

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.

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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 Bologna² the author outlines the strengths and difficulties of the city that, in the mid-fifties, was full of construction sites³ 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 Naples⁴ 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



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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 Bucchini 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 Mendiuni, *L’autostrada del sole* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1999), 43, 51-52; Luciano Righetti, *L’autostrada appenninica Bologna-Firenze* (Bologna: Costa, 2010), 33-34.

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).

Giuseppe Dozza (1901-1974), with the painter Giorgio Morandi (1890-1964), with the rector of the *Alma Mater 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 demagoguery, 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 – Giovanni 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 Piovone, *Viaggio in Italia*, 224 (translated by the author).

6 Piovone, *Viaggio in Italia*, 224 (translated by the author).

Year's Eve 1968⁷ 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 area⁹ 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: Gribaudo, 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've 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 the 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 1955¹⁴, 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 Expanding 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 (sociologists¹⁵, 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 community¹⁶. 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 Polytechnic¹⁷, 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 role¹⁸. 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 Vällingby¹⁹ 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.



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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 reviews²⁴ 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 chiesa* (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 Barchigiani 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.



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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



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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 Zacchioli, 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 centers³¹ 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 Zacchioli, 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



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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.

Fig. 5
Giorgio Bozzato, Luciano Lullini, Giorgio Trebbi, Enzo Zacchioli, 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).

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 Vincenzo 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 Renovação 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 Publicación del Movimiento 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 Bologna⁴⁴ 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

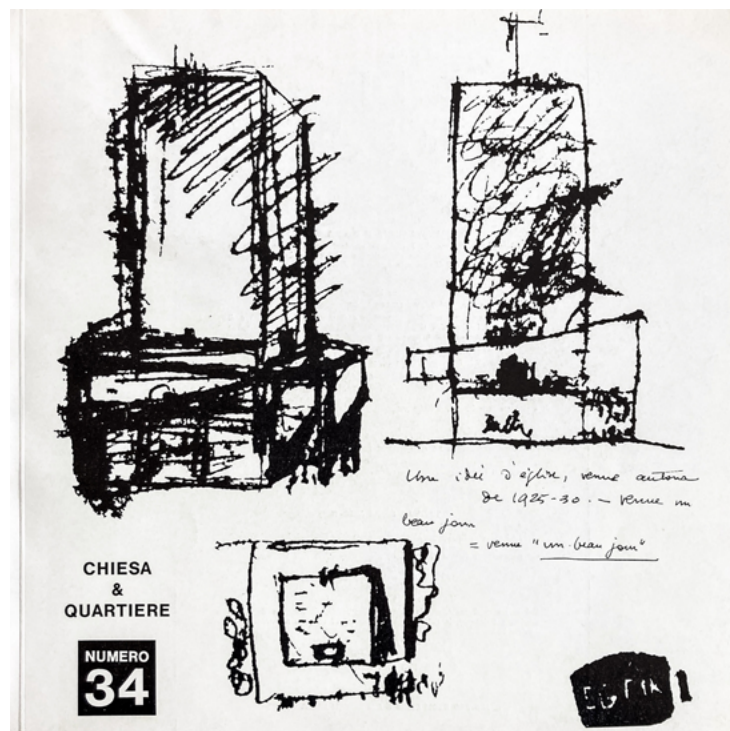
40 See: Alberto Pedrazzini, “Aspetti locali della vicenda post bellica bolognese. Dall’emergenza alla ricerca della costruzione di una città per l’uomo,” *Mélanges de l’école française de Rome*, vol. 115, no. 2 (2003): 485-509; Enrico Galeotti, “Dossetti, il libro bianco e il decentramento,” in *Le orme 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. Quarterly of the Catholic Art Association*; *Kunst und Kirche*; *Ökumenische Zeitschrift für Architektur*; *L’art d’église*; *Revue des arts religieux et liturgiques*; *Christliche Kunstblätter*; *Schweizerisches Jahrbuch für christliche Kunst*; *Art Chrétien* *Revue française des chantiers d’Eglise* 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; Nicola 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.



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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 Vincenzo 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.



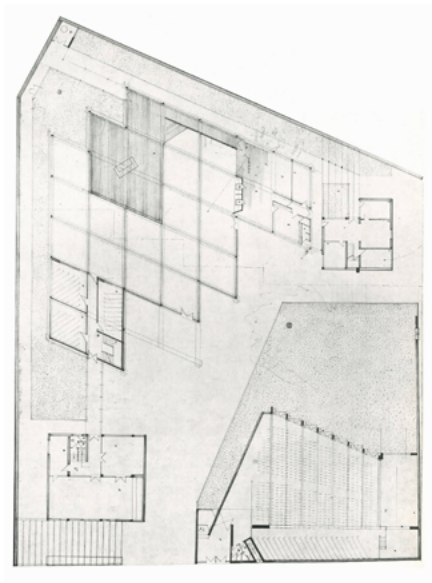
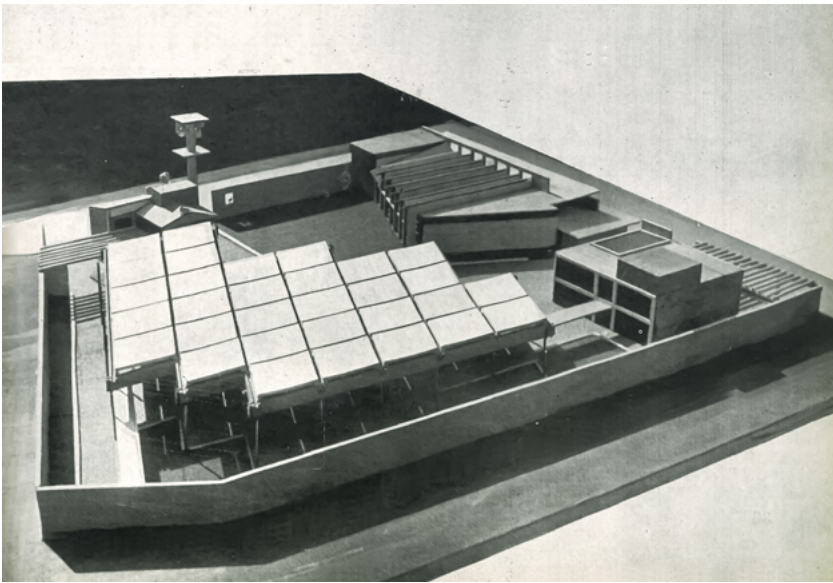
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Goffredo Boschetti, the San Giuseppe al Cottolengo by the architect Mario Federico Roggero, Sant'Andrea della Barca by the architect Vittorio Gandolfi, San Pio X by the architect Giorgio Trebbi, San Giovanni Battista in Casalecchio di Reno by the architect Melchiorre Bega, San Giovanni Bosco by the architect Giuseppe Vaccaro, Santa Croce again in Casalecchio Di Reno by the architect Enzo Zaccchioli 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 Gresleri⁴⁹ 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.



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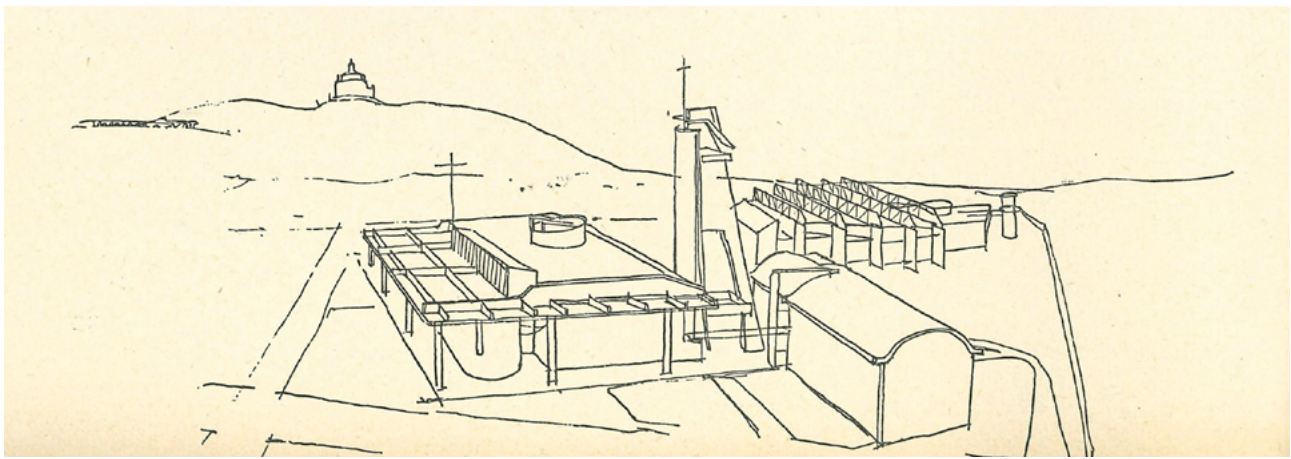
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Chiese certainly somehow made clear to the individual architects. It is therefore possible to clearly verify what we could define as some invariants common to the three churches such as for example the need to include in the project, in addition to 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

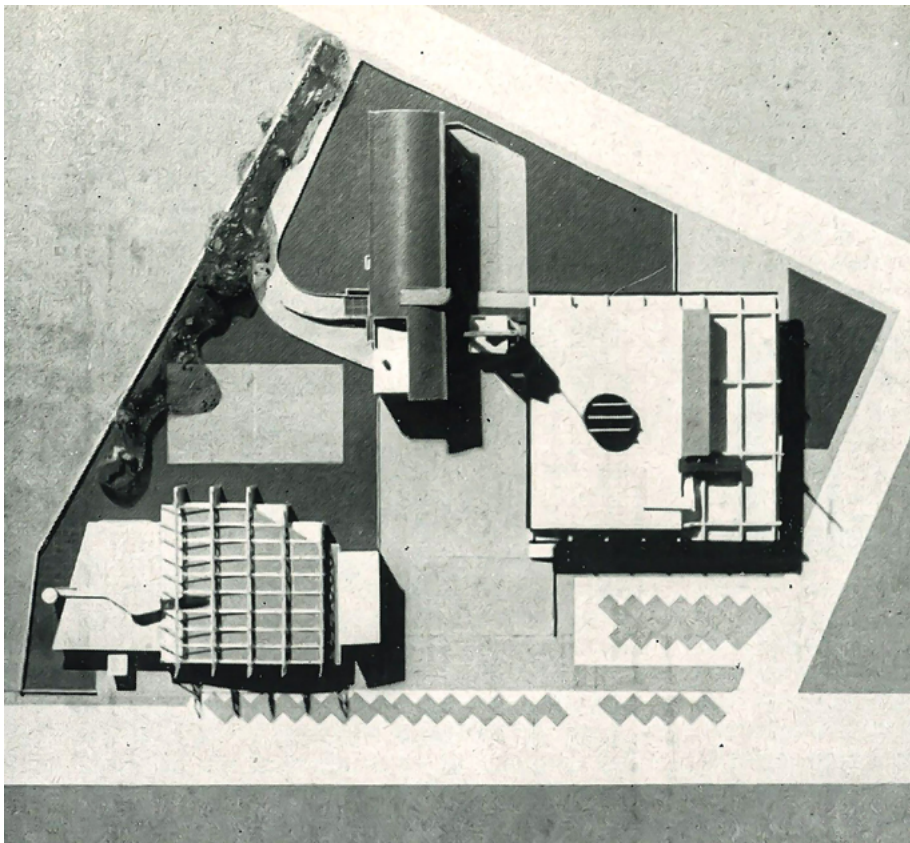
50 The names of the churches were often indicated for simplicity by the technicians of the Ufficio Nuove Chiese with acronyms, a practice that the designers also followed to some extent, as the graphic tables and reports attached to the project show.

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).



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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).



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 delle nostre chiese nuove," *Chiesa e quartiere*, no. 3 (September 1957): 27-30.



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

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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.

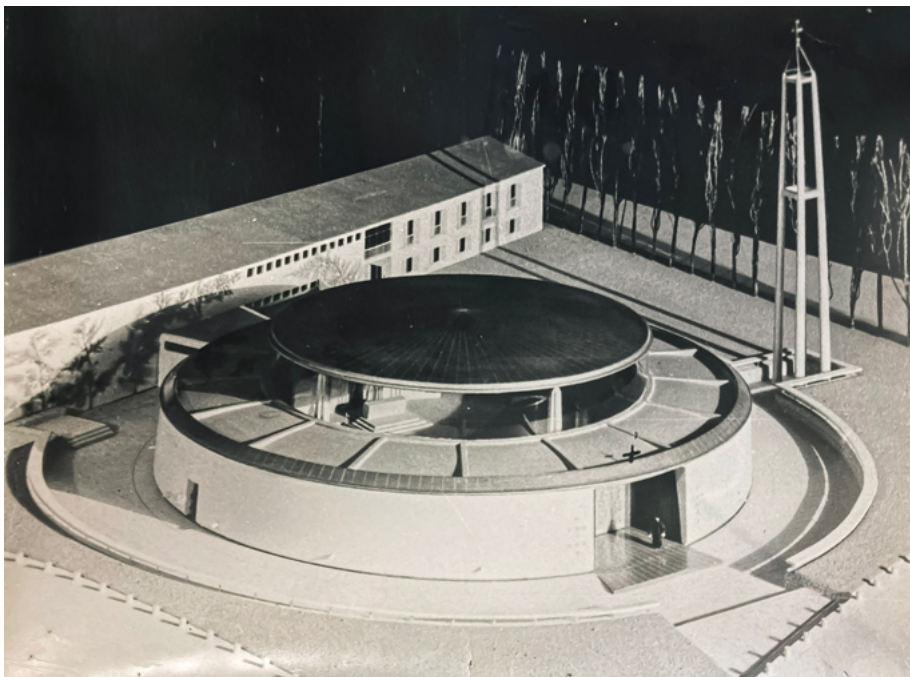
56 Battelli, *Il Cardinale e la città*, 402.

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).



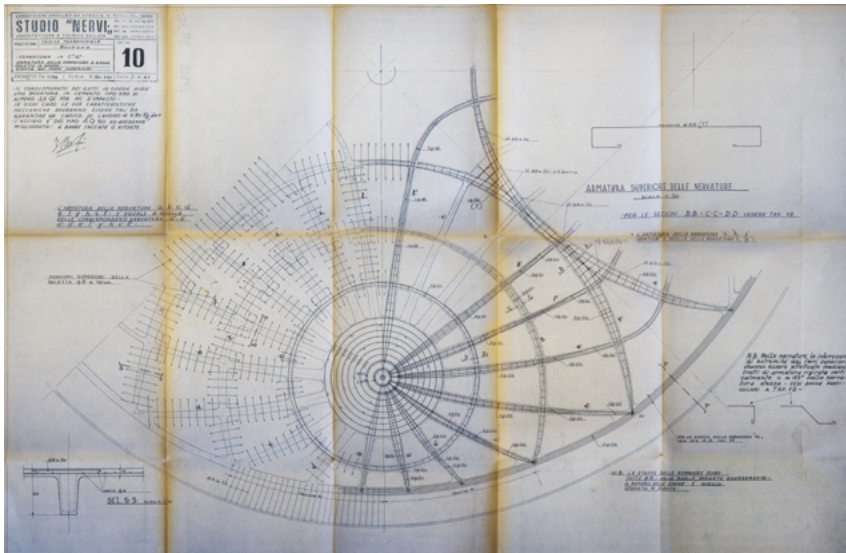
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Catholic centrists close to Lercaro in those months found further unity of purpose in particular with respect to the complex international situation with particular reference to the worsening of the conflict in Vietnam following the direct entry of 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

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).

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.



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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.



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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.

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