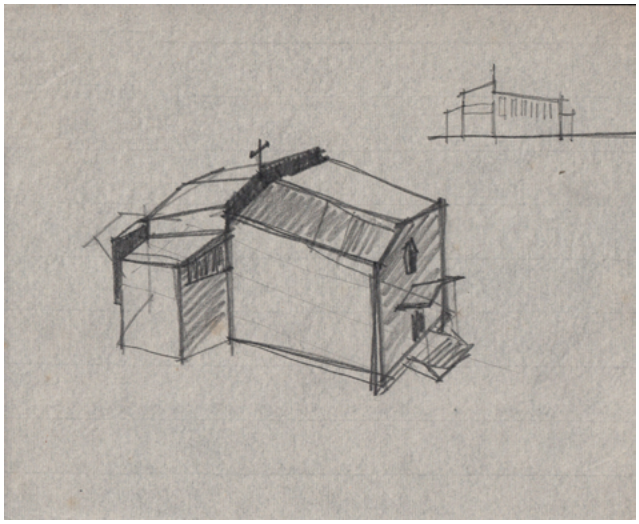
## The Church of San Giuseppe in Cassibile

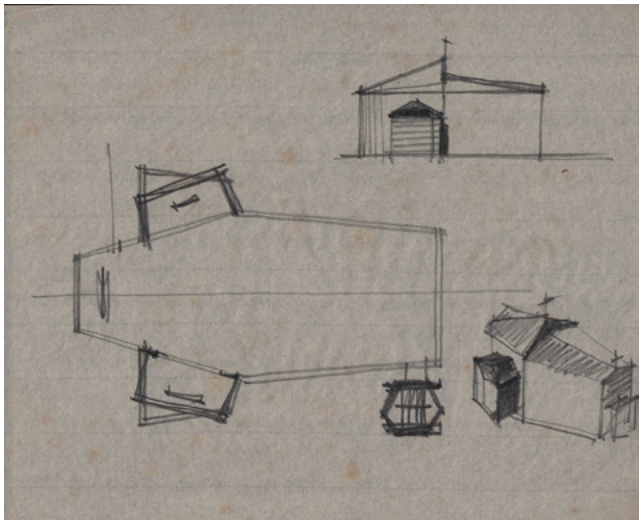
The story of the church of San Giuseppe is common to most sacred architectures designed during the same years: after the war, many churches had been ruined, and places of worship were lacking in small, inhabited centers. In the 1950s, Cassibile had more than 2000 inhabitants, and it faced an urgent need for a parish church. Given its distance of approximately 15 km from Siracusa, building a church that would have allowed the faithful to worship without leaving

Fig. 11
Enzo Fortuna, Mario Tedeschi, *F.T. 38, proposal for the sanctuary of Madonna delle Lacrime*, Siracusa, 1957 (source: Fortuna and Tedeschi "F.T.38", 314).

Fig. 12
Enzo Fortuna, Mario Tedeschi, *Model of the sanctuary of Madonna delle Lacrime in Siracusa*, 1957 (source: Project Archive of the "Struttura Didattica Speciale" of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund).

32 Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano*, 29-30.





13 14

the district was essential. Archbishop Baranzini noted that there were no suitable worship structures "except for the rustic apse of a church […] capable of accommodating a maximum of 40 people", and therefore "wholly insufficient and inadequate".[33]

The recently renewed contact with Mario Tedeschi and the reflections developed with the Milanese colleague were still fresh in the mind of the architect from Siracusa. Indeed, the initial drawings for the church of *San Giuseppe* included strong analogies with the plans for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime*. Enzo Fortuna did not mention any reference in designing this church, but a few years before, in 1955, the big conference on sacred architecture was organized in Bologna. On that occasion, the most important examples of sacred buildings – realized between 1945 and 1955 – were shown: these projects, published in 1956, were the primary references for sacred architecture in Italy.[34]

Designing the church of San Giuseppe, Enzo Fortuna primarily worked through axonometric views and elevations, reintroducing the variation in volume between the nave and the transept. In this case, the longitudinal elevation of the structure remains close to that of the sanctuary. However, two small apses are evident in the axonometric view, with a smaller volume than the nave and the presbytery. These apses allowed the preservation of the Latin cross design in the plan **[Fig. 13]**. The emphasis on the presbytery through subtle height variations can be traced back to several sacred architectures designed a few years earlier, including the church of *SS. Giuseppe e Francesco* in the *INA* district of Cesate (1954-1959)[35] by Ignazio Gardella (1905-1999): this church had a sound

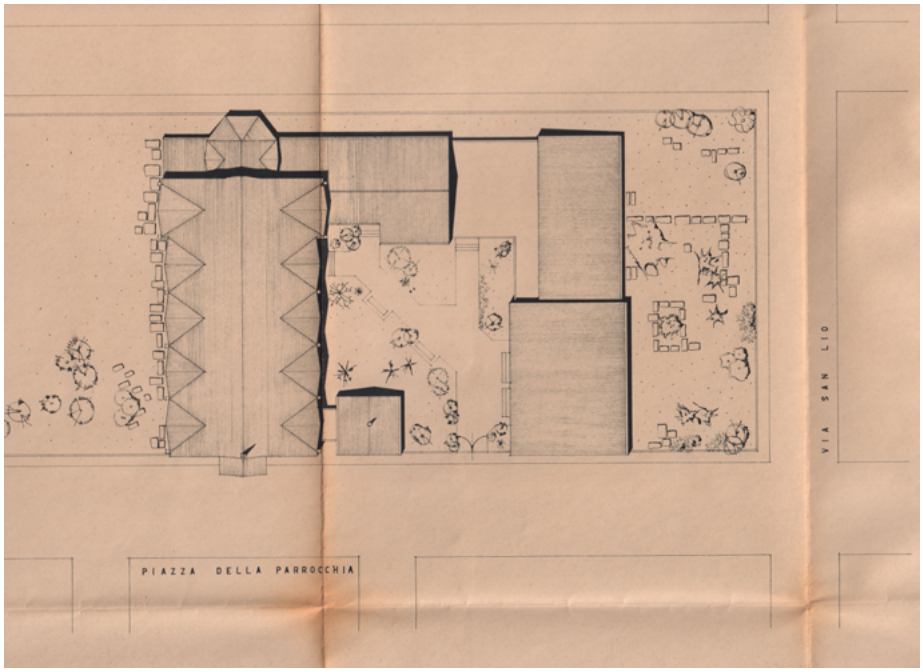
33 Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 60, file 2, *Relazione atta a dimostrare la necessità della costruzione della Chiesa parrocchiale di San Giuseppe in Cassibile (Siracusa)*, April 24, 1959.

34 Centro Studi Architettura e Arte Sacra, *Dieci anni di architettura sacra in Italia, 1945-1955.*

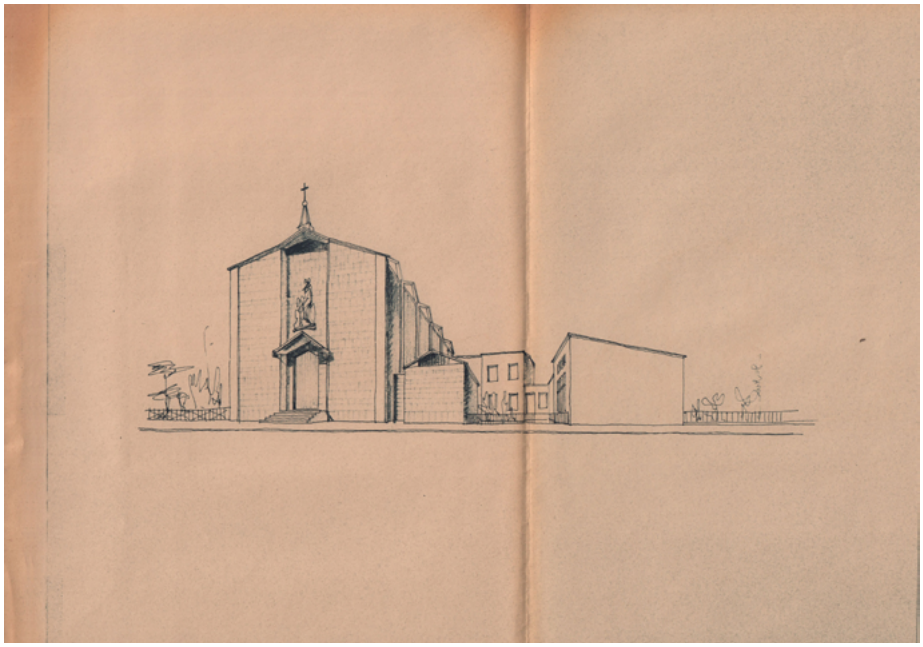
35 Maria Manuela Leoni, "*Chiesa di San Francesco d'Assisi (Cesate, MI)*," in *Architettura in Lombardia dal 1945 a oggi*, https://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/architetture900/schede/p4010-00532/ (last accessed November 2024); Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano*, 44; 56. Longhi, Tosco, *Architettura, Chiesa e società in Italia (1948-1978)*, 19; Angelo Lorenzi, "Chiesa parrocchiale, Cesate 1954-1959", in *Ignazio Gardella architetture*, ed. Maria Cristina Loi (Milano: Electa, 1999), 79-87..

Fig. 13
Enzo Fortuna, *sketch of the church of San Giuseppe in Cassibile*, 1957-1958 (source: Project Archive of the "Struttura Didattica Speciale" of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund).

Fig. 14
Enzo Fortuna, *sketch of the church of San Giuseppe in Cassibile*, 1957-1958 (source: Project Archive of the "Struttura Didattica Speciale" of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund).




15



16

diffusion in the national context and was published in *Casabella* in 1957[36]. The church was in a popular district, and it proposed a formal solution based on tradition and simplicity: these characteristics could be coherent with the context of Cassibile.

Later, Enzo Fortuna's project for the church of *San Giuseppe* underwent some modifications **[Fig. 14]**, and the small lateral apses were inclined, similarly to the solution used by Ludovico Quaroni (1911-1987) in the church of Francavilla al Mare (1948).[37] After various study sketches of the plan and axonometric views,

Fig. 15
Enzo Fortuna, *general plan of the church of San Giuseppe in Cassibile*, 1959 (source: Project Archive of the "Struttura Didattica Speciale" of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund).

Fig. 16
Enzo Fortuna, *perspective of the church of San Giuseppe in Cassibile*, 1959 (source: Project Archive of the "Struttura Didattica Speciale" of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund).

36 Ezio Cerutti, "Quartiere residenziale in Comune di Cesate", *Casabella-Continuità*, no. 216 (1957): 16-35.

37 However, Enzo Fortuna does not borrow from Quaroni the concept of the "losanga longitudinale" typology, which was a true Italian pre-conciliar innovation. Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano:* 34.





17a 17b

there was possibly a shift in Fortuna's choice of references **[Fig. 15, 16]**. It is possible to hypothesize references to the project of *Santa Maria Maggiore* in Francavilla al Mare (1948)[38] by Saverio Muratori (1910-1973).

The competition for the church in Francavilla al Mare in 1948 had a great diffusion in Italy and it was the only one with the sponsorship of UCAI.[39] The projects by Ludovico Quaroni and Saverio Muratori were published in the proceedings of the Bolognese conference (1955),[40] and their echo could be seen in many designers interested in sacred architecture projects.

In general, however, it is possible that Fortuna was familiar with Saverio Muratori's ecclesiastical building designs, particularly appreciated by their continuity with the historical urban tradition[41] and their "commitment to rigor and the intention of unity and readability in structures that opposed the arbitrariness and conceptual poverty of architecture in the 1950s and 1960s".[42]

Enzo Fortuna worked on this project in collaboration with engineer Luigi La Ciura, who was involved especially during the execution phase when further substantial modifications were made to the project **[Fig. 17]**. Both for ease of construction and for economic reasons, the technique of thin-walled reinforced concrete for the roof was simplified into a double-pitched roof, undoubtedly less expensive. However, the design of the supporting pillars was retained on the side walls, offering a "reinterpretation" of visible pillars reminiscent of Saverio Muratori's sacred architecture.

## The Church of Cristo Re in Lentini

The project for the church of *Cristo Re* in Lentini began in 1959. However, the design and execution phases extended until 1977, leading the architect to choose a very different solution than the church in Cassibile. The main reason for this choice lies in the Liturgical Reform introduced by the Second Vatican

38 Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano*, 30-31.

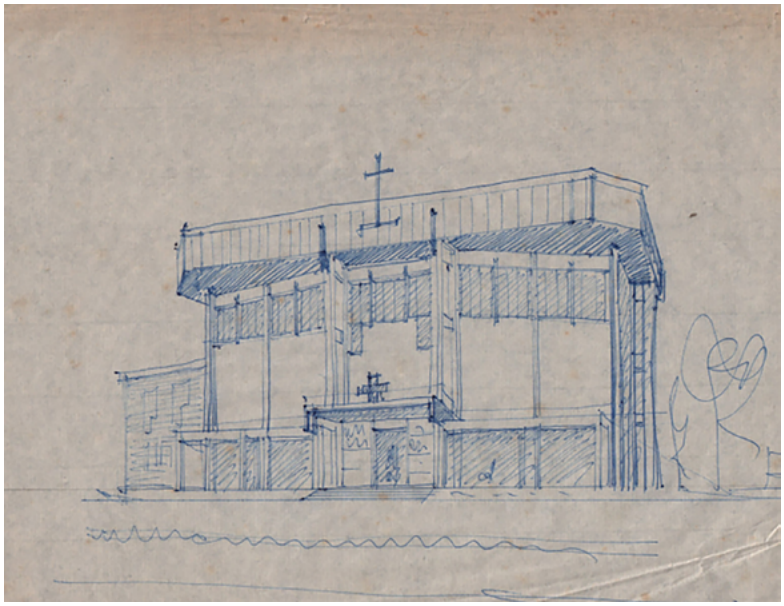
39 Longhi, Tosco, *Architettura, Chiesa e società in Italia (1948-1978)*, 106-113.

40 Centro Studi Architettura e Arte Sacra, *Dieci anni di architettura sacra in Italia, 1945-1955*, 341-343; 356-358.

41 Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano*, 30.

42 Sandro Benedetti, *Architettura Sacra oggi* (Tarquinia: Gangemi Editore, 1995), 234; Longhi, Tosco, *Architettura, Chiesa e società in Italia (1948-1978)*, 11-12.

Fig. 17a, 17b
*The church of San Giuseppe in Cassibile*. Zenit view (from Google Earth) and elevation (photo by the author, 2024).





18b

18a

Council (1962-1965).[43] Until the 1950s, worship buildings maintained a division of spaces reminiscent of traditional liturgical practices. There was always a distinction between the main nave, side aisles, apses, presbytery, and transept. However, in the post-conciliar years, this distinction faded away.

This was probably caused by the novel concept of "communality" introduced in liturgy. This term aimed to strengthen the connection between the altar, the sacramental signs, and the assembly.[44] The initial approach to adapt sacred architecture to "*participatio actuosa*"[45] was to simplify the plan, reducing the sacred space to "large square or rectangular halls, covered without significant structural variations".[46] The focus was on the presbytery, where the primary liturgical objects were placed.

Enzo Fortuna was also responsible for overseeing the construction with the engineer Luigi Maiolino. Enzo Fortuna's design choice involved creating a "central, simple, and solemn" space **[Fig. 18]**. The assembly gathered around the altar, which became the "focal point of liturgical action",[47] positioned directly in front of the faithful and aligned with the church's main entrance.[48] In the project's report, Fortuna explicitly expressed the intention to "fully consider all the norms indicated by the acts of the Second Vatican Council while preserving the freedom of expression that is fundamental for every good designer"[49] **[Fig. 19]**.

43 A big conference was organized in Assisi in 1965, after the Second Vatican Council (Longhi, Tosco, *Architettura, Chiesa e società in Italia (1948-1978)*, 38-39); Pina Ciampani, *Architettura e Liturgia* (Assisi: Edizioni Pro Civitate Christiana, 1965).

44 Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano:*193.

45 Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano*, 193.

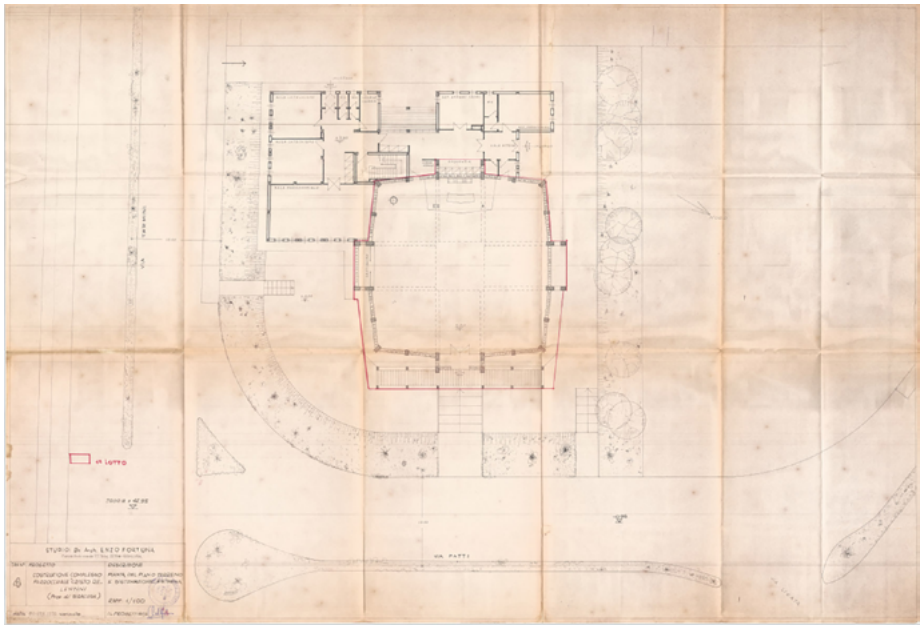
46 Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano*, 194.

47 Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 90, file 3, *Relazione del progetto generale*, November 7, 1974.

48 Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 90, file 3, *Relazione del progetto generale*, November 7, 1974.

49 Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 90, file 3, *Relazione del progetto generale*, November 7, 1974.

Fig. 18a, 18b
Enzo Fortuna, *sketch of the church of Cristo Re in Lentini*, 1970 (source: Project Archive of the "Struttura Didattica Seciale" of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund) and the church of *Cristo Re* in Lentini today (photo by the author, 2024).



In Chapter VII of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the teachings of the Second Vatican Council regarding liturgical space are present: "to be primarily designed/intended for the celebration of the sacraments…, churches must provide that the ambo, the altar, and the baptismal font are centrally located for the celebrating assembly. This, of course, does not mean forgetting or neglecting the tabernacle and images. It involves configuring churches differently, giving them new centrality".[50] In Enzo Fortuna's project, the placement of the Tabernacle and the Baptismal Font is not arbitrary: the Tabernacle is in a separate chapel to "clarify the concept of the Eucharist as the sacrifice of the Altar and the Eucharist as the Sacrament"; the Baptismal Font is positioned "so that it can serve as a reminder and memory of each believer's entry into the Faith".[51]

The central part of the building is emphasized by a lantern (*tiburio*) situated above a glass ribbon around its perimeter **[Fig. 20]**. This lantern was intended to illuminate the large hall and establish "that mystical relationship between shadow and light, so essential and inviting for prayer and meditation".[52]

Enzo Fortuna also designed the associated buildings. As with previous projects, the study about the context that would host the building was important to arrive at the final solution. The site was in a newly constructed area **[Fig. 21]**. The area held no strategic value and was not situated at the center of the settlement. It was not a location chosen by the Archdiocesan Curia but imposed by the non-negotiable destination of the General Regulatory Plan (*P.R.G.*) and detailed zoning. Consequently, it lacked all primary and secondary urbanization works.

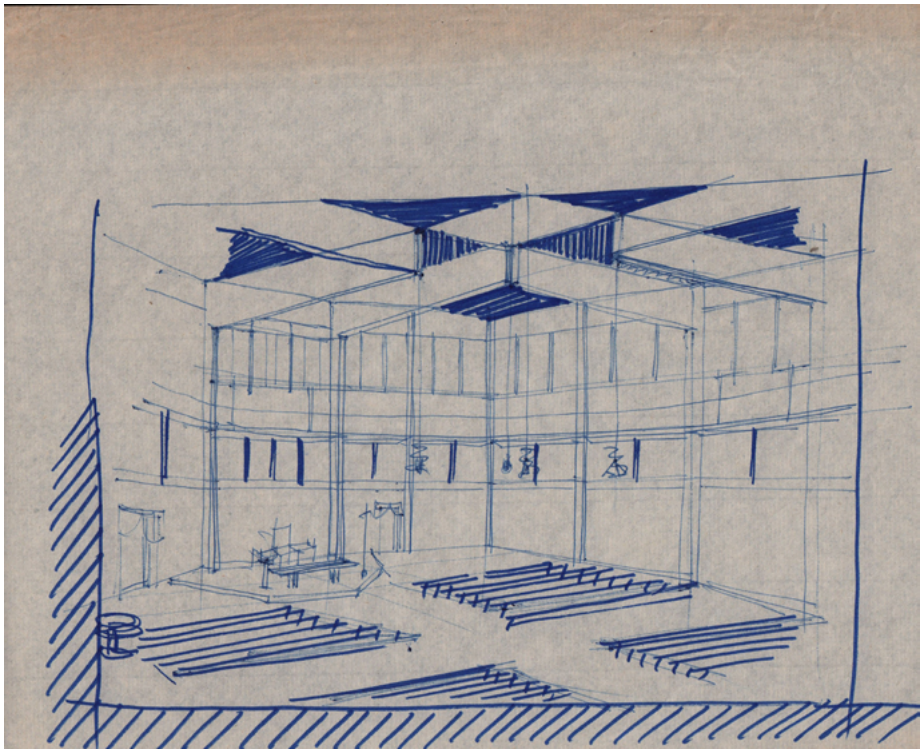
Perhaps if it had been a lot with pre-existing or strategic structures, the archi-

50 Santi, *Nuove chiese italiane (1861-2010). Sette lezioni*: 76.

51 Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 90, file 3, *Relazione del progetto generale*, 7 November 1974.

52 Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 90, file 3, *Relazione del progetto generale*, 7 November 1974.

Fig. 19
Enzo Fortuna, *ground floor plan of the church of Cristo Re in Lentini*, 1970 (source: Project Archive of the "Struttura Didattica Speciale" of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund).



tect from Siracusa would have made a different choice, adhering to the traditional language he was more familiar with. However, the ferment caused by the Liturgical Reform was strong: "churches are not self-referential buildings, but expressive buildings of the church imagined and proposed by the Council. Therefore, in relation to the city, they become creative poles, open toward/in/for the city. There is no room for triumphalism, but neither for anonymity, absence, closure, or indifference regarding the context and the city. There is no place for seeking a dominant or exclusive position".[53] In response, Enzo Fortuna did not hesitate to experiment with the new language for the design of sacred spaces in the church of *Cristo Re*.

## Conclusion

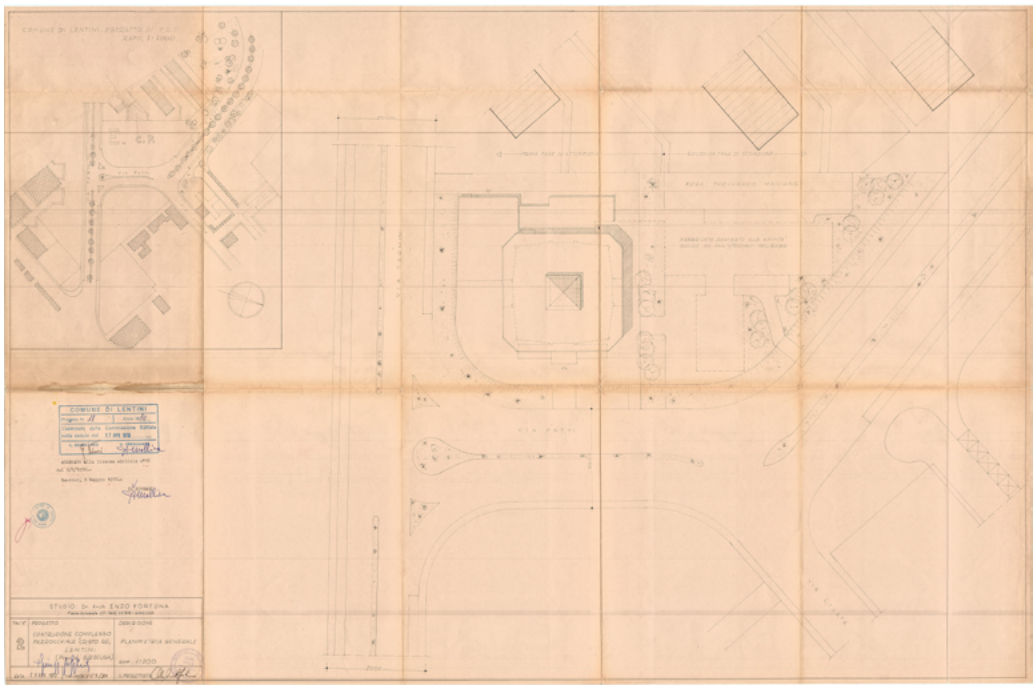
Enzo Fortuna's experience in designing sacred architecture allows a glimpse into the opportunities and real-world challenges faced by professionals during Reconstruction.

Enzo Fortuna's experience also serves as an excellent validation of the research path proposed by Guido Zucconi in 1997.[54] This validation extends not only to the geographical context in which Fortuna worked but also to the intricate balance between ideals and practical necessities, theories and practices, inherent in the architect's profession. Therefore, on one hand, designers had the chance to engage with renowned architects at both national and international levels as for the international competition for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle*

Fig. 20
Enzo Fortuna, *sketch of the church of Cristo Re in Lentini*, 1970 (source: project Archive of the "Struttura Didattica Speciale" of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund).

53 Santi, *Nuove chiese italiane (1861-2010). Sette lezioni*, 76.

54 Guido Zucconi, "La professione dell'architetto", in *Storia dell'architettura italiana. Il secondo Novecento*, ed. Francesco Dal Co (Milano: Electa, 1997).



*Lacrime*; on the other hand, more frequent commissions were aimed at building places of worship in smaller centers by ambitious architects able to draw from well-known national references and employ modern construction techniques, such as thin-walled reinforced concrete.

Fortuna, in the project of the "church-monument"[55] represented by the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime* and in the San Giuseppe in Cassibile, chose to follow the traditional design of sacred spaces. Even if there are no explicit references to contemporary projects for sacred architecture, Enzo Fortuna took on board the main elements arising from the national debate on this issue. Despite the significant modifications often made during the execution phase, largely driven by economic reasons, the reported projects echoed the fervor surrounding sacred architecture. This fervor is evident through the various formal expressions proposed during the competition for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime*. It is also perceived in the design choices adopted by Enzo Fortuna in the selected case studies. Especially in San Giuseppe in Cassibile, the interest in the competition for the church of Francavilla al Mare (1948) could be confirmed due to the consecutive sketches remembering the solutions by Ludovico Quaroni and Saverio Muratori. The international debate interested Enzo Fortuna also after the Second Vatican Council, when he worked on the project for the church of Cristo Re in Lentini: his choices in this project show a different approach to the design of sacred architecture, following the main indications derived from the Council.

Through his design activity, Fortuna contributed to the transformation of expanding centers with a careful approach to the national and international debate, often expressed in a manner consistent with the local architectural tradition.

Fig. 21
Enzo Fortuna, *general plan of the church of Cristo Re in Lentini*, 1970 (source: Project Archive of the "Struttura Didattica Speciale" of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund).

55 Longhi, Tosco, *Architettura, Chiesa e società in Italia (1948-1978)*, 58-62.

## Bibliography


Andrault, Michel and Pierre Parat. "Corona con nove raggi bianchi in campo azzurro," *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 264-273.

Anfuso, Martina. "Il Santuario della Madonna delle Lacrime di Siracusa. Dal concorso al cantiere (1955-1994)." Master Degree Thesis, University of Catania, 2011.

"Bando di concorso internazionale per il progetto del Santuario della Madonna delle Lacrime e delle opere annesse in Siracusa," *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 256-258.

Barbera, Paola, Zaira Barone, and Maria Rosaria Vitale. "Enzo Fortuna: i progetti di Restauro e allestimento per il Museo di Palazzo Bellomo a Siracusa 1952-1970." *AAA Italia*, no. 16 (2017): 35.

Benedetti, Sandro. *Architettura Sacra oggi*. Tarquinia: Gangemi Editore, 1995.

Benedetti, Sandro. *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano*. Milano: Jaca Book, 2000.

Caramel, Luciano, ed. *L'arte e L'ideale. La tradizione cristiana nell'opera di Cesare Cattaneo e Mario Radice*. Milano: Mazzotta Editore, 1988.

Carbonara, Pasquale, Carmelo Minniti, and Gaetano Santuccio, "Aretusa," *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 288-295.

Caruso, Rosa Maria Marta. "La lettura dell'antico nella formazione degli architetti siciliani a Roma. Studi e progetti di Giuseppe Marletta (1906-1988) e Enzo Fortuna (1921-1979)." In *Forme dell'abitare a Roma. Echi dell'antico nell'architettura del primo Novecento*, edited by Simona Benedetti. Roma: Gangemi Editore, 2023, 419-427.

Caruso, Rosa Maria Marta. "L'archivio di Enzo Fortuna. Uno scorcio sulla professione di architetto nella seconda metà del Novecento in Sicilia." Master Degree Thesis, University of Catania, 2018.

Centro Studi Architettura Sacra in Italia, ed. *Dieci anni di architettura sacra in Italia 1945-1955*. Bologna: Ufficio Tecnico Organizzativo Arcivescovile, 1956.

"Quartiere residenziale in Comune di Cesate", *Casabella-Continuità*, no. 216 (1957): 16-35.

Ciampani, Pina. *Architettura e Liturgia*. Assisi: Edizioni Pro Civitate Christiana, 1965.

Feraboli, Maria. "Mario Tedeschi. Arte, interni e architettura in un archivio ritrovato," *Recupero e conservazione*, no. 147, (2018): 12-20.

Fortuna, Enzo, and Mario Tedeschi. "F.T. 38". *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 314.

Gandolfi, Vittorio, and Mario Righini. "Alma Mater," *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 284-287.

Gillet, Guillaume, and René Sarger. "Turris Davidica," *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 274-279.

Irace, Fulvio, and Luca Pietro Nicoletti, eds. *Carlo Ramous. Scultura, Architettura, Città. Sculpture, Architecture, City.* Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2017.

Kidder Smith, George Everard. *Nuove chiese in Europa*. Milano: Edizioni di comunità, 1964.

Lazzaroni, Laura, ed. *La diocesi di Milano e le nuove chiese 1954-2014.* Segrate: Digital Print Service srl, 2016.

Longhi, Andrea. "Architetture per il battesimo: memoria, liturgia, progetti." In *Casa di Dio. Progettazione e adeguamento di chiese nel terzo millennio*, edited by Michele Anderle (et alii), 63-64, 66. Firenze: Centro Di, 2005.

Longhi, Andrea, and Carlo Tosco, *Architettura, Chiesa e società in Italia (1948-1978)*. Roma: Edizioni Studium, 2010.

Lorenzi, Angelo. "Chiesa parrocchiale, Cesate 1954-1959." In *Ignazio Gardella architetture*, edited by Maria Cristina Loi, Milano: Electa, 1999, 79-87.

Montuori, Eugenio. "Stella Mattutina," *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 299-302.

Passarelli, Vincenzo. "Punto di partenza". *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 246-247.

Santi, Giancarlo. *Nuove chiese italiane (1861-2010). Sette lezioni*. Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2011.

Schiffer, Erwin. "314253," *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 280-283.

Schnell, Hugo. "L'esposizione dei progetti: rassegna indicativa". *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 248-250.

Schwarz, Rudolf. "Il problema dell'architettura sacra," *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 251-253.

Zerbi, Michele, and Antonio Martinelli. "Ex fletu tuo salus mea," *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 342.

Zerbi, Michele, and Antonio Martinelli. *Progetto presentato al concorso internazionale per l'erigendo Santuario della "Madonna delle Lacrime" di Siracusa*. Sovrano Ordine di Malta, 1960.

Zucconi, Guido. "La professione dell'architetto." In *Storia dell'architettura italiana. Il secondo Novecento*, edited by Francesco Dal Co. Milano: Electa, 1997.

## Web Pages

Leoni, Maria Manuela. "Chiesa di Santa Maria Nascente (Milano)", *Architettura in Lombardia dal 1945 a oggi*, https://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/architetture900/schede/p4010-00242/.

Leoni, Maria Manuela. "Chiesa di San Francesco d'Assisi (Cesate, MI)", in *Architettura in Lombardia dal 1945 a oggi*, https://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/architetture900/schede/p4010-00532/.

## Archival Sources

Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 48, file 1, Correspondence – 10/12/55.

Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 48, file 1, Correspondence – 15/12/55.

Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 60, file 2, *Relazione atta a dimostrare la necessità della costruzione della Chiesa parrocchiale di San Giuseppe in Cassibile (Siracusa)*, April 24th 1959.

Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 90, file 3, *Relazione del progetto generale*, November 7th 1974.

Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 153, Notes of Vincenzo Fasolo's courses *Storia e stili dell'architettura greca* and *Storia e stili dell'architettura romana*.

Giovanni Multari

# Ordinary and Extraordinary. The Experience of Parrish Complex in Dresano





## /Author

**Giovanni Multari**
**Department of Architecture, University of Naples Federico II**

Architect since 1991, Ph.D. in Urban Design since 1997 and Associate Professor at the Department of Architecture of the University of Naples Federico II since 2019. In 1995, with architect Vincenzo Corvino, he established corvino+multari, with headquarter in Naples and offices in Milan. He applied for several international competitions, followed by realization of housing, work spaces and open public spaces requalification. In 2005 the magazine *Ventre* dedicated his first monographic number of *Ventre Zoom* series to their work, publishing the monograph "Corvino+Multari 1995-2005". In 2006, with the Restoration project for Pirelli Skyscraper in Milan, Corvino+Multari wins the Special Award for Restoration at the Gold Medal Competition for Italian Architecture called by the Triennale of Milan, the Aluminium Renovation Award 2007 (Italy) and the European Aluminium Renovation Award 2007. In 2006 he also participated to the 10th International Architecture Exhibition at the Biennale of Venice with the project for the new Station in Castellammare di Stabia.
His current research investigates the existing, of different nature and scale, to define possible places and new strategies for the project, from Castel Volturno, Rosarno, to Naples. He has held conferences in Italy (Milan, Rome, Naples, Cosenza, Turin, Florence, Palermo) and abroad (Graz, Krakow, Warsaw, Mendrisio, Brussels, Paris, Berlin, London, New York); projects and creations have been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions and published in national and international architecture magazines such as *Casabella*, *Abitare*, *Domus*, *Area*, *d'A*, *The Plan*, *Concept* and *World Architecture*. Among his latest publications: *Italian Foreign Architecture* (Rome: Tab Edizioni, 2022), *Architettura Alto Adige* (Rome: Tab Edizioni, 2020); *La grande dimensione in architettura. Il Centro Direzionale di Napoli* (Rome: Aracne, 2015).

https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/20791
Copyright © 2024 Giovanni Multari

## Ordinary and Extraordinary

Sacredness is an ancient theme in architecture, but also a highly relevant one in contemporary discourse. It imposes the idea of a space that, in fulfilling ordinary tasks related to earthly rites, simultaneously evokes the extraordinary nature of its existence: "that the first origin of architecture must take place in the altars, on which the ancients sacrificed"[1], as Mario Gioffredo asserted in his treatise "Dell'Architettura", published in Naples in 1768.

To build a church, therefore, is to consider not only a merely practical purpose but the ability to translate human emotions towards the mystery into tangible architectural expression.

The relationship between worship and architecture immediately emerges through the markers of its historical and cultural complexity. The religious phenomenon, as well as the study of forms of expression, permeates the very development of the construction of a building of worship, in a phenomenology of the sacred that is the true object of investigation.

We should look at the manifold complexities that the investigation of the sacred proposes, with an awareness of the potential for synthesis, which brings out, where the whole is summarised, that essentiality that gives constant topicality to the built space.

In this sense, the relationship between form and the sacred is at the heart of the religious experience itself, constituting the very foundation of interest in the condition of a community that generates the place of worship.

An experience that reveals itself precisely in the possibility of linking earthly and temporal reality with the perception of a transcendent level of everyday life. The religious experience of life needs to give lasting representation to the immediate and momentary perception of the sacred.

It is therefore a relationship in which the aesthetic experience is present in all its strong value as a path to truth and meaning. A deeply inclusive relationship, since the presence of the sacred is inherently linked to form. We are therefore in the presence of an intangible, immaterial reality that is represented in the material forms of earthly life.

This bond takes on its specific value in the context of religious traditions, even manifesting itself in entirely new ways, highlighting the very reason for the presence of a religion that emerges and is based on the testimony of a revelation and a message of truth that has hitherto gone unheard.

From these initial considerations, we understand the difficult problem of designing a church, which lies in the relationship with meanings, with the sacred as emotion, and with its representation. This difficulty is renewed with each new project, as the process of defining the work struggles to articulate its reason, to find the right words and examples to guide the path of constructing an architecture of sacred space. At the same time, however, architecture itself, as matter made up of the works developed by man to respond to his own human

1 Benedetto Gravagnuolo, ed., *Mario Gioffredo* (Napoli: Guida Editori, 2002), 25.

condition, needs and necessities, can guide this path of knowledge. It awakens questions embedded within these solutions, illuminating their value as answers to problems: birth, death, community, beauty, sacredness. Questioned in the right way, the architecture, that is, the built works, narrate the long work done to transform the solitude of each existence into a shared and conscious history.

It is no coincidence that birth, death, community, beauty, and sacredness are all encapsulated in the experience of the church.

The theme of the church has the ability to lead us unmediated into the contradictions of contemporary architecture and, without mediation, confronts us with the need and difficulty of working with meanings, each time discovering that to do so we need forms that are recognisable, communicative, comprehensible, and shareable.

Certain forms, therefore, capable of inscribing themselves in that relationship of stability in which value is determined, a value that endures over time.

This may be the substantial inheritance of such a constructed architecture of the sacred: the effort to make things already known, evident, and stable speak, and to make them relevant.

It is not easy to measure oneself with the design of a church, which requires, on the one hand, recognisability, and on the other, renewal. Designing a church corresponds to fabricating that *trita et consumata meditatio usus*, as Vitruvius defined it, a process of seeking solutions through reflection on questions and practical needs, a practice that develops knowledge and in which the value and legacy of architecture emerge. A practice that makes architectural forms intelligible, for themselves, as tools for comprehending reality.[2]

To fabricate, it is necessary to act by forms, by spaces, to see the work from inside, from outside, from above, as Adolf Loos argued, and to think volumetrically.[3]

It is only when we try to do this that we discover how difficult it is to measure ourselves against this universe of the ordinary and the extraordinary, interpreting examples and forms experimented with and refined over time. These forms survive neglect and destruction, shared by those who came before us and who, crossing the same entrance, turning to the same light, and kneeling on the same stones, have made these spaces and forms a shared heritage.

An inheritance, as we said, that has rendered these forms and spaces stable a repository of efforts, as Cattaneo liked to say.[4]

The theme of the sacred, so evocative and difficult to avoid, brings us closer to architecture and to that world of knowledge that must confront contemporaneity while preserving the heritage that belongs not only to architects but to all humanity.

Hence, the references that emerge from this investigation: sacred space built on central space and sacred space built on longitudinal space the two main

---

2 Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, Italian translation by M. Vitale (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), 123.

3 Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime. Selected Essays*, English translation by M. Mitchell (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 1998), 78.

4 See: Carlo Cattaneo, *Industria e morale*, M. Vitale ed. (Brescia: Scholé, 2019), 32.

archetypes of the house of God, the central space, and the house of man, the nave space, as described in Carlos Marti Aris' beautiful treatment.[5]

The building of worship is fixed in the fundamental relationship and integration between the ecclesia, or the assembly of the faithful, and the altar-presbytery, i.e., the place of the rite. The hall/nave and the presbytery/altar have over time combined according to two spatial principles: the longitudinal one, closely linked to liturgical functions and the *domus ecclesiae*, and the central one, with clear references to the *domus Dei.* With the Second Vatican Council, the idea of making the church coincide with the hall emerges as a precise directive, emphasising the need for greater integration between the assembly of the faithful and the spaces of liturgical action.

Ultimately, it is a collective building a hall with a strong community value, a place where the community gathers and participates in a rite that unites them. This concept of communion still calls on architects to research and interpret evocative spaces. It is not a question of adopting predefined models for the church of the Second Vatican Council, but of developing forms in which the call of the faithful is realised from the entrance to the hall and up to the altar, in an initiation into the mystery, between construction and immaterial components, between the ordinary and the extraordinary.

A space that, as highlighted, has two distinct characters: the absolute and the phenomenal. The first corresponds to the constructive envelope of the building – an extraordinary empty space shaped by its structure. For example, the Church of Baranzate (1957) by Angelo Mangiarotti and Bruno Morassutti. In this church, the hall is conceived as a unified, light-filled space, devoid of superfluous divisions, where the glass-cement walls play an essential role. Light, filtered through the transparent material, defines the interior, creating an ethereal atmosphere that emphasises the spiritual character of the space. The simplicity of the design and the essentiality of the structure emphasise the dialogue between light, matter, and spirituality, making the hall the focus of the architectural experience.[6]

Then there is the phenomenal space, composed of smaller spaces within the larger building, as in Michelucci's Highway Church (1964). In this case, compositional elements play a key role in characterising the sacred space. The Church of the Motorway is distinguished by the presence of internal structures that articulate the space, such as chapels and internal pathways, which create a spatial layering. The use of natural light, filtered through irregular openings, and the contrast between unfinished materials and refined finishes amplify the dynamism of the environment. The layout of the spaces guides the visitor on a sensorial and spiritual journey, enriched by the compositional harmony of the architectural elements.[7]

---

5 See: Carlos Martí Arís, *La variazione dell'identità. Il tipo in architettura* (Milan: Clup, 1993), 57.

6 See: Florencia Andreola, Marco Biraghi, Gabriella Lo Ricco, eds., *Milano. L'architettura dal 1945 ad oggi* (Milan: Hoepli, 2018), 123.

7 See: Giuliana Scotto, *La chiesa dell'autostrada di Giovanni Michelucci. Una lettura estetica* (Munich: GRIN Verlag, 2012), 30.

In both of these references, the theme of light is the main building material, and it is useful to quote Purini's discussion here:

> (...) light has three fundamental aspects. The first type is emotional light: simply light that dialogues or contrasts with shadow. When we enter a Baroque church, for example, the dialectic between light and shadow, or even light and darkness, is fantastic: it grabs us completely, not only in the mind but above all in the body – it moves us strongly. (...) Le Corbusier ... even in the Chapel of Ronchamp there is this emotional light (...). Then there is a light that I call analytical, which throws itself over the building elements and explains what they are doing from a tectonic point of view. An extraordinary example is the architecture of De Stijl (...). Then there is a third and more difficult light perhaps impossible for us architects to achieve which is ontological light, i.e., light that does not illuminate space but coincides with space. So there is a spatiality of light, and this spatiality transcends the building and light itself onto another plane (...). Another great architect in whose work this light manifest itself in all its power is Mies van der Rohe.[8]

Light is also the element that establishes the relationship between the outside and the inside of the church, and in this sense it links buildings of worship to the community: the relationship between church building and context indicates another important field of action and proposes itself as a reference for places of proximity, for the neighbourhood and for the city.

Gio Ponti's Co-Cathedral of Taranto, born not out of the need for a new church, but for a religious centre that would be the fulcrum in the expansion of the city of Taranto between 1964 and 1970, was not only had to express a new religiosity, but it had to be a major element, the cornerstone for a new expansion. The Co-Cathedral of Taranto was conceived as a central element of the new urban development, capable of dialoguing with its surroundings. Its strategic position and the 'sail' tower, an iconic symbol recalling the city's seafaring tradition, make it a visible and significant landmark. The building is not only a place of worship, but also a space of aggregation and collective identity, capable of representing the link between past and future. The architecture stands out for its ability to combine spirituality and modernity, helping to characterise the expanding neighbourhood. The Co-Cathedral fosters social cohesion and strengthens the community's sense of belonging, acting as a symbolic bridge between the new development and the historic heart of the city. This balance between religious function, cultural symbolism and urban integration makes it an emblematic example of contemporary design.[9]

---

8 Quote from the paper presented by Franco Purini at the "Spazio Sacro" conference part of the "Seed 2023 Project. Design Actions for the Future", Assisi – Italy, April 28-29, 2023.

9 See: Maria Maddalena Torricella, *Gio Ponti 1964-1971. Progetto e costruzione di una cattedrale – La Gran Madre di Dio a Taranto* (Venice: Gangemi, 2004), 25.

In conclusion, the investigation into the double register of interpretation, ordinary and extraordinary, even as reconstructed through the three case studies cited, makes available the necessary knowledge capable of supporting the difficult practice of designing and building a church.

## The Experience of Parrish Complex in Dresano

Sacred architecture represents an ambivalent and symbolic design field, where spatial composition and liturgical experience intertwine to create meeting places between the earthly and the divine. In the context of the Dresano parish complex, this relationship manifests through a balance of pure geometries and evocative materials, which engage in dialogue with the surrounding community and its spirituality. The project inspired by tradition but forward-looking, symbolizes collective life and the celebration of the sacred, where architecture becomes a tool for conveying profound and shared meanings.

The layout and architectural composition form the central theme in constructing a symbolic and representative building, serving as a witness to a community united by shared values and meanings. The volumetric definition of space and the composition of forms animate the architectural discourse, integrating light, function, and ritual, and assigning each element a precise and recognizable role.

The architectural articulation of the parish complex derives from two elementary geometries: the circle, the purest form, which supports the ecclesiastical building the seat of the "*celebrated Eucharist*" and the rectangle of the basement structure, which encloses a central cloister surrounded by the pastoral ministry rooms, the seat of the "*lived Eucharist*." The church volume marked by its double height, stands at the center of the composition, extending into a paved churchyard. The basement structure spans the east-west axis of the site, developed on a single level, with reinforced concrete elements pigmented with iron oxide to emulate the brick tones typical of South Milan's agricultural architecture, allowing filtered light into the interior spaces.

The two volumes meet at the churchyard, forming a perimeter pronaos that welcomes the faithful while filtering the transition from public space to the sacred place of celebration.

The hall is organized into two concentric circles: the inner circle houses the hall, where the pews converge toward the presbytery, while the outer circle forms an ambulatory that envelops the entire assembly. This ambulatory allows natural light to flood the space and houses the key liturgical elements presbytery, Eucharistic chapel, baptismal font, and confessional. The presbytery, positioned at the culmination of the axial sequence of spaces (churchyard, portal, hall, apse) emphasizes the circular layout while introducing a symbolic axiality, culminating in Nino Longobardi's imposing Crucifix sculpture.

The concept of constructing a church recalls the experience of the Israelites in the desert when Moses returned from Mount Sinai with the tablets of the law and required a sacred space to preserve them. This pilgrim community needed

skilled artisans and architects to create the Ark of the Covenant and the Tent of Meeting (Ex. 24:1-40; 26:1-37). However, human ingenuity alone was insufficient; divine inspiration was essential. The Spirit of wisdom and intelligence bestowed upon Moses inspired the creation of something both beautiful and sublime, bridging the human and the divine.

Religious architecture transcends human skill, as it enters the sphere of the divine. It embodies both the ordinary and the extraordinary, symbolizing a reality that points beyond what is visible to the eyes toward the essence of the divine horizon. In sacred works, the divine spark shines, and human effort gestures toward ultimate reality. Beauty an attribute of God, serves two purposes: drawing the creature closer to the Creator and uncovering the spiritual depths of humanity. Beauty not only pleases the eye but also holds spiritual, social, and ethical dimensions.

A church, for instance, preserves and transmits immaterial values to present and future generations. It also reflects its social dimension, as the life of a Christian community often manifests its charitable mission in addressing the most challenging societal issues.

The architect as a mystagogue guides the observer through the meaning of the sacred space, helping them uncover values and spirituality that nurture their journey through life. The architect's mission requires both intelligence, to understand the needs of God's people, and wisdom, to bring them closer to His presence. In Dresano the lozenge-patterned churchyard encircles the church like an embrace, offering the first encounter with the sacred. This space transitions the faithful from communal gathering to the heart of the church. The circular hall, illuminated from above, enhances the sense of unity among the assembly. Light emphasizes the bright, open stone structure, celebrating the mystery of Christ's resurrection. The assembly is invited to turn toward the presbytery, where Longobardi's bronze Crucifix anchors the space. The symbolism of the Eucharistic celebration evokes the mystical tradition of the Church, represented by the water and blood flowing from Christ's side, the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. The journey continues into the cloister, which houses the pastoral ministry spaces. Here the "*celebrated Eucharist*" integrates into the believer's daily life. The cloister recalls the meditative paths of monastic tradition, emphasizing prayer as the foundation and culmination of all pastoral action. The community, inspired by the light of the Risen Christ, moves outward into the world, bringing with them the joy of the Gospel.



2



3



Fig. 1-29 corvino+multari, Parrish complex Madonna delle Grazie, Dresano 2009-2017 (photo by Marco Introini).



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



12



13



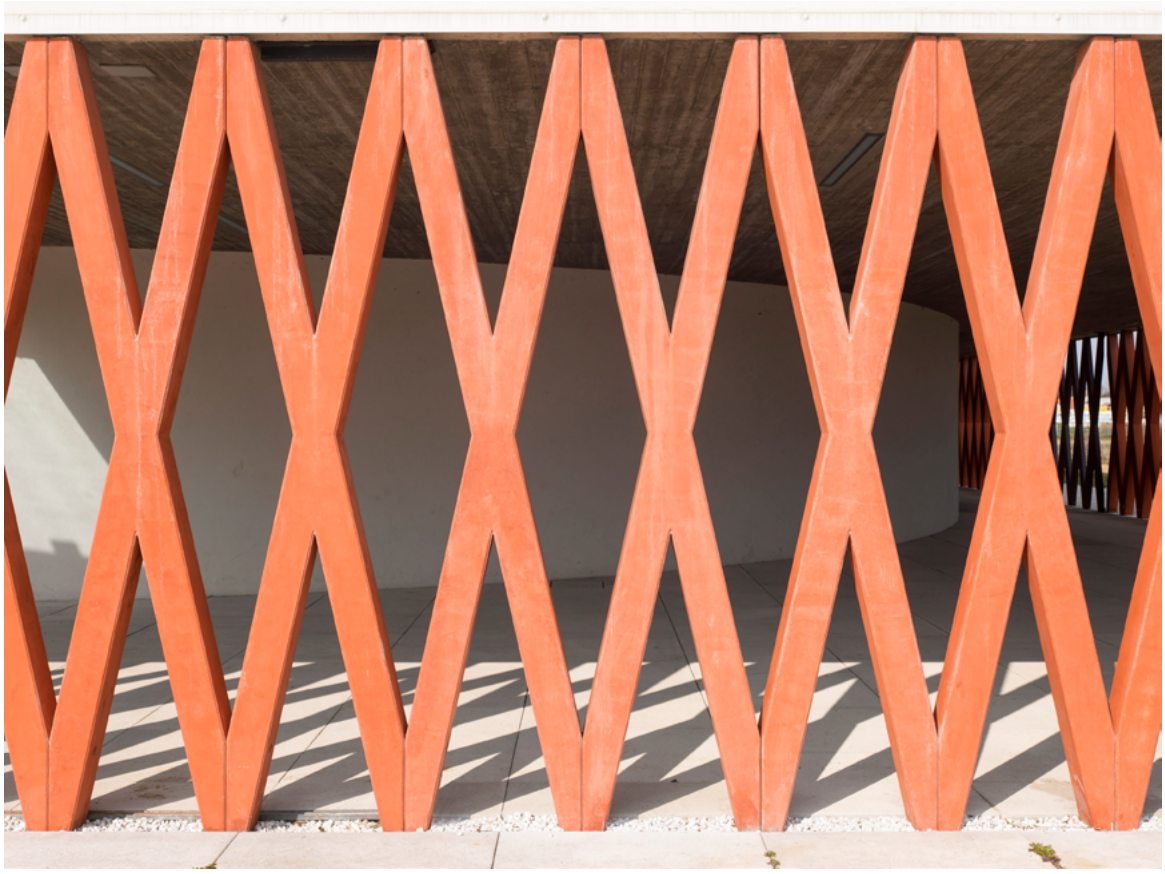
14



15



16



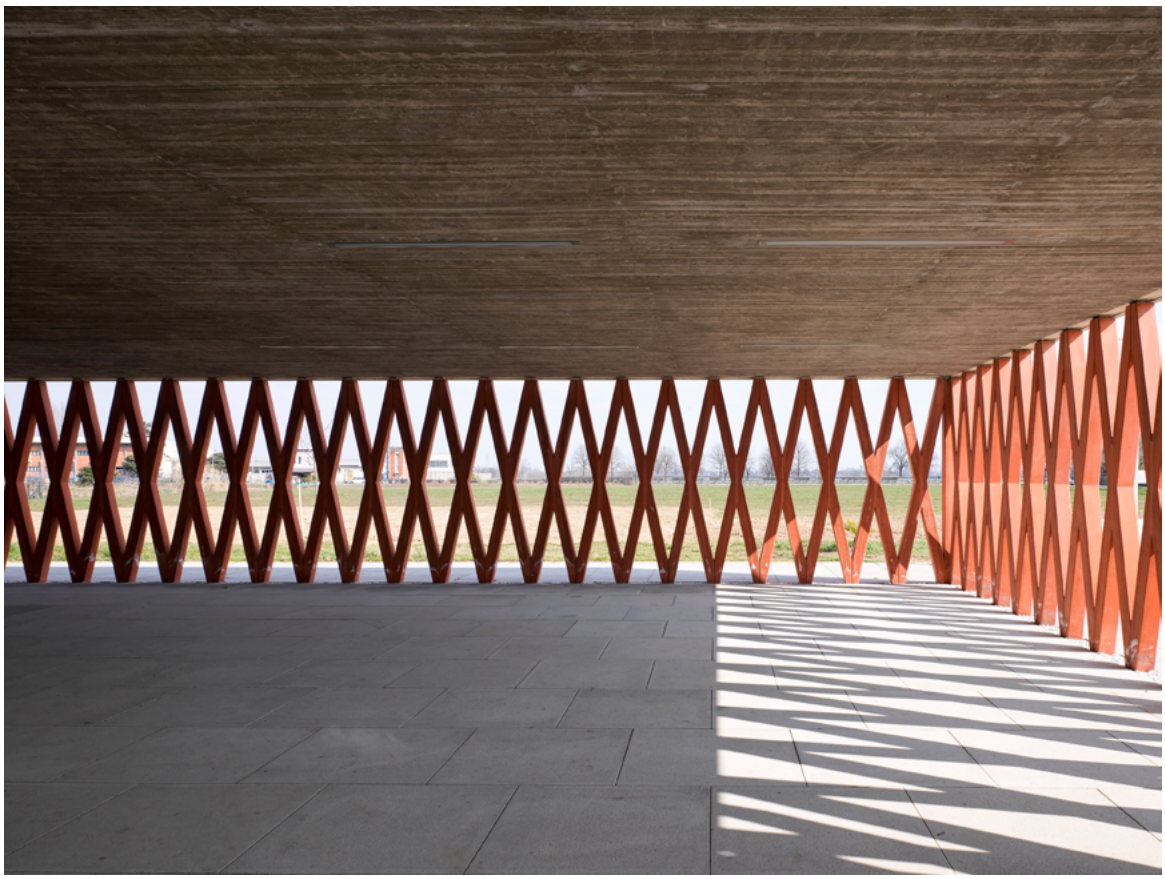
17



18



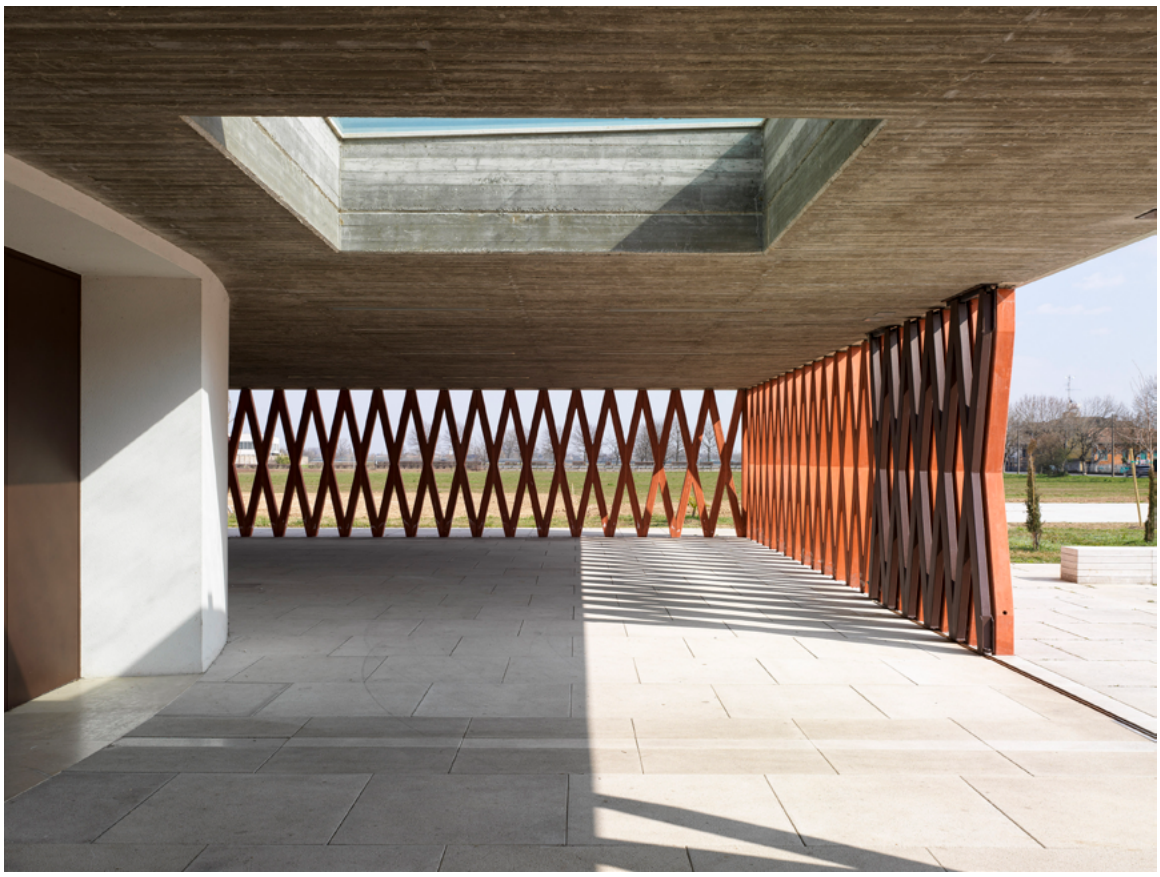
19



20



21



22



23



24



25



26



27



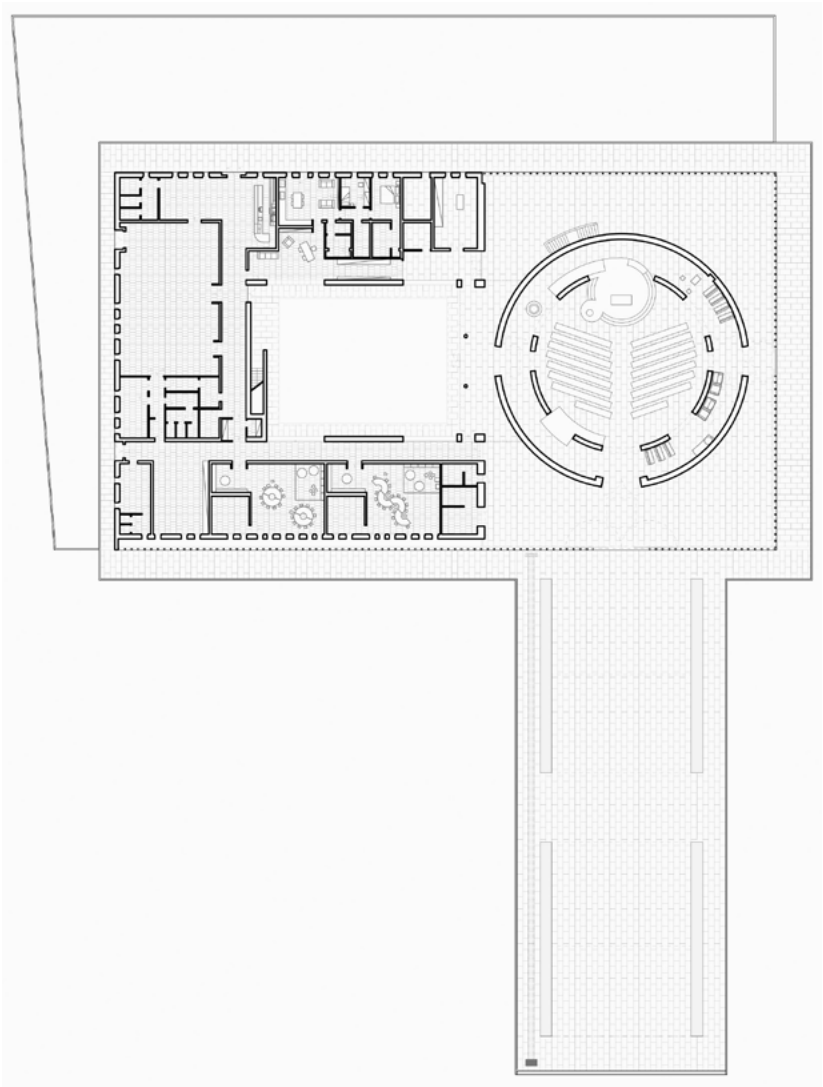
28



29



30

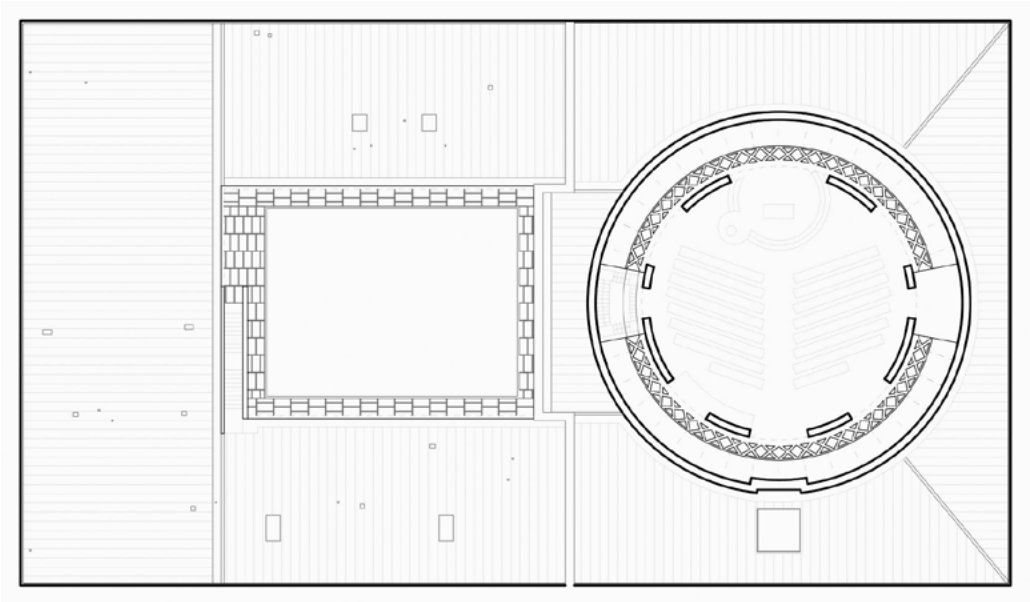


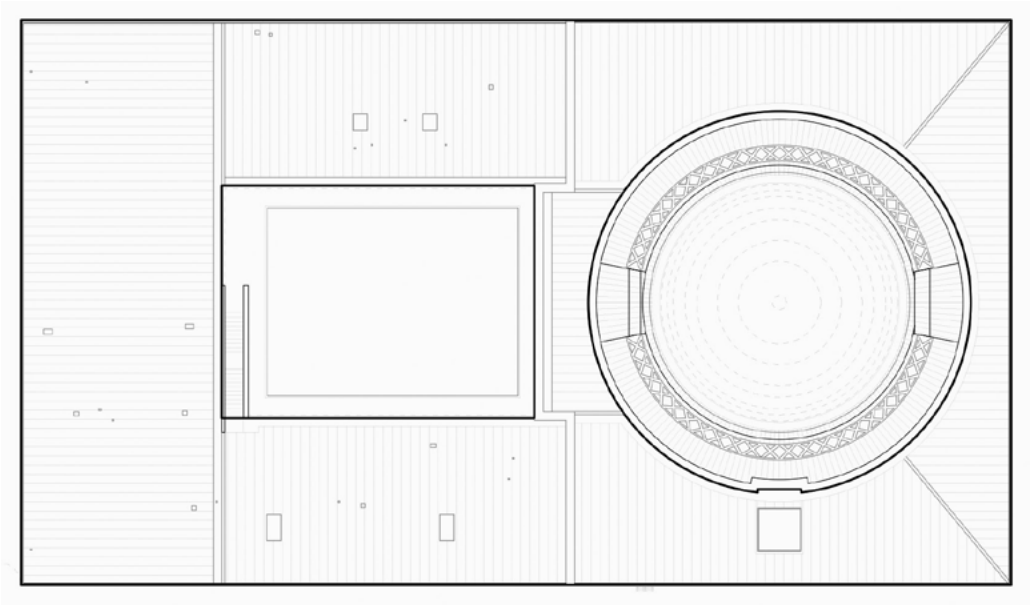
31



Fig. 30
corvino+multari, Parrish complex Madonna delle Grazie, Dresano 2009-2017, plan of the urban context (corvino+multari archive).

Fig. 31
corvino+multari, Parrish complex Madonna delle Grazie, Dresano 2009-2017, floor plan (corvino+multari archive).

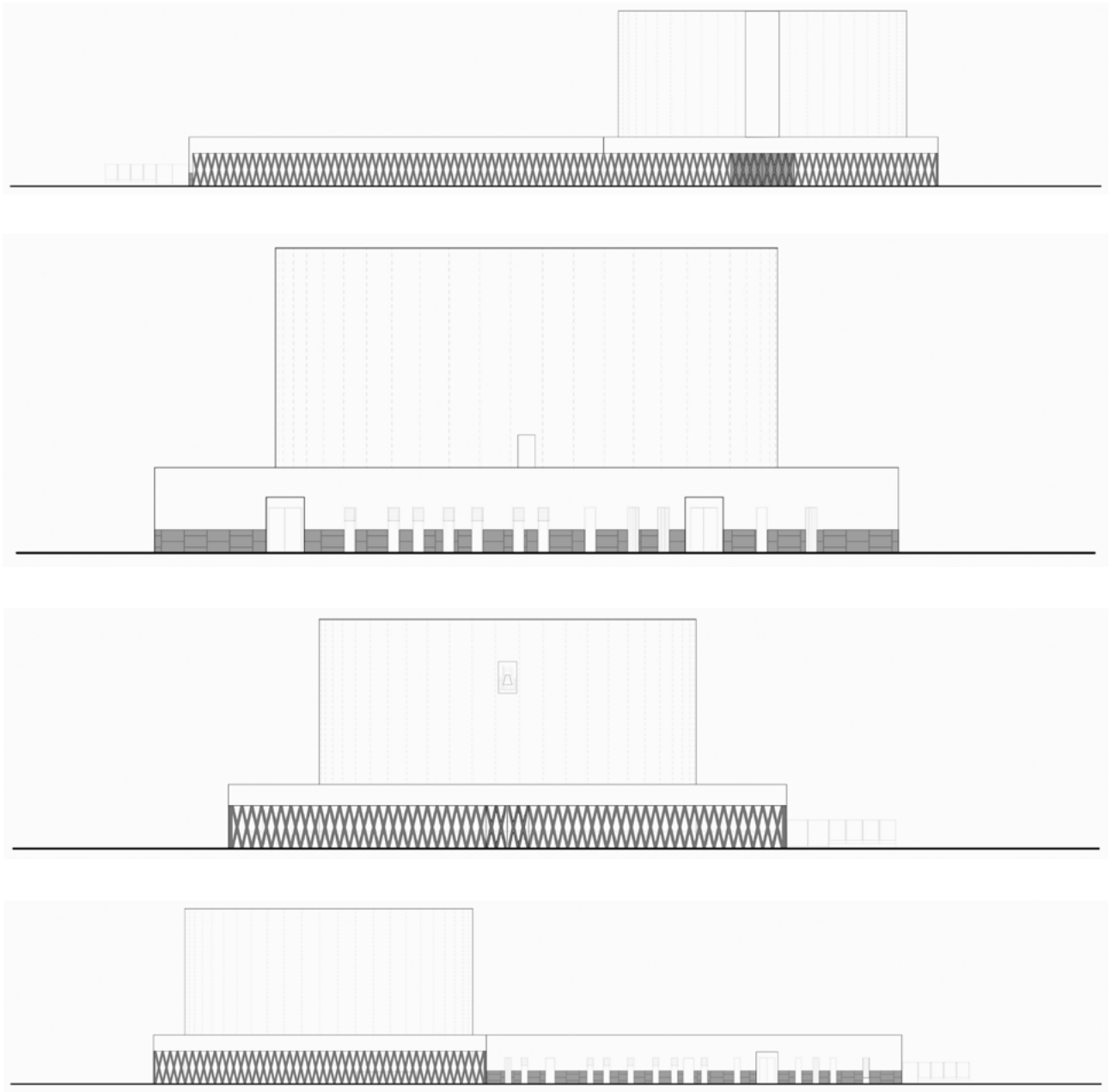




32 33

Fig. 32
corvino+multari, Parrish complex Madonna delle Grazie, Dresano 2009-2017, first floor plan (corvino+multari archive).

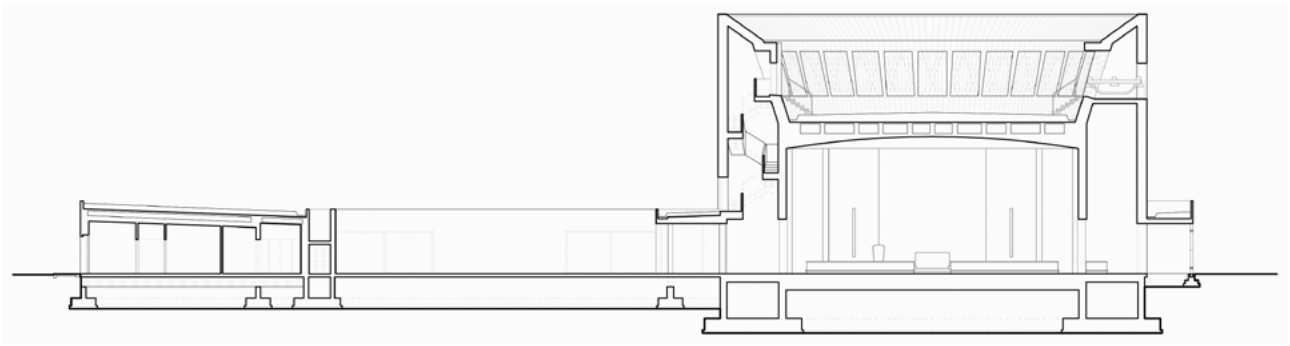
Fig. 33
corvino+multari, Parrish complex Madonna delle Grazie, Dresano 2009-2017, roofing plan (corvino+multari archive).

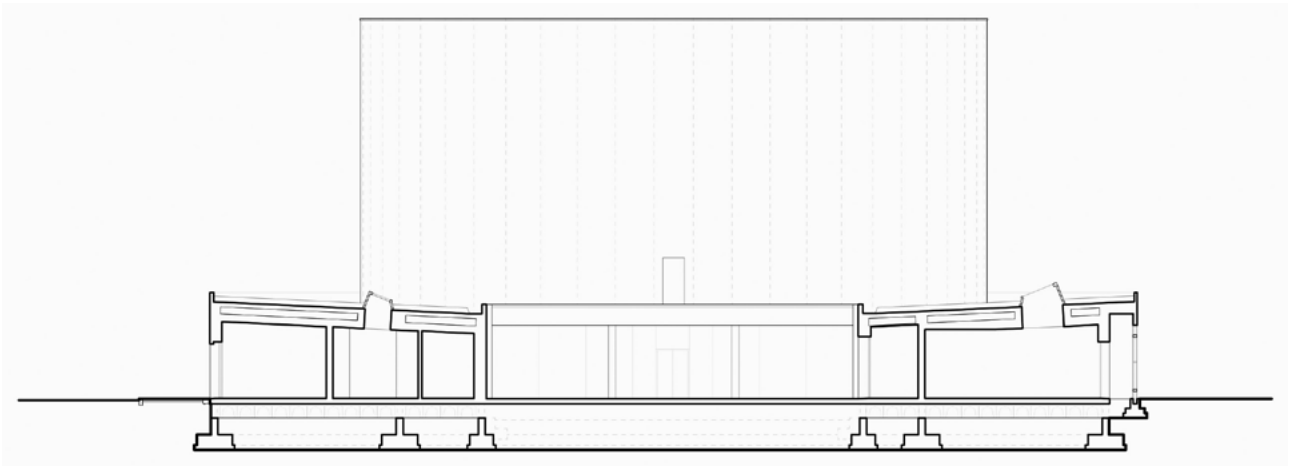


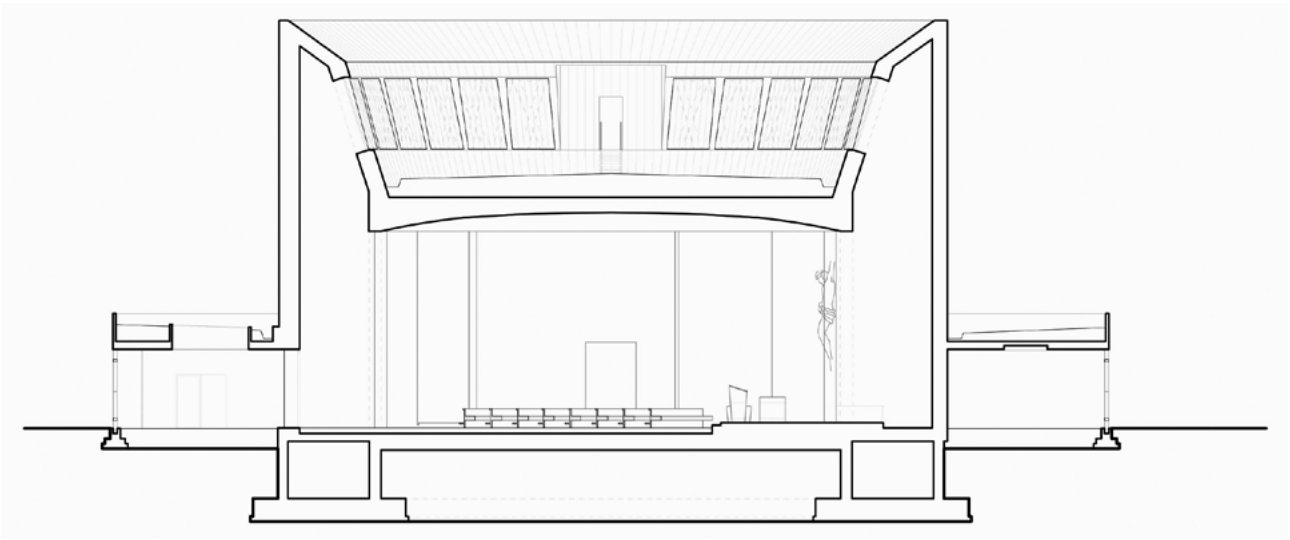
34 35 36 37



Fig. 34-37
corvino+multari, Parrish complex Madonna delle Grazie, Dresano 2009-2017, elevations (corvino+multari archive).

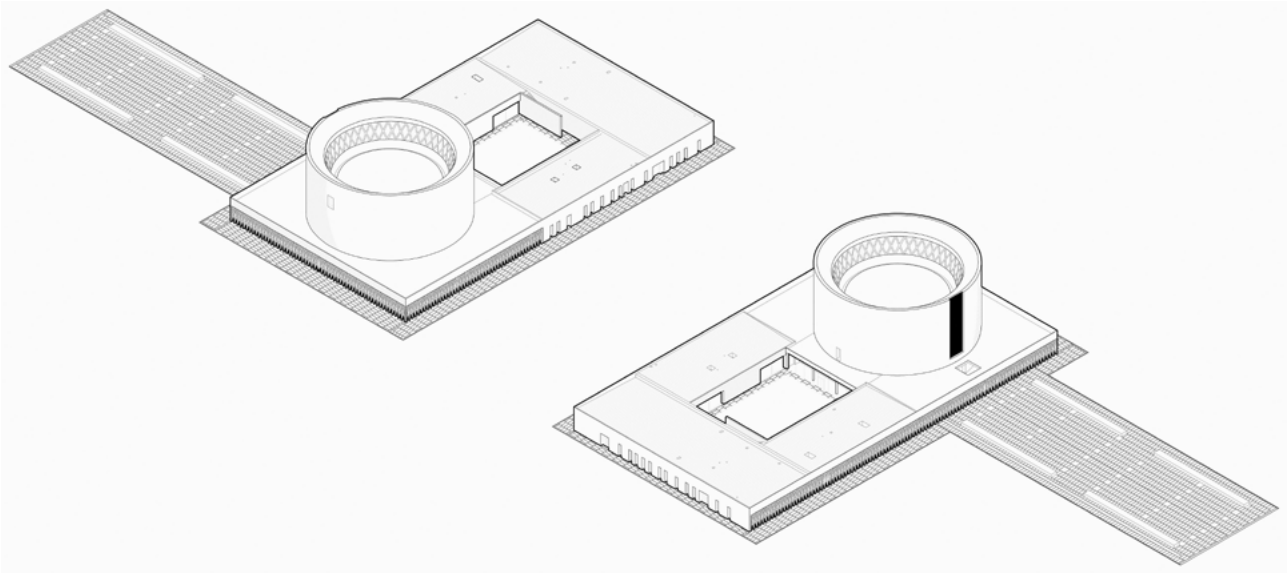




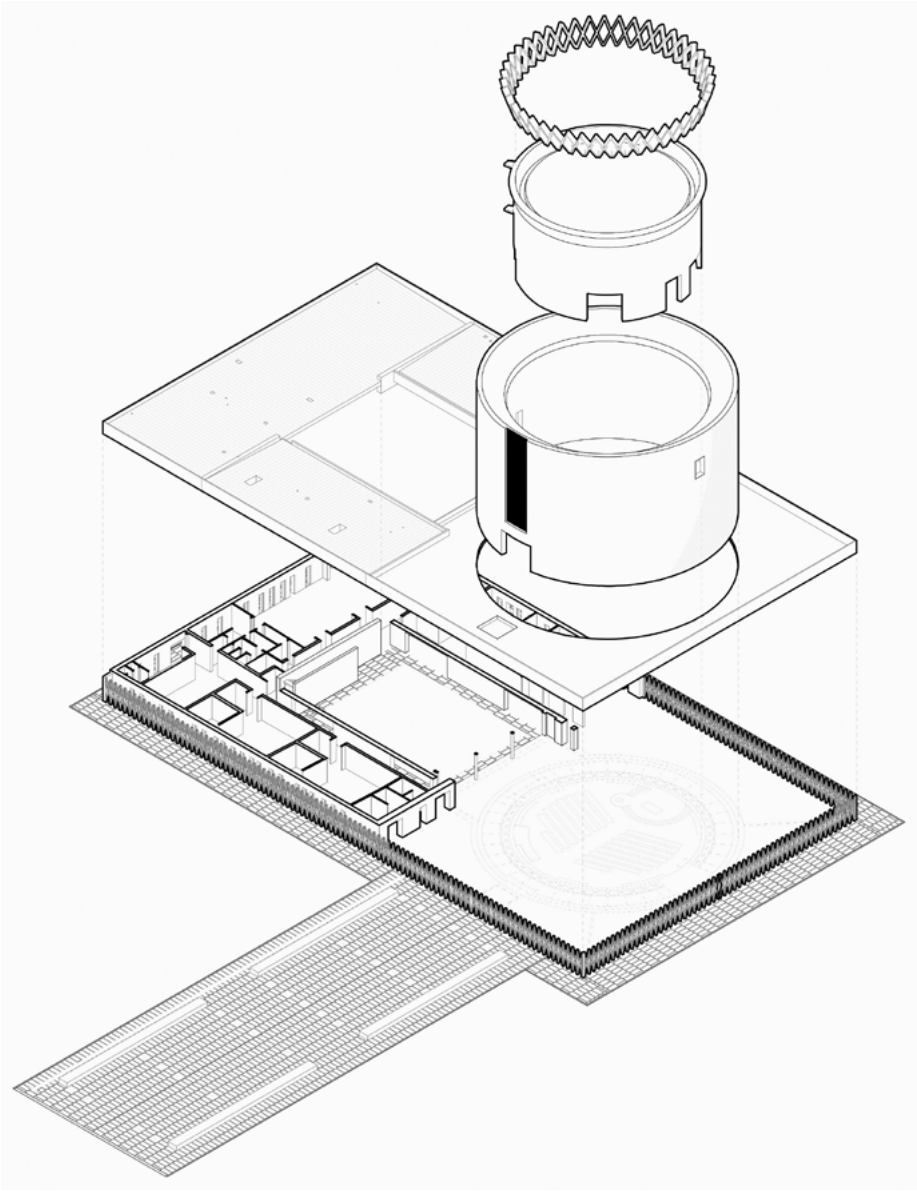


38 40

Fig. 38-40
corvino+multari, Parrish complex Madonna delle Grazie, Dresano 2009-2017, sections (corvino+multari archive).



41

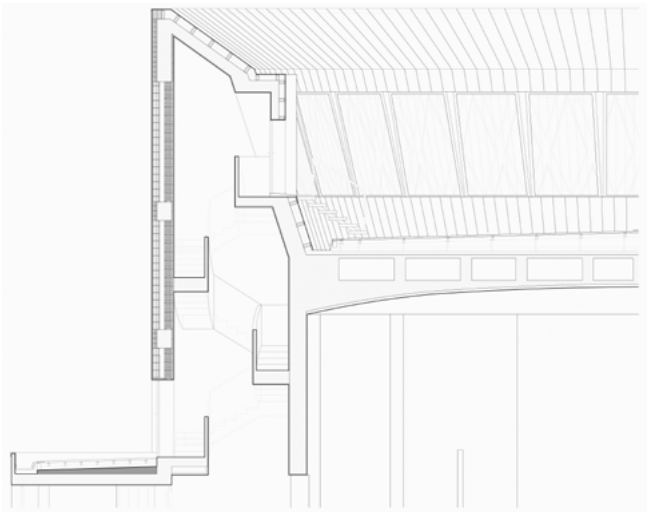


42

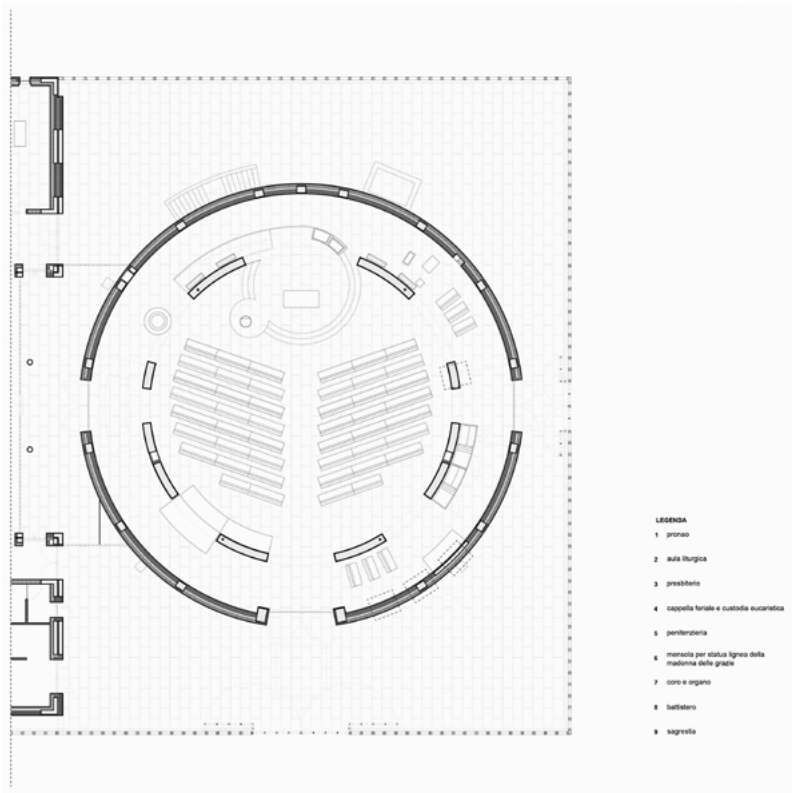
Fig. 41
corvino+multari, Parrish complex Madonna delle Grazie, Dresano 2009-2017, axonometric views (corvino+multari archive).

Fig. 42
corvino+multari, Parrish complex Madonna delle Grazie, Dresano 2009-2017, exploded axonometric views (corvino+multari archive).

43



44




45

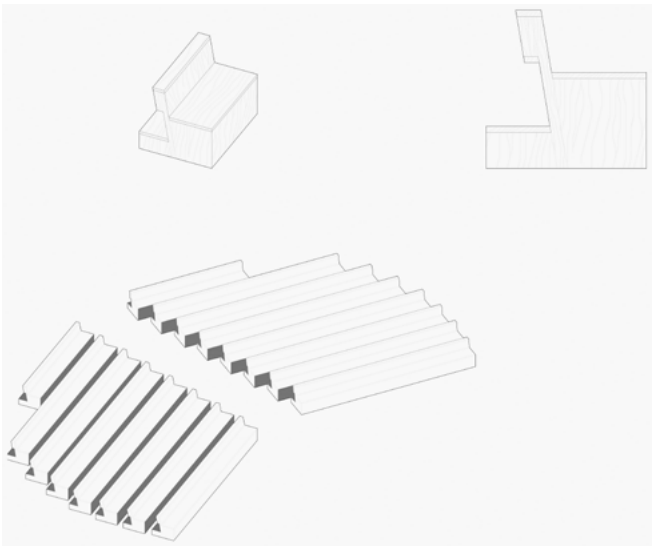


Fig. 43-45
corvino+multari, Parrish complex Madonna delle Grazie, Dresano 2009-2017, construction details (corvino+multari archive).

## Bibliography


Benedetto Gravagnuolo, ed., *Mario Gioffredo* (Napoli: Guida Editori, 2002), 25.

Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, Italian translation by M. Vitale (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), 123.

Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime. Selected Essays*, English translation by M. Mitchell (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 1998), 78.

Carlo Cattaneo, *Industria e morale*, M. Vitale ed. (Brescia: Scholé, 2019), 32.

Carlos Martí Arís, *La variazione dell'identità. Il tipo in architettura* (Milan: Clup, 1993), 57.

Florencia Andreola, Marco Biraghi, Gabriella Lo Ricco, eds., Milano. *L'architettura dal 1945 ad oggi* (Milan: Hoepli, 2018), 123.

Giuliana Scotto, *La chiesa dell'autostrada di Giovanni Michelucci. Una lettura estetica* (Munich: GRIN Verlag, 2012), 30.

Quote from the paper presented by Franco Purini at the "Spazio Sacro" conference part of the "Seed 2023 Project. Design Actions for the Future", Assisi – Italy, 29-30 April 2023.

Maria Maddalena Torricella, Gio Ponti 1964-1971. *Progetto e costruzione di una cattedrale – La Gran Madre di Dio a Taranto* (Venice: Gangemi, 2004), 25.

**Nicholas Adams**

# A Banned Book and two Articles: The Individual and the Collective at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (1955–1959)

ARTICLE

*Corporate Architecture, Skidmore Owings & Merrill, William H. Whyte, Large Architectural Offices, individualism and Collectivity*

**/Abstract**

**A 1955 pot-boiler novel, Edwin Gilbert's Native Stone described Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's New York office and its lead architect Gordon Bunshaft in unflattering terms. SOM threatened a lawsuit to suppress Gilbert's book and the book was withdrawn. Yet the issues raised in the book, most notably the relationship between the individual and collective continued to resonate leading to two significant articles about the firm. In the first, published in *Fortune* magazine (1958) entitled "The Architects from 'Skid's Row'," the firm attempted to paint a picture of a happy collective. Its goal was to provide a healthy counter-narrative to the novel. Cheerful employees given a chance to express themselves within the context of the group were at the center of the story. A year later (1959) Gordon Bunshaft sponsored his own self-aggrandizing narrative in Newsweek striking back at the myth of the collectivity. There he claimed that he was the firm's leader, and the others worked for him. Though the picture of SOM seems like a nightmare from another time, having nothing to do with the firm today, the issues (of individual and collectivity) raised in this sequence of novel and two articles continue to resonate. They are ones raised by William H. Whyte in his best-selling study of corporate America, *The Organization Man* (1956). Whyte describes the tension between the collectivity and the individual in corporate America fearing that the rise of a group conformity would stifle the innovation and originality that originally gave rise to the corporation itself. These are issues that remain alive in all large architectural firms.**

**/Author**

**Nicholas Adams**
**Vassar College**
**niadams@vassar.edu**

Nicholas Adams is Mary Conover Mellon professor emeritus in the Art Department at Vassar College where he taught the history of architecture (1989–2018). He received an A.B. from Cornell University (1970) and a PhD from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University (1978). He has been visiting professor at McGill University, Harvard University, Columbia University, the University of Rome. Adams is the author of *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM: Building Corporate Modernism* (2019) and the first independently authored study of Skidmore Owings & Merrill: *Skidmore, Owings & Merrill: SOM since 1936* (2007). He has published more than a dozen articles on the firm in *Casabella,* the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians,* and elsewhere.

Other books include *Gunnar Asplund's Gothenburg and the Transformation of Public Architecture in Interwar Europe* (2014); *Gunnar Asplund* (2011); *Firearms and Fortifications: Military Architecture and Siege Warfare in Sixteenth Century Siena* (1986) with Simon Pepper. He edited two volumes of the *Architectural Drawings of Antonio da Sangallo the Younger* (1994 and 2000). He co-curated an exhibition of architectural books entitled *Building Buffalo: Books from Buildings, Buildings from Books* (2017) with Francis Kowsky. His article "The Early Years of Nathaniel A. Owings: A Portrait of the Architect as a Storyteller," in the *Indiana Magazine of History* (2022) was awarded the Madison prize for the best article to appear in 2021.

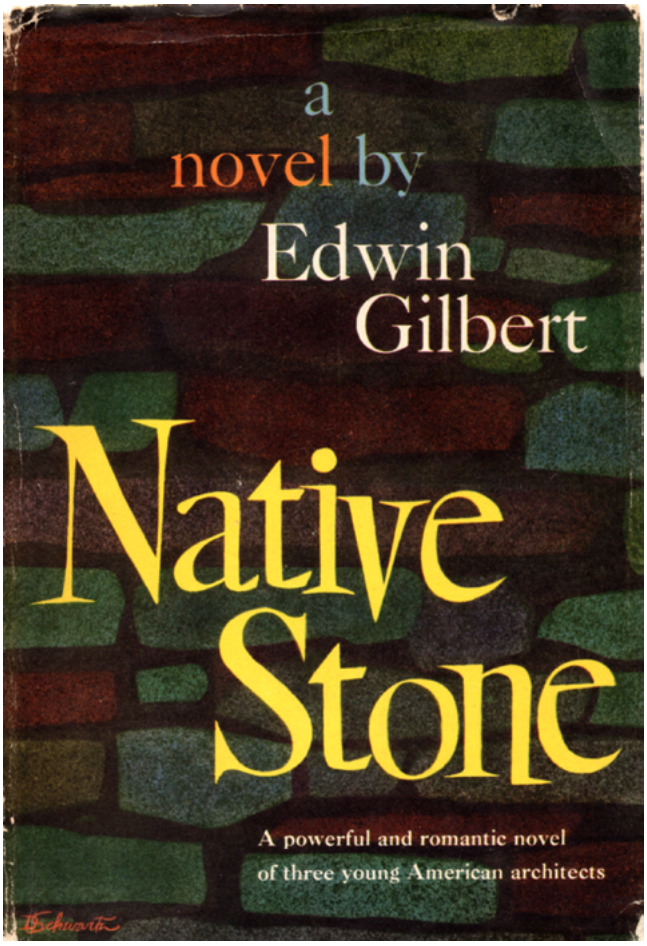
He has been a visiting fellow at the American Academy in Rome; the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton; the Canadian Centre for Architecture; and the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery in Washington.

https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/20396
Copyright © 2024 Nicholas Adams

Although little known, and of scant literary importance, a steamy novel published in 1955 stirred up a hornet's nest inside the architectural firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM). Although sexual favors and innuendoes provide the main story line, the novel may also have led to an open conflict within the firm over the critical relationship between the collective and the individual. Four years later the events detailed here almost resulted in the firing the firm's design leader and partner, Gordon Bunshaft (1909–1990). Although some parts of this story have been told before; my aim here is to bring all the pieces together to create an account that will provide insight into a large architectural firm at the apex of its fame over 70 years ago.

Judging from the reviews, readers of Edwin Gilbert's *Native Stone* (New York: Doubleday & Co., first suppressed edition, 1955; second corrected edition, 1956) were untroubled to find that its main characters were by turns, sexist, racist, and anti-Jewish.[1] **[Fig. 1]** The novel told of the exploits of three young architects, graduates from Yale University's School of Architecture: Abbott Austin, son of a Boston Brahman, Vincent Cable, a clever New Haven boy from a humble family, and Rafferty Bloom, a half-Irish half-Jewish son of a butcher from Cleveland. Following graduation, each follows a different architectural and amorous path before they join in practice. Austin goes to work for his elderly patrician uncle. Cable and Bloom both move to New York City. Though there are excellent evocations of life inside the school's drafting rooms (Gilbert trained as an architect) the novel is a romance as each man selects a partner who, through the course of the novel, proves to be inappropriate: insanity, infidelity, and duplicity bubble away from page to page. As the book rushes to its conclusion, the anti-Jewish siren has been tossed aside; the hot-blooded liberal progressive has shifted her allegiance from the New Haven-born working-class climber to the supposedly sensitive half-Irish half-Jew, and Austin, the Brahman child, has divorced his frigid wife in favor of the attractive, loving, Phoebe Dunn. This is a novel for idle hours and not much else.

The closest readers of this book, however, were not sleepy commuters on the New Haven & Hartford railroad, but the lawyers at Isham Lincoln & Beale in Chicago, attorneys for SOM.[2] In the novel, the fictional Rafferty Bloom works




1

Fig. 1
Edwin Gilbert, *Native Stone* (New York: Doubleday, 1955), book jacket

1 Edwin Gilbert, *Native Stone* (New York: Doubleday, 1955); corrected second edition (New York: Doubleday, 1956). All quotations are from the first edition unless otherwise noted.

2 The book was brought to SOM's attention by Jack Hennessy, a partner in the engineering firm of Syska & Hennessy. Hennessy, according to SOM's lawyer, saw an advance copy of the book at the office of the architect Wallace Harrison. Memorandum of Marshall Grosscup Sampsell to Owings, 27 April 1955, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., Papers of Nathaniel A. Owings, Container 2, folder "NAO Personal, January–June 1955."



in an architectural office with a disguise so tissue-thin that SOM threatened a $14 million lawsuit against the book's author and publisher. The threat was enough to force the withdrawal and destruction of the first edition, considerable rewriting, and the publication of a sanitized edition the following year.[3] That Bloom's employer in the novel, Pierce, Pender and Reeves (referred to as P. P. & R.) represented SOM is beyond doubt.[4] As he enters through modern glass doors Bloom admires color photographs of "hospitals, hotels, skyscrapers, universities, airports, embassies" displayed on its "stark-white" walls. He is startled by the time clock for employees to check in.[5] He admires copies of the *P. P. & R. Bulletin* on heavy card-stock, a fictionalized version of *SOM News,* SOM's actual newsletter, and he notes that the firm has "offices in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, as well as field offices and drafting rooms in Bonn, Istanbul, Rome, Paris, Algeria."[6] Bloom also observes that the firm does not build anything "as lowly as a dwelling," like SOM, and he is dismayed, in a familiar critique, to see that there is a "certain similarity between all these diverse structures." When he finally gets a view of the drafting room he is amazed by its size: "There must have been at least two hundred draftsmen at work in the area before him, fluo-

3 Doubleday agreed to withdraw all 4300 copies in the hands of retailers, to stop reviews, and ask Gilbert to write to those who had received free copies and ask for their return. Doubleday agreed to show any revisions to SOM prior to republication. Memorandum of Sampsell to Owings, 27 April 1955, Owings Papers, Container 2, folder "NAO Personal, January–June 1955."

4 It was common to write the abbreviation of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, "SOM," as "S.O.M." through the 1950s.

5 "Designers for a Busy World: Mood for Working," *Newsweek*, no. 97 (May 4, 1959). See also Roger Nicholas Radford, *"Oral History of Roger Nicholas Radford*," interviewed by Sharon Zane (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago), 40. In Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 158, the "personnel manager" explains to Bloom that the time clocks had been installed as the firm had a "big job for the Army last year."

6 Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 164–165. Later, when the office goes to lunch, Bloom and his colleagues walk along 58th Street.

Fig. 2
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, New York, view of the drafting room, ca. 1955 (© ESTO, Ezra Stoller)

rescent light fixtures clamped to each drafting table, and it made him think of the grotesque configuration of T.V. aerials in one of those ranch house real estate developments."[7] These details coincide with other descriptions of SOM: from its many departments (that so impress Bloom) to the antiseptically white office desks. [Fig. 2]

P. P. & R, however, is not a happy place. As depicted by Gilbert, the staff are contemptuous of the firm and their employers. "Which box are they putting you on?" Bloom is asked by one of the designers referring to the firm's ubiquitous right-angled designs. And the staff refer to themselves casually as "galley slaves," albeit "the best paid galley slaves in New York."[8] Money holds them in place. "Thought I'd try it alone," one of them says, "but Harriet got pregnant somehow."[9] Even a senior employee admits blankly: "I have a big family."[10] After a few drinks over lunch on his first day, Bloom blends in with the group by inventing a mocking nickname, "Firkydoodle," for P. P. & R's senior head of design, Munson Kirk.[11] Munson Kirk is the fictional representation of Gordon Bunshaft, the New York office's chief designer. Already noted for his successful buildings, Bunshaft was also well-known for his acerbic tongue and his rigorous control over design.[12] As Ben Yates, Bloom's draftsman-colleague explains sarcastically: "Oh, yes, there's a definite design policy [at P. P. & R]. It's all based on Munson Kirk's first success for the firm. You know. Nothing succeeds like success. And I must say we are copping more awards than any other office around."[13] Gilbert's physical description of Kirk also recalls Bunshaft. "He has heavy-lidded dark eyes, eyes made darker, smaller, recessed by the surrounding mound of gray flesh." One sartorial detail exaggerates a Bunshaft fashion. "His trousers were hitched almost rib-high by a pair of violet suspenders."[14] His manner is unsympathetic: "Saul," he tells his assistant in front of Bloom, "as soon as you can undo everything this man has learned at Yale or wherever it is he went, let me know."[15] In short, someone with decent knowledge of contemporary architecture in New York would probably have had little trouble guessing that the fictional office was based on SOM and that Munson Kirk was Bunshaft: the clinching detail, if needed, was a P. P. & R. project in Greenwich, Connecticut where SOM had, in fact, just built a hospital (1954).[16]

---

7 Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 158. At this time SOM had offices in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Portland. SOM's field offices cited by Gilbert were largely correctly identified.

8 Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 161. The various staff members are not identifiable. One of the group of staff members around Bloom is a tweed-wearing Englishman. There were, in fact, at least three English architects working at SOM in this period: Roger Radford (1926–2009), Max Gordon (1931–1990), and John Penn (1921–2007). Thanks to Matthias Dicks for drawing my attention to Penn.

9 Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 164.

10 Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 170.

11 Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 166.

12 See Nicholas Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM: Building Corporate Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), chapter 3. Manufacturers Hanover Trust, New York (1954) is named as the model for a bank that the architects design for "Taunton, CT.," *Native Stone,* 135–136.

13 Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 164.

14 Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 158.

15 Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 159.

16 Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 203.

Rafferty Bloom's experience at P. P. & R. hinges on Kirk's theft of a design. Bloom's first assignment had been to consider the entrance for a chemical research center in New Jersey. Rather than come up with alternatives, as he had been directed, Bloom had redesigned the entrance entirely.[17] "My idea," he explains, "was to get rid of that stiff formidable feeling."[18] Enraged, Kirk throws the sheet into the waste basket. But as Bloom leaves at the end of the day and attempts to retrieve the drawing––only to find that the basket has been emptied––as we learn later, by Kirk.[19] Although the drawing would have belonged to the firm because executed by their employee while paid by the firm, Kirk's underhanded appropriation is devious. Later, after Bloom has left the firm, the design is developed and ultimately premiated. Following a health scare, Kirk acknowledges Bloom's hand in the design and rewards him for his contribution; but the idea that senior partners used subterfuge to steal ideas from their underlings hardly gave a flattering picture of teamwork at SOM.

Another detail of life at P.P. & R. was equally unwelcome: the implication that Kirk would be (or was) having an affair with one of the (three) women working on the drafting floor. When Bloom first arrives there, his eye is immediately drawn by one of them, Marion McBride, known as Mac. She is, evidently, the ideal for every man in the room. She is a first-rate professional, too, but her subdued wardrobe (tailored blouse, tweed skirt, flat shoes) indicates to Bloom that she is not looking for a husband.[20] Everyone agrees that she is "married to architecture."[21] When Bloom calls on Marion one evening (uninvited), we learn more about her. The apartment is stark: walls black and oyster white. It has a "neo-Mondrian" painting on one wall (as did Bunshaft's own apartment that had recently been featured in *Architectural Forum*), a charcoal sofa, and two "anatomical-looking" birchwood chairs and a white marble table.[22] Why has he stopped by? As he explains it to her: "I wanted to know why it is that a beautiful girl tries to pass herself off as drab and unfeminine, as a robot in a big office…."[23] Her honesty startles Bloom and it is to Gilbert's credit that he provides it space. "'How would you like it' –– her voice was belligerent, uncalm––'how would you like it if you lost the use of both hands and couldn't hold a pencil any more?'" She then explains her ambition to be "'a registered architect, a practicing architect, a successful, a very, very, successful architect. A very, very, good one above all.' She said this with straight, hard-hitting conviction. 'But I have the misfortune of

17 See Walter McQuade, *Architecture in the Real World: The Work of HOK* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1984), 20, describes a situation with Gyo Obata, the head of design at HOK. Bill Valentine, later chairman of HOK, is quoted as telling new recruits: "If Gyo wants to do something, we are *bound* to do it that way. We are bound morally, and we're bound in a business sense. And we *will* do it that way. We're not going to look for a way to go around it; we're going to do it, even if we happen not to agree with it." Bloom has violated a general corporate understanding of hierarchy.

18 Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 163. Kirk's assistant is named Saul Weintraub–a possible reversal of ethnic authority. Bunshaft was Jewish.

19 Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 171.

20 Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 177.

21 Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 165.

22 "Quality in Quantity: Manhattan House, a full block of new New York apartments," *Architectural Forum,* no. 97 (July 1952): 144.

23 Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 178.

being born with reasonably agreeable features and, worst of all, blond hair––though I think I'll dye it.'" And she voices her fear of marriage. "'A very nice trap maybe, But I am the one who has ovaries, I bear the children, I take on the burden of the husband. I haven't a chance if I trust to nature or trust a man. Plus which, my friend, I know better than to let myself ever get involved.'"[24] "'Why do you think I'm holding on at P. P. & R.?'" she asks. "Because this might be a gilt-edged reference. Did you know that despite the fact that women practice architecture, despite the so-called age of enlightenment, a young female architect is––she mocked an imaginary male client–– "'well––sure, she's all right to do the kitchen or decorate the living room, but what about safe concrete footing? What about cantilevering? Drainage? Roof load? Uh huh! Nothing doing. Better not risk it!"[25] It is a woman architect's all–too-familiar complaint, and one wishes, having allowed his character to speak so forthrightly, that Gilbert had been more courageous. The scene ends with Bloom and McBride in bed––and she is converted to the idea of making herself more attractive to men.

Bloom is not the only person interested in McBride––and here the story turns back to SOM and what becomes the source of SOM's threatened lawsuit. Kirk, in one of the book's most vulgar phrases, is also keen on McBride. "After Kirk hired her," someone observes, you should have seen him "walking around all day with that I beam in his pants."[26] Subsequently, as McBride tells Bloom she has been invited out to Greenwich with Kirk. "He insists that I sit in with him…on the first design session with the president of the Greenwich Hospital Drive Fund." She is exultant: "I think I'll be able to practice architecture much sooner than I ever hoped." Kirk is "crazy about" her, Bloom says. She demurs. "But never to the point of letting me––or anyone––cut in on him. Which I have every intention of doing." Bloom is disappointed. "You shouldn't Marion. You don't have to do anything like that."[27] The "anything like that" she will do is clearly more intimate than just traveling up and back from Greenwich for presentations with Kirk. Team players at SOM are not selected wholly on merit is Gilbert's clear message.

*Native Stone* troubled the partners at SOM. Remembering events, Walter Netsch (1920–2008), a partner in the Chicago office unburdened himself awkwardly in his oral history (1977).

> There was one novel that was written in which Gordon played a principal part as a hero, and one young lady in the office was supposed to be the woman in it—neither one actually identified. But our lawyers got a hold of this book, and I remember a partners' meeting with paper clips through every page in which there was some problem that the legal department…thought besmirched Gordon. And it was handled, I don't know how, either with the publisher or something, but it was taken care of.

24 Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 179.

25 Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 180.

26 Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 165.

27 Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 203.

When the interviewer, presses Netsch for the title of the novel, he refuses. "I will not tell you. I Fig., it's past and over with." And in his further comments he manages to sound both certain of the falsity of the charge, but at the same time hinting that it might have been true. "It wasn't true. I'm not saying that there wasn't a relationship of a partner and someone else in the office, or some other office at some other time. I'm not saying that this was a puritanical joint, but this was a case where it had gotten to be a problem."[28] From which one might wonder whether "the problem" was an actual affair (these things happen) or its public imputation in fiction? (SOM had policies against employees marrying one another.)

As events unfolded, Nathaniel A. Owings (1903–1984), one of the founders and de-facto chief partner, was told (27 April 1955) by the firm's lawyer, Marshall Grosscup Sampsell (1904–1973) that the Marion McBride character, "Mac," was modelled on Patricia W. Swan (1924–2012), who worked in the design department in the New York office of SOM.[29] This was, he said, "the most compelling reason for Doubleday's action" to withdraw the edition. In a letter to Sampsell, Owings complimented the lawyer, mischaracterizing the episode: "It would appear that when anything pornographic is involved, Sampsell is the man!"[30]

Gilbert, for his part, "maintained that he had not talked to any former employee of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill," but admitted that he had been shown through the New York office by Ernie Durhan (1913–1973).[31] Gilbert knew something about architecture having trained at Michigan State (1933).[32] But Gilbert could not have deduced so much about Bunshaft's character from a walk through the studios. Did he make up the theft of drawings? Did he actually know Patricia Swan? Junior designers still claim their designs have been ripped off––and some, like Emanuel Turano (1917–2007), the senior designer at SOM's Lever House, resented working for Bunshaft for a related reason: Turano did the work and Bunshaft claimed the credit. At P. P. & R. the staff believed that the best work came from Kirk's assistant, Saul Weintraub––though Kirk took the credit.[33] Did

---

28 Walter Netsch, "Oral History of Walter Netsch," interviewed by Betty J. Blum (Chicago: Art Institute, 1997, revised edition, 2000), 185–86.

29 Swan worked at SOM in New York 1951–78; and then in Denver, 1978–86. Concerning *Native Stone, see* Memorandum of Sampsell to Owings, 27 April 1955, Owings Papers, Container 3, folder "NAO Personal, January–June 1955." The physical description of "Marion McBride," in the opinion of someone who knew her, fits her perfectly. (Conversation with John Winkler, 29 August 2023).

30 Letter from Owings to Sampsell, May 3, 1955. Owings Papers, Container 2, folder "NAO Personal, January–June 1955."

31 Inside the copy of *Native Stone* in the Howard Gottlieb Archive at Boston University, Gilbert has written: "FOURTEEN MILLION DOLLAR LAW SUIT" [author's note: written in red]
This is a RARE COPY OF FIRST EDITION OF NATIVE STONE. DESTROYED by Publisher DURING LIBEL LAW SUIT THREAT by Architectural FIRM OF SKIDMORE OWINGS & MERRILL SUING FOR $14,5000,000,000. This first printing was RE-PRINTED at COST TO AUTHOR OF $10,0000.000. This COPY IS THE ONE IN WHICH AUTHOR MADE CHANGES That RELIEVED HIM OF ACTUAL LIBEL SUIT. ALMOST NO COPIES EXIST. E.G." Gilbert added too many zeroes for the figure he reports in words.

32 Obituaries describe him as graduating from the University of Michigan; when he graduated it was known at Michigan State College, see "529 Degrees to be Awarded at M.S.C. June 12," *The Herald-Palladium* (Benton Harbor, Michigan), May 25, 1933, 12.

33 Laurie Turano-Allis, daughter of Emanuel Turano, email message to author, 19 Oct. 2018. She writes: "As the project began, he said Gordon preferred our father's work and sent the other 3 members [assigned to the project] on his personal errands, such as retrieving his dry-cleaning and walking his dog, so our father would and did complete the entire project." The experience seems to have soured Turano on working at SOM and he left to open his own firm. For Weintraub, see Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 161.

Gilbert just invent an affair between a senior partner and a staff member? As Netsch blurted out: "I'm not saying that there wasn't a relationship of a partner and someone else in the office, or some other office at some other time." Or, as he had already said: "I figure, it's past and over with."[34] Whatever *it* was, *it* was what he remembered even though it can hardly have been the only grounds for a libel suit.

In revising the book for publication in 1956, Gilbert changed everything about the architectural firm. In the new edition the firm is called "Pierce and Pender" and is more traditional, its offices dowdy and old world. There is no *SOM Bulletin,* no timeclock, and Munson Kirk sits in a "disorderly old cubicle." Kirk has lost his suspenders, too, and in their place is "a bright tartan plaid shirt and black bow tie, unknotted."[35] Marion McBride appears, as she is essential to action later in the book, but she works for another firm that is sharing space with Pierce and Pender. The job in Greenwich has changed, too: not for a hospital, it is for a Greenwich Auditorium. In short, so much has changed that it would have been impossible for anyone to pin the story on SOM.

Though what stood out to the partners was the potential for a sexual scandal, can that have been their only concern? How did they feel about the representation of the antiseptic and mechanical New York office; its crude and self-centered chief designer; the cynical sexual and anti-Jewish badinage of its employees; the implication that sexual favors were available and sought; the mistreatment of employees' ideas. The male partners fixated on a little saucy gossip about a "lady architect" and a fellow partner.[36] Was that all that mattered?

In the internal SOM memoranda no one pretended that *Native Stone*'s representation of life in the New York architectural office was either correct or incorrect. That Bunshaft could be an uncivilized boor was too well-known in New York architectural circles (and probably beyond), but he was a successful boor, as even Gilbert acknowledged. The staff––well, they were just the staff; the liquid lunch was commonplace.[37] Within the walls of the firm, indeed of any large architectural offices, using the ideas provided by the staff was what partners did. Kirk had been sneakier than needed but that was all. Perhaps Owings and Netsch thought there was nothing they could do about some of these practices––perhaps there was nothing they wanted to do about them except to keep them out of the public eye.[38]

---

34 One inexplicable oddity is the use of the name "Jack Dunbar" in Gilbert's text. There was an identically named employee (1924–2017), in SOM's interiors department.

35 Gilbert, *Native Stone,* 2, 161.

36 From a comparable date, see Lee Wyndham, *Lady Architect* (New York: Julian Messner, 1957). Though Wyndham had evidently read *Native Stone,* her book, though romantic in nature, was intended for a juvenile audience and was much less racy.

37 SOM's reputation in this regard may have been damaged by noted alcoholic partners (Skidmore, Owings, Graham); lunches in New York at the Plaza Hotel and then at the Versailles Restaurant were lengthy. See Nathaniel A. Owings, *The Spaces in Between: An Architect's Journey* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), 72.

38 This is ample evidence for Bunshaft's boorish behavior; that he failed to credit his colleagues sufficiently is the contention of Brown, see Adams, "William S. Brown's 'SOM The Formative Years' (1983): A New History of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, no. 78 (September 2019): 254–258. Romantic affairs are harder to prove or disprove. Though Bunshaft was Jewish, and anti-Jewish sentiment within SOM has been reported to me orally by more than one source–it was probably present there as through the larger



Did this novel and its sorry tale resonate for SOM? Did *Native Stone* provoke a rethinking of SOM's public face, a recognition that its social ethic needed to be defined in print, even made clear for clients? Public relations was then in its infancy. Even so, because "SOM" considered itself a brand––one that could be damaged––its defense required muscle.[39] With that in mind, after suppressing the book they constructed a counter-narrative.

In January 1958, *Fortune* magazine published a profile of SOM, "The Architects from 'Skid's Row'."[40] As the first extended portrait of SOM to appear in a national magazine, the article has long been considered the touchstone for understanding the firm in the later 1950s, at the high point of post-war businessman's modernism. The firm took the occasion seriously and though many of the issues in this article have been discussed before, it is interesting to reread the article in the light of Gilbert's book. As Walter Netsch recalled the article in his oral history: "It got to be a pretty interesting story about how the firm really worked and what a partnership meeting was really about. And boy, did the paper clips appear on that draft! That poor guy who wrote it really had the pressure put on him."[41]

The most remarkable thing about the article was the large amount of space dedicated to people and the relatively small amount devoted to completed build-

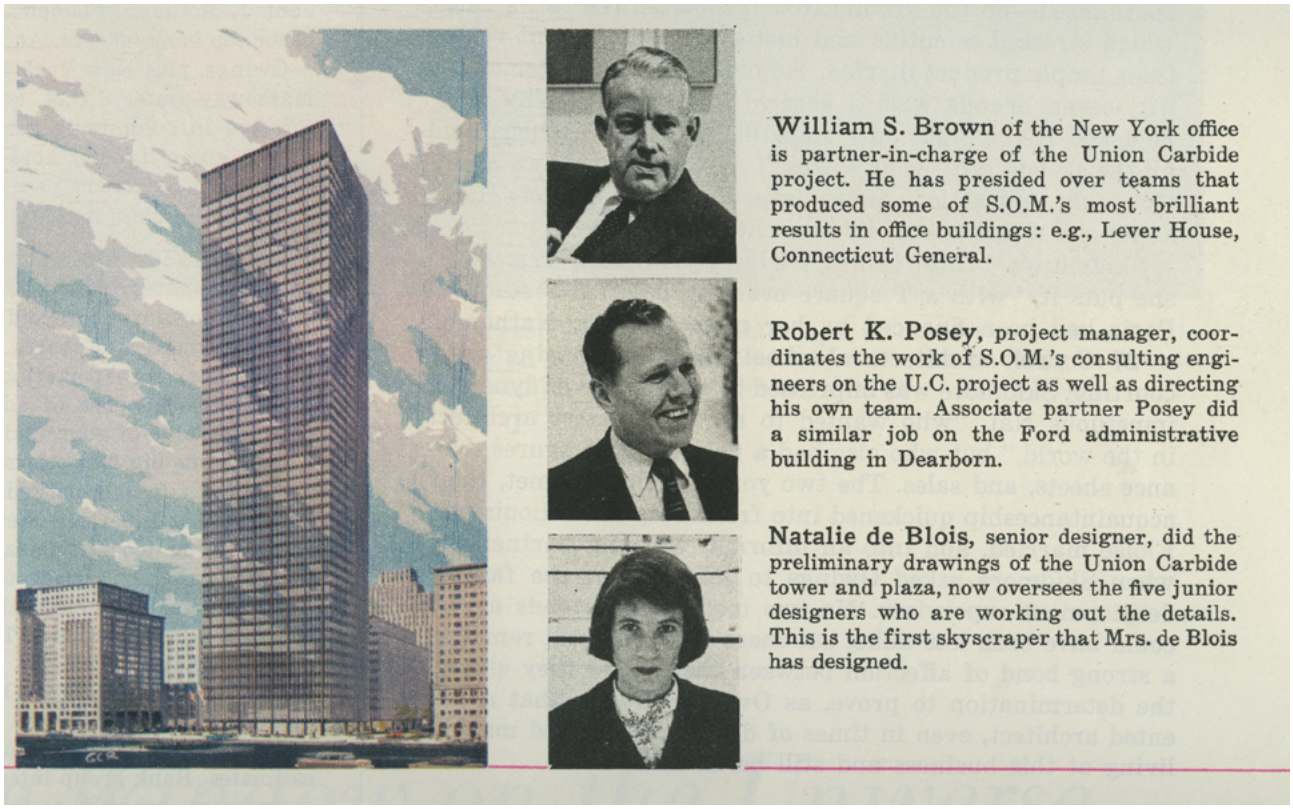
Fig. 3
"S.O.M.'s partners see a lot of each other as they move between the firm's four offices but they seldom see co-founder Louis Skidmore since he retired to Florida two years ago. So last spring they paid him a mass visit." Illustration used on the first page of "The Architects from 'Skid's Row'," *Fortune,* January 1958, 137. (Photographer: John McDonald, Winter Haven, FL, Negative C-574-4)

society.

39 There was no public relations department at SOM in these years. Most connections to the magazines were handled by Marion Vanderbilt (New York) and, later, Mildred Steelhammer (Chicago), both of whom also had general secretarial responsibilities as well. Partners often made connections with the editors and there were disputes between the offices over coverage. For a contemporary view of public relations see Asher B. Etkes and Raymond Dodd, "The Architect and Public Relations," *Progressive Architecture* (September 1952): 19; (October 1952): 114; (November 1952): 102–103; (December 1952): 104; (February 1953): 99; (March 1953): 116.

40 "The Architects from 'Skid's Row'," *Fortune,* no. 57 (Jan. 1958): 137–40, 210, 212–13.

41 Walter Netsch, "Oral History of Walter Netsch," interviewed by Betty J. Blum (Chicago: Art Institute, 1997, revised edition, 2000), 186.



**William S. Brown** of the New York office is partner-in-charge of the Union Carbide project. He has presided over teams that produced some of S.O.M.'s most brilliant results in office buildings: e.g., Lever House, Connecticut General.

**Robert K. Posey,** project manager, coordinates the work of S.O.M.'s consulting engineers on the U.C. project as well as directing his own team. Associate partner Posey did a similar job on the Ford administrative building in Dearborn.

**Natalie de Blois,** senior designer, did the preliminary drawings of the Union Carbide tower and plaza, now oversees the five junior designers who are working out the details. This is the first skyscraper that Mrs. de Blois has designed.





ings. There was one group shot of the partners seated around a picnic table at retired co-founder Louis Skidmore's house in Florida (on the opening page), and eleven pictures of employees (partners and staff of different grades) elsewhere. [Fig. 3] Although there was a lengthy side-bar–article on the winning of the commission for the Chase Manhattan tower, New York (1961), in all only three buildings were illustrated.[42] Camaraderie and lack of hierarchy––that picnic table––provided the focal point for the article and the opening paragraph stressed the team. An ebullient Owings enters the Chicago office and is greeted joyously by partners and staff alike. The atmosphere recalls a sporting victory or a collegial homecoming.

> Suddenly a whoop and holler split the air. Past the reception desk charged a short, chunky, bright-eyed man, roaring with laughter, yelling greetings. He looked remarkably like Smokey, the bear in the Boy Scout hat on U.S. conservation posters. It was Nathaniel Owings…. In a moment he was surrounded by a clamorous welcoming group from all levels of the S.O.M. hierarchy….[43]

Under the headline "'Group Design' As Practiced by S.O.M" the article then described how designs progressed through the firm, explaining that there was no such thing as a single designer: the "S.O.M 'designer' is several men."[44]

However, at this point in SOM's development, everyone knew that Gordon

Fig. 4
Natalie de Blois illustrated along with the project manager and partner-in-charge with the design for the Union Carbide headquarters building. "The Architects from 'Skid's Row'," *Fortune,* January 1958, 139.

42 For the only comparable profile see Buckminster Fuller, "Fuller's House," *Fortune* 33 (April 1946): 167.

43 "The Architects from 'Skid's Row'," 137.

44 "The Architects from 'Skid's Row'," 138.

Bunshaft was the undisputed design leader of the firm––feared by underlings, respected (and even treated carefully) by equals: an individualist. He had received accolades for the buildings he claimed as "his" designs: Lever House, Manufacturers Trust, and Connecticut General. He had an unassailable position of authority not only in the New York office, where he was based, but across the firm. Oral histories reveal that he intervened mercilessly on anything within his reach, and his success had been such that he was often called in for consultation by other offices; and even when he was not physically present, designers in the other offices attempted to make their works look like his: his was the "house style." He backed up his authority with a combination of surly silence and short-fuse irascibility.[45] From a certain point of view, it was odd that "Skid's Row," did not center its story on Bunshaft. In fact, what the article did was show that because he was so important, he created opportunities for others. At Chase Manhattan tower, as recounted in *Fortune,* the major figure was senior designer, Jacques Guiton (1914–2007). Bunshaft, the article stated, was absent in Europe during much of the design process, leaving creative freedom to Guiton. He ran the show working "one day with ten designers, another day with three…"and the article quoted SOM partner Roy O. Allen (1921–92): "No one man designs a building, at least not in this shop."[46] According to the article the firm also offered opportunities to women. Among the photographs of the men, there was one woman: Natalie de Blois (1921–2013), described as a married woman. The caption described her as overseeing a five-person team working on the preliminary drawings for the Union Carbide skyscraper on Park Avenue in New York. "This is," the caption read, "the first skyscraper that Mrs. de Blois has designed," implying that more were to come and that she was the lead designer.[47] In her neat suit, looking directly at the camera, she was a model professional. **[Fig. 4]** Left unsaid was the fact that Bunshaft had final approval (she was the senior designer), that he was to whom the building would ultimately be credited.

The second feature of the article that stood out was the dissonance of Bunshaft's voice. When interviewed, Bunshaft emphasized his role: "The partners work as one big team," he was quoted as saying, "the others take care of job getting, supervision, and all those headaches, and I am in charge of design." This was not the picture of the social ethic advanced elsewhere in the article though in the succeeding lines, ostensibly Bunshaft's opinion, he seemed to contradict his previous statements, softening them slightly to favor the collective. These comments are not given as a direct quotation––and from everything we know about what Bunshaft thought, they are probably not opinions he would have voiced at this time.[48]

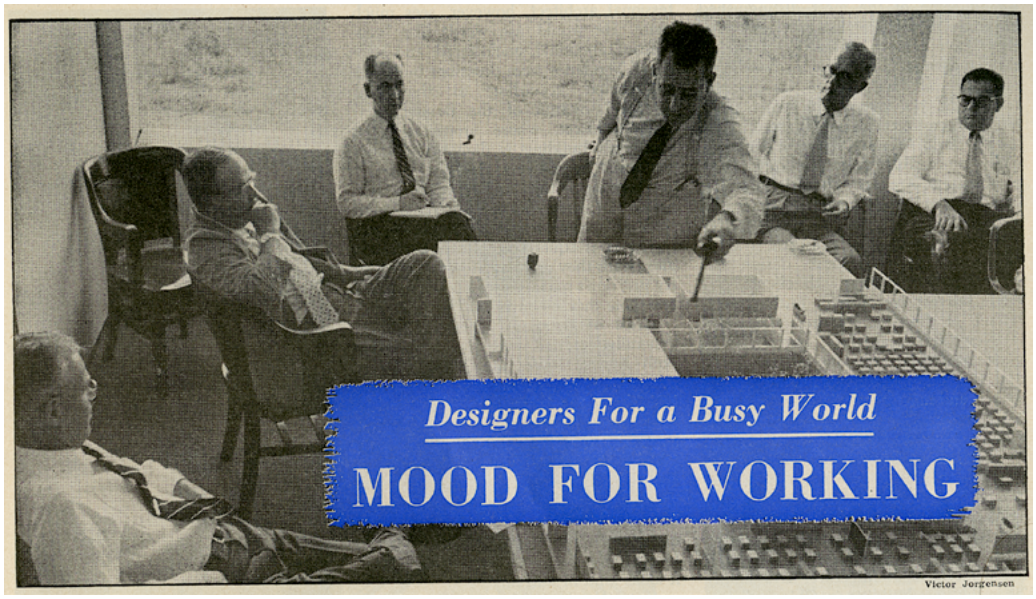
---

45 Bunshaft's evidence that these were "his" buildings came from his combined position as senior design partner and senior administrative partner. This gave him not only control over the design, but also control of the purse strings. This authority was not enjoyed by others at SOM. See Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM,* chapter 4. On Bunshaft's moods, see Nicholas Adams, "Gordon Bunshaft: What Convinces is Conviction," *SOM Journal*, no. 9 (2014): 8–19.

46 "The Architects from 'Skid's Row'," 210.

47 "The Architects from 'Skid's Row'," 139.

48 "The Architects from 'Skid's Row'," 212.




> But in a serious discussion [as if everything up to that point had just been playful] Bunshaft is the first to declare that an S.O.M. building is designed by talk, endless communal talk that begins well before the job is actually in the shop and continues through every phrase of the operation. Any number of people contribute to these conversations, including the client and his representatives, the interested S.O.M. partners, and scores of others on various levels in the office. S.O.M.'s planning, in effect, is an exercise in group intelligence.

In short, the article implies that at SOM they had found a way to allow the individual and the collective to coexist.[49] Was the fictional comity in "'Skid's Row'" an adequate representation of reality? Not according to Bunshaft.

Angered by the "'Skid's Row'" article, Bunshaft was the protagonist for the publication of a counterblast, "Designers for a Busy World: Mood for Working," in *Newsweek* magazine, the following year.[50] Here, he presented himself as the star, the one person responsible for design at SOM. The first page photograph showed him standing over a model of the Connecticut General headquarters, his unlit pipe used as a pointer, leading a discussion between seated white-shirted men with ties, led by Frazier B. Wilde, the president of Connecticut General. **[Fig. 5]** The article took direct aim at the central arguments of "'Skid's Row'." Bunshaft was in charge: there was no such a thing as "architecture by committee."

> There's no such thing as design by committee. There always has to be one dominant force, someone who comes up with the original design. The group and the conferences come in later, when we hammer the design to pieces to see if it makes sense.[51]

49 It may be possible to attribute this favorable statement about the collective to SOM partner William S. Brown who argued the collectivist position within the partnership and opposed Bunshaft's efforts to centralize credit and authority on himself. See Adams, "William S. Brown's 'SOM The Formative Years' (1983)," 254–58.

50 "Designers for a Busy World," 97–100.

51 "Designers for a Busy World," 97.

Fig. 5
Gordon Bunshaft leading discussion at Connecticut General. Frazier B. Wilde, president of Connecticut General, is to the left wearing a jacket. *Newsweek,* 4 May 1959 (photographer: Victor Jorgensen)

If Bunshaft's explosion in *Newsweek* was not what the partners expected––they did not know him very well.[52] So irritated were they that they considered Bunshaft's severance from the firm, and in a closed-door New-York-partner-only meeting, Bunshaft wept when confronted by their objections and threats of dismissal; he was allowed to keep his position.[53] William S. Brown (1910–1999), a fellow partner, who had worked with Bunshaft since 1939, annotated his copy of the *Newsweek* article and made a list of ten points to raise at the meeting. He believed Bunshaft to have strayed from the firm's social ethic––and specifically on the issue of the partnership as a collective: "No longer a partner in spirit. Using his position to promote his own program rather than the firm. It will become more acute as time goes on because he can't curb his appetites." And later: "Having a love affair with himself."[54]

In the end, the first uncirculated edition of a novel and two articles raise useful questions about how architectural firms functioned. *Native Stone* revealed egocentrism at the heart; "'Skid's Row'" constructed another narrative about the collective; Bunshaft's "Designers for a Busy World," ripped the mask away, again.

Admittedly, the link between *Native Stone* and the *Fortune* article is circumstantial. We cannot go back and ask people what they were thinking: but the sequence of a novel and two magazine articles seems more than coincidental; these are big issues for large architectural firms. Could a firm like SOM, sustain a high quality of design over time without a stubborn individualist? Did high quality design require an authoritarian with celebrity status to sell commissions to clients, critics, and the public?[55] It was a problem much to the fore in this period. William H. Whyte's *The Organization Man* (1956), a best-seller on business practice, had emphasized a social ethic, grounded in faith in the group or the team as the source of creativity.[56] Whyte had lamented the devaluation of individuality and the rise of conformism––all those commuters in their gray flannel suits, he feared, would soon stifle the creativity and flair that gave rise to the corporation in the first place.[57] SOM modelled the tensions described by Whyte. What was the meaning to all those architectural boxes? Later, in the 1980s, after Bunshaft's retirement, SOM sought to dodge the stresses that came from an internal star

---

52 Adams, "Brown's 'SOM The Formative Years,'" 267. Unlike *Fortune,* where SOM apparently had significant control over the text (as recounted by Netsch), it seems unlikely that was the case with *Newsweek.* The article quoted an unnamed architect describing SOM as an "overgrown plan factory which produces T-square architecture." And there was no one to censor Bunshaft's off-the-cuff- remarks. "The firm did some pretty lousy things when it first got started. I wasn't around then." "Designers for a Busy World," 98.

53 In the musical "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying," (1961) the character J. Pierrepoint Finch asks the loyal mailroom clerk, Mr. Twimble, about the role of "a genius' suggestions" in the firm. Twimble replies: "Watch that genius get suggested to resign."

54 Brown's notes and comments on "Designers for a Busy World." (Columbia University, Avery Fine Arts Library Archives).

55 Magalli Sarfatti Larson, *Behind the Postmodern Façade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 114.

56 William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1956), 7.

57 While it might seem that the greater obligation fell on the employees (who could be fired if they stepped out of line), management was also restricted in what it could say. See Nicholas Adams, "Belonging as a Corporate Ideal: Nathaniel A. Owings of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill writes *The Spaces in Between*," in *L'architetto: ruolo, volto, mito,* ed. Guido Beltramini and Howard Burns (Venice: Marsilio, 2009), 323–342. See also, Robert Vanderlan, *Intellectuals Incorporated: Politics, Art, and Ideas Inside Henry Luce's Media Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2010), particularly chapter 4, "Intellectuals Incorporated."

by partnering with noted individuals outside the firm on specific projects: Frank Gehry, Charles Moore, Stanley Tigerman, and Venturi Rauch Scott Brown. SOM partner Bruce Graham, based in Chicago, thought he could introduce these strong outsiders without reverting to Bunshaft's organizational style.[58] The tension between individual and collectivity, between pyramid and circle (Whyte's metaphor), remains. We should be completely clear however about some things: the social environment of SOM today has nothing in common with life described by Gilbert seventy years ago: women have positions of significant responsibility within the firm; gender, religious, and racial stereotyping is unwelcome and sanctioned. Even so, issues around individuality and collectivity remain. In her assessment of SOM in 1981, the journalist Suzanne Stephens raised the same questions from twenty-five years earlier about the tension between "individuality and anonymity." From where would originality come, she asked?[59] And, she might have asked further, whether originality and novelty required a single figure to lead the way. It is a subject that has not passed from view.[60]

58 Larson, *Behind the Postmodern Façade*, 114–115.

59 Suzanne Stephens, "SOM at Midlife," *Progressive Architecture*, no. 65 (May 1981): 138–149. Stephens dedicates a significant portion of the article to the issue of "Individuality vs. Anonymity," 141.

60 See, for example, Fred Bernstein, "Not Your Daddy's SOM: Roger Duffy's Quiet Demeanor Masks a Steely Determination to Remake One of Architecture's Behemoths," *Metropolis 23*, no. 4 (Dec. 2003): 118–123, 162–163.

## Bibliography


Adams, Nicholas. "Belonging as a Corporate Ideal: Nathaniel A. Owings of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill writes *The Spaces in Between*," in *L'architetto: ruolo, volto, mito,* edited by Guido Beltramini and Howard Burns. Venice: Marsilio, 2009, 323–342.

Adams, Nicholas. "Gordon Bunshaft: What Convinces is Conviction," *SOM Journal*, no. 9 (2014): 8-19.

Adams, Nicholas. "William S. Brown's 'SOM The Formative Years' (1983): A New History of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians,* no. 78 (September 2019): 254–258.

Adams, Nicholas. *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM: Building Corporate Modernism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019.

Bernstein, Fred. "Not Your Daddy's SOM: Roger Duffy's Quiet Demeanor Masks a Steely Determination to Remake One of Architecture's Behemoths," *Metropolis 23*, no. 4 (December 2003): 118–123, 162–163.

"Designers for a Busy World: Mood for Working," *Newsweek*, no. 97 (May 4, 1959): 97–100.

Etkes, Asher B. and Raymond Dodd. "The Architect and Public Relations," *Progressive Architecture* (September 1952): 19; (October 1952): 114; (November 1952): 102–103; (December 1952); 104; (February 1953): 99; (March 1953): 116

Fuller, Buckminster. "Fuller's House," *Fortune 33* (April 1946): 167.

Gilbert, Edwin. *Native Stone*. New York: Doubleday, 1955 (corrected second edition, 1956).

Larson, Magalli Sarfatti. *Behind the Postmodern Façade*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

McQuade, Walter. *Architecture in the Real World: The Work of HOK.* New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1984.

Netsch, Walter. "Oral History of Walter Netsch," interviewed by Betty J. Blum (Chicago: Art Institute, 1997, revised edition, 2000).

Owings, Nathaniel A. *The Spaces in Between: An Architect's Journey*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973.

Quality in Quantity: Manhattan House, a full block of new New York apartments," *Architectural Forum,* no. 97 (July 1952): 144.

Radford, Roger Nicholas. "Oral History of Roger Nicholas Radford," interviewed by Sharon Zane (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago).

Stephens, Suzanne. "SOM at Midlife," *Progressive Architecture,* no. 65 (May 1981): 138–149.

"The Architects from 'Skid's Row'," *Fortune,* no. 57 (January 1958): 137–140; 210; 212–213.

Vanderlan, Robert. *Intellectuals Incorporated: Politics, Art, and Ideas Inside Henry Luce's Media Empire*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2010.

Whyte, William H. *The Organization Man*. New York: Simon & Shuster, 1956.

Wyndham, Lee. *Lady Architect*. New York: Julian Messner, 1957.

"529 Degrees to be Awarded at M.S.C. June 12," *The Herald-Palladium* (Benton Harbor, Michigan), May 25, 1933, 12.


## Archival sources


Edwin Gilbert collection, Howard Gotlieb Archive, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts.

Papers of Nathaniel A. Owings, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

Histories of Postwar Architecture

# Erratum: The Possibility of an Island: Cold War Berlin as Charged Void, Landscape, and Mirage

This erratum regards the following article: Angelidou, I. (2023). The Possibility of an Island: Cold War Berlin as Charged Void, Landscape, and Mirage. Histories of Postwar Architecture, 6 (12), 54-71. https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/18192.

The correction concerns the addition of three lines of the article: a paragraph at page 69 was wrongly cut out during the layout procedures. The missing text is the following:

“plan of the Campo Marzio, which here resembles the Museuminsel".

Therefore, the complete paragraph is the following:

"On the upper right hand corner, David from Tanzio da Varallo’s painting “David and Goliath” leans over a fragment of Piranesi’s plan of the Campo Marzio, which here resembles the Museuminsel"

The editorial team apologizes with the author and the readers for the inconvenience



CC BY 4.0
https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/21632 | ISSN 2611-0075
Copyright © 2024 Ioanna Angelidou

Histories of Postwar Architecture

# Erratum: Eight Forts. Trace of Modern Architecture in Austro-Hungarian Permanent Fortified Works among the Mountainous South-West Borders of The Empire. 1833-1913.

This erratum regards the following article: Bortot, P. (2023). Eight Forts. Trace of Modern Architecture in Austro-Hungarian Permanent Fortified Works among the Mountainous South-West Borders of The Empire. 1833-1913. Histories of Postwar Architecture, 6 (13), 312-342. https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/20362.

The correction concerns the title, the page number appearing in the issue index, the correction of the syntax or typing in some paragraphs, the substitution of a name at page 319 and the substitution of an image at page 331.

The corrections are due to mistakes in the title typing and in the insertion of the images by the layout preparation process, and to the update of some contents provided by the author.

The typing mistake in the title changes it from “Eigth Forts. Traces of the Modern in Austro-Hungarian Permanent Fortified Works among the Mountainous South-West Borders of The Empire. 1833-1913” into “Eight Forts. Trace of Modern Architecture in Austro-Hungarian Permanent Fortified Works among the Mountainous South-West Borders of The Empire. 1833-1913”.

The correction in the page numbers concerns the issue index: the article goes from page 312 to page 342, whereas in the general index it was wrongly indicated 312-322.

The corrections in the paragraphs concern the mistype of a word on page 313.

The wrong text is the following:

Forts were built either as isolated buildings, or in pairs, or in small groups, and from a morphological point of view they express, in the layout and construction technique, the state of the art of the various periods in which they were built.

Therefore, the correct paragraph is the following:

Forts were built either as isolated buildings, or in pairs, or in small groups, and from a morphological point of view they express, in their layout and construction technique, the state of the art of the various periods in which they were built.

The corrections in the paragraphs concern the mistype of a word on page 314.

The wrong text is the following:

“This article briefly addresses the evolution of the modern fort on the south-west border of Austro-Hungarian Empire by analyzing some paradigmatic cases, according to the autor”.

Therefore, the correct paragraph is the following:

“According to the autor, this article briefly addresses the evolution of the modern fort on the south-west border of Austro-Hungarian Empire by analyzing some paradigmatic cases”

The corrections in the paragraphs concern the mistype of a word on page 315.

The wrong text is the following:

“This process, which came to maturity in the early twentieth century, would eventually lead to the invention and use of novel and in some cases absolutely modern and original construction solutions”.

Therefore, the correct paragraph is the following:

“This process, which came to maturity in the early Twentieth century, would eventually lead to the invention and use of new and in some cases absolutely modern and original construction solutions”.

The corrections in the paragraphs concern the mistype of a word on page 316.

The wrong text is the following:

“Second period (1860-1862). Construction of forts with French case-mate construction technique following the example of Napoleonic lunettes in Palmanova. His type had the task of barring roads, which is why they took the name ‘Strassensperren.’”

Therefore, the correct paragraph is the following:

“Second period (1860-1862). Construction of forts with French case-mate construction technique following the example of Napoleonic lunettes in Palmanova. This type had the task of barring roads, which is why they took the name ‘Strassensperren.’

The corrections in the paragraphs concern the mistype of a word on page 316.

The wrong text is the following:

“5. Fifth period (1904-1915). This is the period of modern heavy-armored Forts. The first work of this type was Fort Garda, completed in 1907. Here a new construction technique was experimented with the only use of concrete. It was built in a unique bolck of concrete with internal and perimetral walls with a thickness of 1.5 meters. The thickness of the covering was between 2.5 and 3.0 meters and it rested on a plane of 30cm double T beams. It was equipped with 4 heavy-armored rotating domes - drehbare panzer Kuppeln - and a revolving heavy-armored observatory - drehbare gepanzerter Beobachtunssgstand - for the commander”.

Therefore, the correct paragraph is the following:

“5. Fifth period (1904-1915). This is the period of modern heavy-armored Forts. The first work of this type was Fort Garda, completed in 1907. Here a new construction technique was experimented with the only use of concrete. It was built in a unique block of concrete with internal and perimetral walls with a thickness of 1.5 meters. The thickness of the covering was between 2.5 and 3.0 meters and it rested on a plane of 30cm double T beams. It was equipped with 4 heavy-armored rotating domes - drehbare panzer Kuppeln - and a revolving heavy-armored observatory - drehbare gepanzerter Beobachtungsstand - for the commander”.

The corrections in the paragraphs concern the mistype of a word on page 318.

The wrong text is the following:

“All facade sections [Fig.4] are characterized by the arc-shaped ventilation elements placed above each pair of vertical embrasures: these allow internal ventilation and the removal of smoke from small arms during combat”.

Therefore, the correct paragraph is the following:

“All facade sections [Fig.4] are characterized by the arch-shaped ventilation elements placed above each pair of vertical embrasures: these allow internal ventilation and the removal of smoke from small arms during combat”.

The corrections in the paragraphs concern the mistype of a word on page 319.

The wrong text is the following:

“Laterally, this upper body, presents two asymmetrical facades, with two small gables on the south side and one on the north side, at which there are a different number of rifle-embrasure with the function of protecting the single-pitch roofing of the two lower south and north sections of the fort flanking the caponi-er-bulwark”.

Therefore, the correct paragraph is the following:

“Laterally, this upper body, presents two asymmetrical facades, with two small gables on the south side and one on the north side, at which there is a different number of rifle-embrasure with the function of protecting the single-pitch roofing of the two lower south and north sections of the fort flanking the caponi-er-bulwark”.

The substitution of a name concerns a recent attribution. It appears in the fifth paragraph on page 319.

The wrong text is the following:

“Maria della Rovere with the technical contribution of Michele Sanmicheli”.

Therefore, the correct paragraph is the following:

“Maria della Rovere with the technical contribution of Pier Francesco da Viterbo”.

The corrections in the paragraphs concern the mistype of a word on page 321.

The wrong text is the following:

“These works, because of the technique with which they was built, are also called ‘French-style forts.’

A pair of forts was built north of Lake Garda: Fort S. Nicoló and Fort Nago. Fort S. Nicoló, by shape and structure is the one that can make us understand, perhaps most directly, the French derivation. In fact, morphology and construction technique directly echo those of the polygonal lunettes built by the French ‘Genie’ in an external radial position to modernize the Venetian Fortress of Palmanova”.

Therefore, the correct paragraph is the following:

“These works, because of the technique with which they were built, are also called ‘French-style forts.’

A pair of forts were built north of the Garda Lake: Fort S. Nicoló and Fort Nago. Fort S. Nicoló, by shape and structure is the one that can make us understand, perhaps most directly, the French derivation. In fact, morphology and construction technique directly echo those of the polygonal lunettes built by the French ‘Genie’ in an external radial position to modernize the Venetian Fortress of Palmanova”.

The corrections in the paragraphs concern the mistype of a word on page 327.

The wrong text is the following:

“Between the dome and the forepart was a gap that effectively let water go through, that is inpratically in mountainous environment”.

Therefore, the correct paragraph is the following:

“Between the dome and the forepart was a gap that effectively let water go through, that is unpractical in mountainous environment”.

The substitution of a picture concerns image 21 and 22. They appear on pages 331.

Image 20 was repeated, by mistake, twice. The captions are correct.

The wrong image 21 is the following:



The image must be replaced by the following:



The wrong image 22 is the following:



The image must be replaced by the following:



The corrections in the paragraphs concern the internal title on page 340.

The wrong title is the following:

“Conclusions: Brutalism ad a necessity”.

Therefore, the correct title is the following:

“Conclusions: Brutalism as a Necessity”.

The corrections in the paragraphs concern the mistype of a word on page 340.

The wrong text is the following:

“The theme, but also the territory descrived, proved to be extremely complex. This was due to the events in the region, which is situated at a truly strategic point, that has not a despicable historical density”.

Therefore, the correct paragraph is the following:

“The theme, but also the territory described, proved to be extremely complex. This was due to the events in the region, which is situated at a truly strategic point, that has a remarkable historical density”.

The corrections in the paragraphs concern the mistype of a word on page 341.

The wrong text is the following:

“The shape of the forts from the last period, particularly the Verle fort, is remember some of the sketches by Erich Mendelsohn, one of the founding fathers of Expressionist architecture”.

Therefore, the correct paragraph is the following:

“The shape of the forts from the last period, particularly the Verle fort, recalls some of the sketches by Erich Mendelsohn, one of the founding fathers of Expressionist architecture”.

The editorial team apologizes with the author and the readers for the inconvenience.



CC BY 4.0
https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/21633 | ISSN 2611-0075
Copyright © 2024 Paolo Bortot