

A LEAP OF FAITH

*Towards Churches as
Spaces of Alternative Value and Resistance*

Maria Beatrice Fenoglio

Enoncé Théorique

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First Advisor Professor: Charlotte Malterre-Barthes

EPFL Mentor: Kathlyn R Kao

Second Professor: James Binning

“Si difende cio’ che si ama, si ama cio’ che si conosce.”

“One stands up for what one loves, one loves what one knows.”

Giulia Maria Crespi

INDEX

1. INTRODUCTION

2. DESACRALIZATION

2.1 The Silent Decline of Faith

3. SACRED OMNIPRESENCE

3.1 The Roots of the Church in Italian Context

3.2 Behind the Facade

4. SACRED SPACES THROUGH TIME

4.1 From Private Worship to Monumental Structures

4.2 From the 'Sacrum' to the Divine

4.3 From Issue to Opportunity

5. REDEFINING THE SACRED

Case Studies of Interventions and Failures in Churches

5.1 DRASTIC

A. The Lucas condominium, Boston

B. St. Sebastian Kindertagesstätte, Munster

5.2 MANY

A. Selexyz Dominicanen Bookstore, Maastricht

B. St John a Waterloo, London

5.3 MODERATE

A. St Simon's Episcopal Church, Miami

B. St. Michaelis Church, Neustadt am Rennsteig

5.4 FEW

A. Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Brussels

B. Volumnia Church of Saint Agostino, Piacenza

5.5 MINIMUM

A. Basilica of St. Francis, Assisi

B. Alicia Salemi Square, Trapani

5.6 ZERO

A. St. Charles, Macconago

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 A process of horizontal construction and deconstruction

1. INTRODUCTION

*T*his enoncé aims to highlight the changing role of religion and its buildings in contemporary times to evaluate their image and management critically. Starting from the observation that more and more churches in Italy are undergoing processes of desacralization, the research argues this phenomenon may be an opportunity to restore the meaning of sacredness and delineate the new position of these buildings in cities.

Through an interdisciplinary methodological approach encompassing legal, political, economic, and social aspects, this work explores how the Church – as an institution and building type – confronts issues of hierarchy, cultural violence, and social injustice. In particular, attention will be drawn to the building's potential and responsibility to be designated as a sanctuary: a space of gathering, refuge, and potentially, resistance to mercantile and capitalist mechanisms. The building will be the starting point to deconstruct the ecclesiastical institution and its sanctity imposed from above, in order to build a horizontal sacredness made of fragility, care, participation, bonds and new values between the past and the future.

Eleven case studies, classified according to the level of intervention on the building, are conducted to understand what alternative value can be created through physical transformations and changes in meaning and use, without succumbing to capitalist ventures.



2. *DESACRALIZATION*

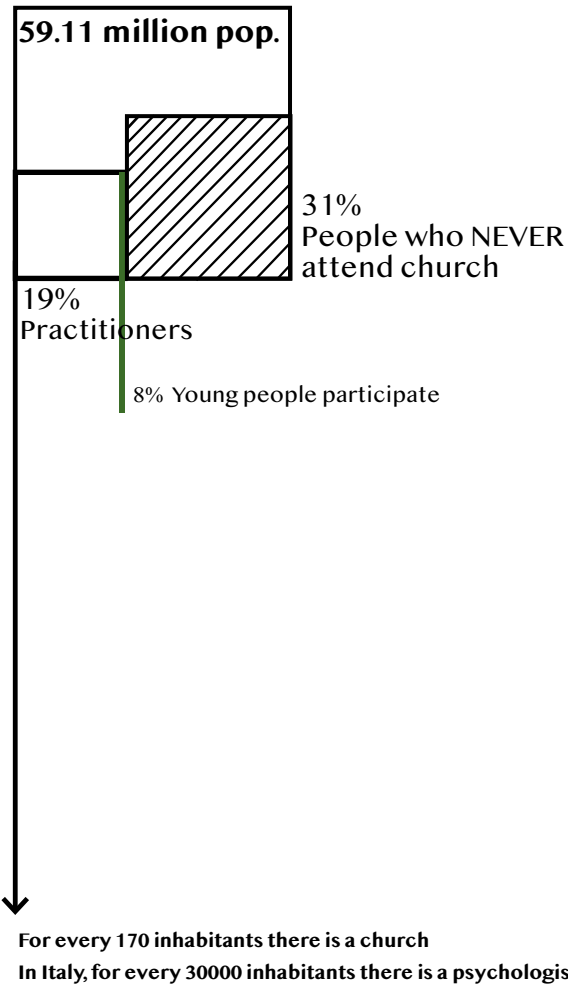
2.1 The Silent Decline of Faith

*I*t started when, some years ago, the church had begun to close its doors a few days of the week, gradually decreasing hours of operation until it remained closed most of the time. Today, four diocese priests come dressed to celebrate the last mass before the church's deconsecration and 'death'.¹

The few remaining faithful have gathered in the main nave, occupying just a few, very few seats on the long benches. They are here to express their sorrow, facing the altar from which the bishop displays the sacred objects for the last time. One by one, these are solemnly carried outside through the main door. The procession of these objects symbolizes the passage of the last presence of Catholic sanctity in those spaces, only to abandon them. The bishop is the last to leave the church, closing the doors of the building and ending the Catholic life of the church, leaving silence behind.



ITALIAN POPULATION



2. DESACRALIZATION

2.1 A ritual that reveals the Silent Decline of Faith

The desacralization is a moment of closure for a long delay of imminent 'death' from a decrease of use. In fact, nowadays, an average church is used 8-10 hours a week.² Thus, an active church is only fully utilized for two months of the year, a number that is falling sharply across Europe.³

In Italy, specifically, the number of believers and priests decreases at a higher rate per year compared to the whole of Europe.⁴ Parishes will merge, and several churches will end up with the same pastor. In some cases, the costs of maintaining the structures become unsustainable without the support of congregant offerings, signaling the weakness of religious communities. Despite the most innovative recent church policies, the religious community still struggles to recognise and address the crisis of faith.⁵ The sacred building, fragile and empty, represents tangible evidence of failure and must be distinguished from the solid, secular image of the church institution through deconsecration.

Another strategy adopted by the Vatican is to consider the church not as the 'house of the faithful' but as the 'house of God'.⁶ This allows to explain the desacralization by a departure of God rather than facing their failure to sustain the community that adheres to Christian Values. In this way, the decline of faith remains silent. The structures are often sold, converted, or demolished by private individuals or abandoned. Currently, the number of churches in Italy is disproportionate to the number of believers: there is one church for every 170 believers. Compared to the mental health emergency in Italy, there is one psychologist for every 30,000 inhabitants. The number of practicing believers decreases by 1% annually and currently represents 19% of the population. This data is self-explanatory, but articles fail to mention that 31% of the Italian population does not wish to set foot in churches.⁷ Young people in particular no longer identify with sacred buildings, as they are closely linked to Catholic values.⁸ By not frequenting them, they do not know them and no longer identify with them, leaving these buildings uncared for and victims of neglect. As the Italian entrepreneur and founder of the FAI,⁹ Giulia Maria Crespi, was fond of repeating,

“One stands up for what one loves, one loves what one knows.”

Therefore, this research will attempt to identify how inclusive and 'horizontal' social participation in these structures can take shape in a complex landscape such as the Italian one.

PROPERTIES OF THE CHURCH

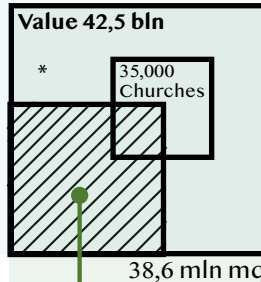
Value 2000 bln

* Chapels,
Oratories,
Colleges,
Boarding schools,
Shelters,
Orphanages,
Hospices,
Convents,
Seminaries,
Hotels for 'pilgrims',
Lands
Rented dwellings

Churches

Outside Italy

REAL ESTATE IN ITALY



600-700
Converted Churches

30,000
Private Churches

PROPERTIES OF THE STATE

Value 120,6 bln

40 mln mq

INSURANCE REAL ESTATE

Value 120,6 bln

2,1 mln mq

30-40% empty or underused
40% are in a poor state of maintenance

3. SACRED OMNIPRESENCE

3.1 The Roots of the Church in Italian Context

The connection of the building type with religion, conservative ideology, and its complicated past diminishes the potential usability of these spaces. But if questioned and rethought, churches offer a spatial network to reconnect with their original public essence. The Church's presence on the territory has lasted for millennia, permeating European culture and taking deep roots on many levels. With a partial, limited and not exhaustive analysis – which will provide an overview of territorial, cultural, political, legal and social spheres – this work seeks to unveil the imposition of an image of Catholicism and the verticality of its institution.

Territorial sphere:

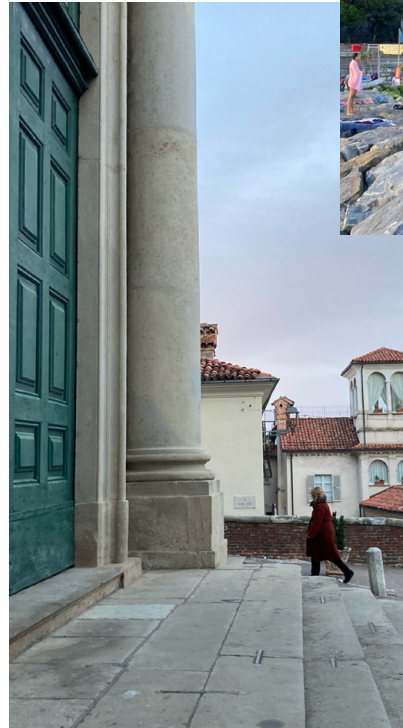
In Italy alone, the Vatican State owns 38.6 million square meters of religious architecture and land, which is 20% of all Italian real estate.¹⁰ From shrines and oratories to seminaries and churches, the Vatican's 46,000 properties closely tied to Catholic values have drastically influenced the territory, altering the urban planning of inhabited centers and shaping their experience. The Church is omnipresent. Even if one tries to avoid it, walking through the city is impossible without encountering a bell tower or a religious façade.¹¹ Regardless of their sacralized or desacralized state, the architectures impose the weight and power of an entrenched hegemony that has educated and changed society for centuries. As architectural theorist Keller Easterling argues when discussing the relationship between space design and power dynamics,

“These spaces aspire to be worlds unto themselves, self-reflexive and innocent of politics. But these enclaves can become political pawns and objects of contention.”¹²

Architecture can be seen as political masks that either conceal or reveal intricate power structures, subtly shaping everyday life, politics, and the economy.



SPOT THE CHURCH



3. SACRED OMNIPRESENCE

3.1 The Roots of the Church in Italian Context

Cultural sphere:

A significant portion of the medieval and modern artistic heritage was commissioned by the Vatican and is currently preserved in churches. The union of art and faith has generated and shaped the concept of beauty throughout European history, resulting in masterpieces untouched by secular criticisms. Artists such as Giotto, Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian, and the Mannerists of the 16th century dedicated themselves to interpreting Christian doctrine to convey the 'right values' to the illiterate population. As researcher and academic Clara Green, investigating the division between sacred and profane, claims:

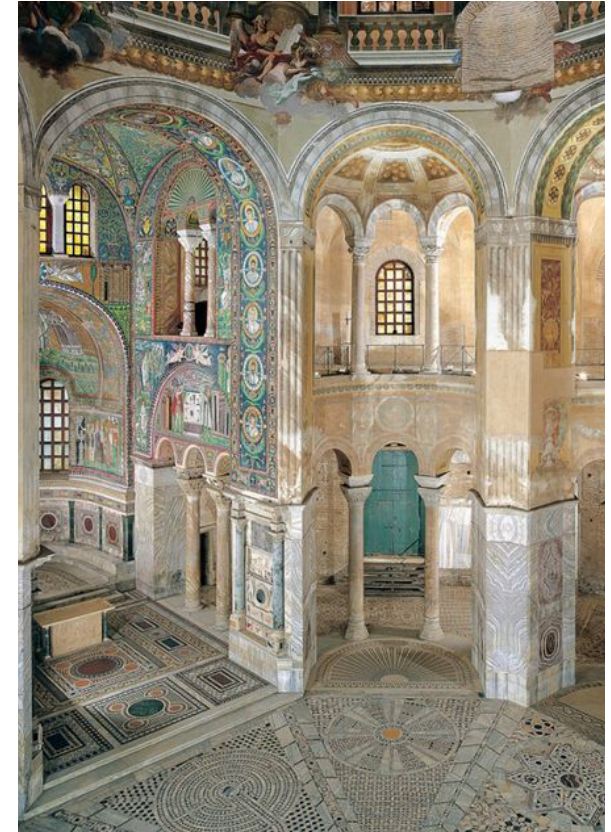
“The sacred is not an essential quality, is a matter of human agency and articulation”¹³

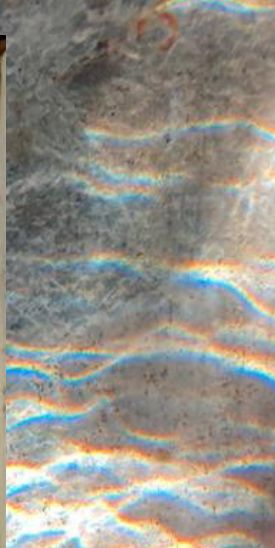
The aesthetics created carry the values carefully discussed and selected in advance by the clergy. Through scriptures, frescoes, sculptures, and paintings displayed in sacred structures, the Church has educated for centuries on morality and sanctity, leaving an indelible mark on cultural history.¹⁴



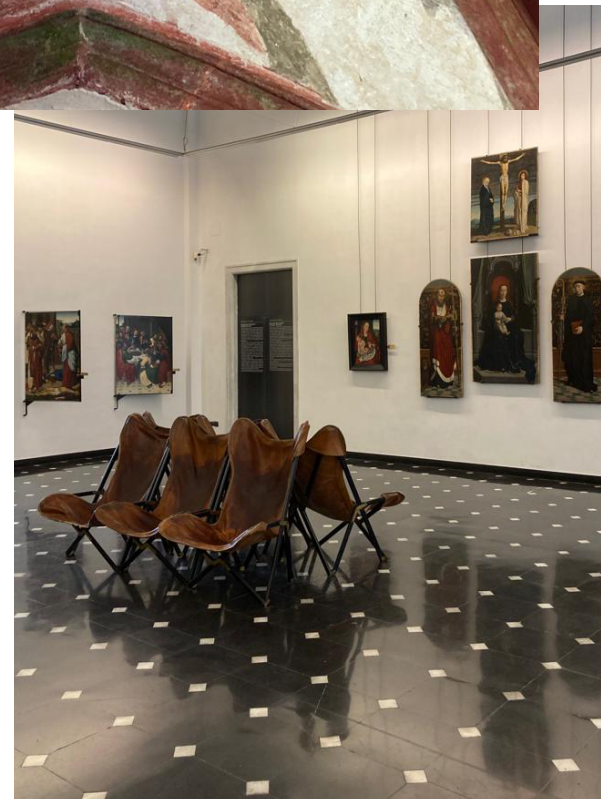


SACRED ART
A CULTURAL AESTHETIC





SACRED ART IN THE MULTIPLE CULTURAL CONTEXTS OF THE CHURCH



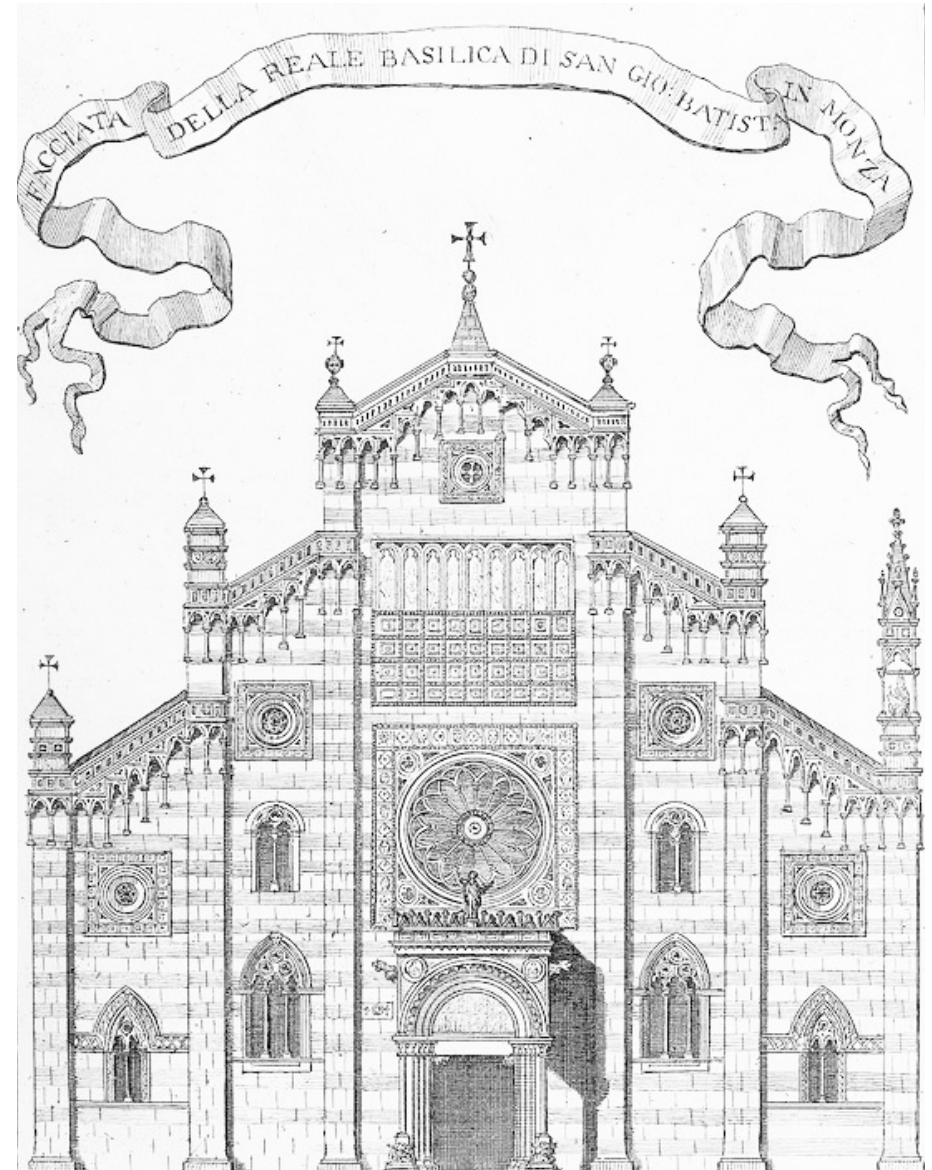
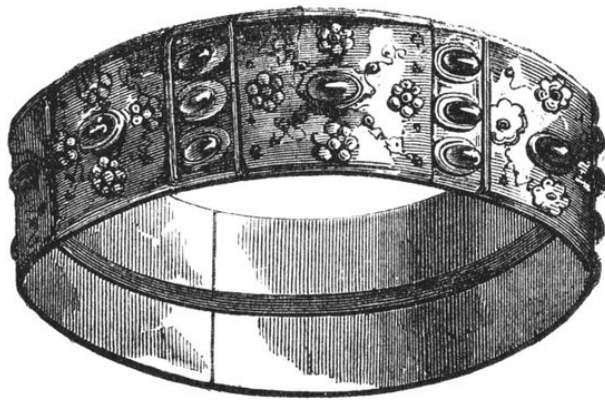
3. SACRED OMNIPRESENCE

3.1 The Roots of the Church in Italian Context

Political sphere:

The definition of sacredness and its aesthetics has been the shared instrument of power between State and Church for a long time, giving each other divine legitimacy and political influence. The Iron Crown is one of the symbols of this collaboration. Preserved in the Monza Cathedral, it was essential for anyone aspiring to be proclaimed the king of Italy. The ancient diadem of Constantine conceals a relic of Christ and imparts ecclesiastical blessing to the sovereigns who wore it, including Charlemagne, Frederick Barbarossa, Charles V, and Napoleon.¹⁵

As of today, the intertwining of Catholicism and politics persists, albeit with new dynamics compared to the past. Figures of Catholic background, such as Monti, Letta, and Renzi, hold key roles in the current alternating governments in Italy. Despite their selection being based rather on skills than religious affiliation, Catholic culture and education continues to play a crucial role in positions of responsibility.¹⁶ Within the same territory, the Italian state coexists with the Holy See who has parallel politics and has an international influence.¹⁷



3. SACRED OMNIPRESENCE

3.1 The Roots of the Church in Italian Context

Legal sphere:

The influence of the Church has not been limited to the public sphere but gradually infiltrated into the private lives of individuals, affecting various aspects, including marriage. For instance, in the first millennium of Catholicism, the union was left to the good sense of the faithful; only later did the importance of its monitoring become apparent, and thus, from the 12th century, marriage became a sacrament.¹⁸

Officially instituted to prevent unions among relatives, a statute was drawn up to define the extent to which marriage was prohibited. Only male ancestors from whom lands and titles were inherited were taken into consideration. The effect was the valorisation of male procreation, and therefore, through laws and customs, downplaying the importance of women.¹⁹



3. SACRED OMNIPRESENCE

3.1 The Roots of the Church in Italian Context

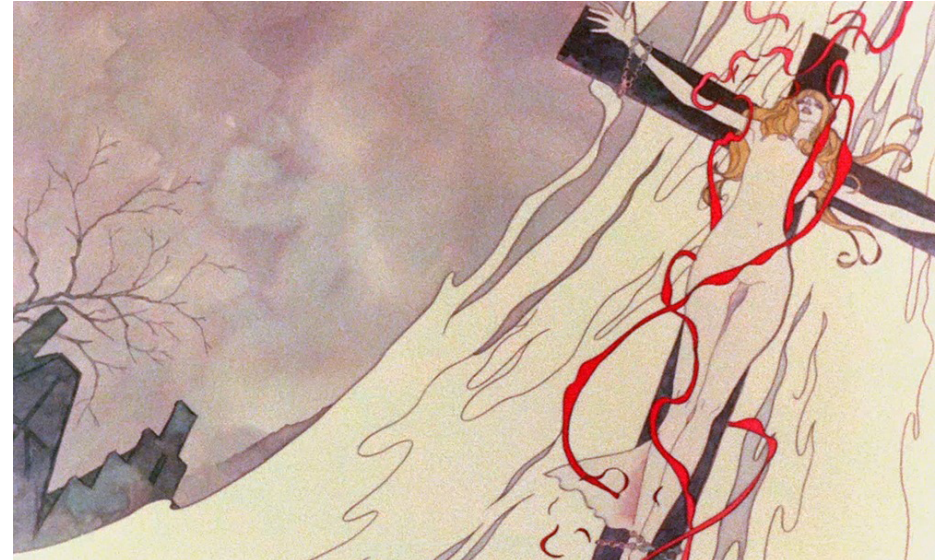
Social sphere:

In the process of reinforcing the separation between the Sacred and the Profane, women have played a crucial role, becoming one of the primary targets of Catholic morality. In the 15th century, a series of religious treatises, such as the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486), were published, increasingly shaping the concept of sin and degrading female sexuality and pleasure as demonic forces.

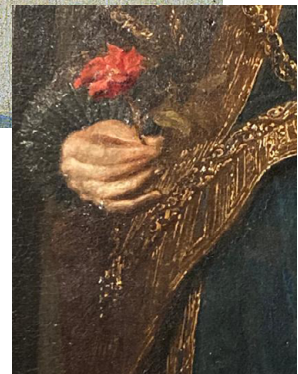
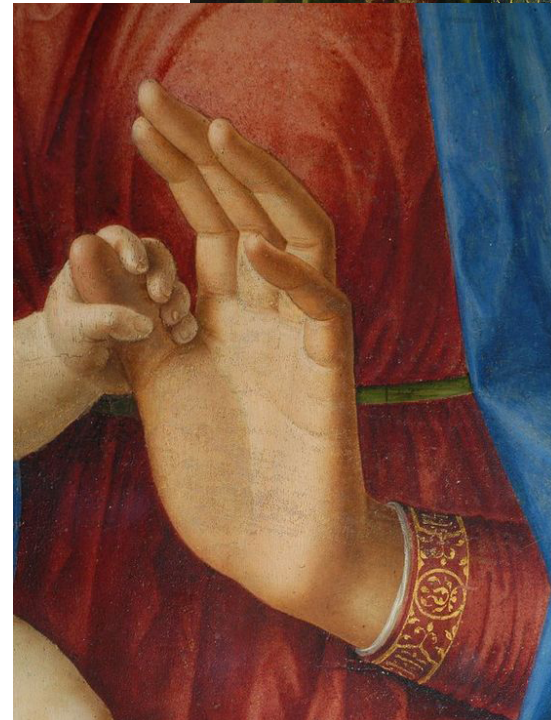
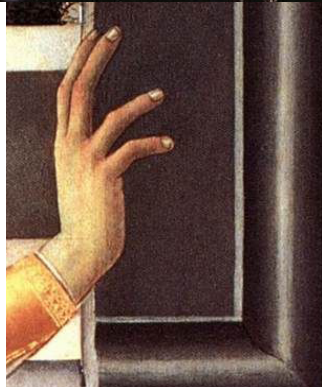
“Never in history have women been subjected to such a massive assault on their bodies, organized internationally, legally sanctioned, and religiously blessed... The witch hunt has produced a model of a desexualized, obedient, submissive woman, resigned to subordination to the male world, forced to accept as natural being relegated to a sphere of activity that was economically devalued in capitalism.”²⁰

Silvia Federici

The witch hunt during the enclosure era was an epochal event that deprived women of their social power and confined them with terror to a position from which they have not yet fully liberated themselves. The division between man (sacred) and woman (profane) is still considered fundamental by the Vatican today, influencing the choices of a secular government like the Italian one on gender inclusion and the right to abortion.²¹



WHAT DO THE HANDS OF
WOMEN OF THE PAST SAY?



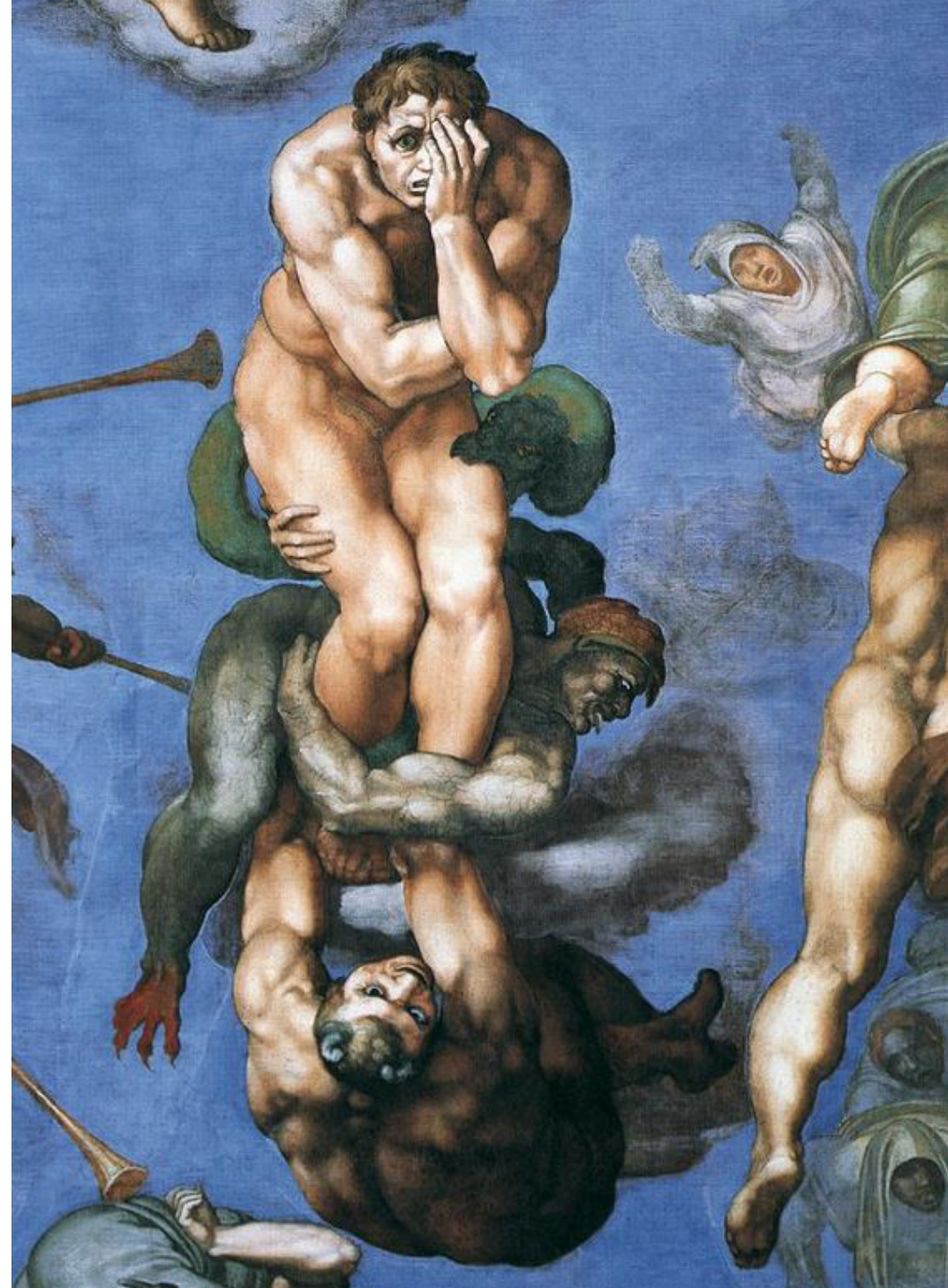
3. SACRED OMNIPRESENCE

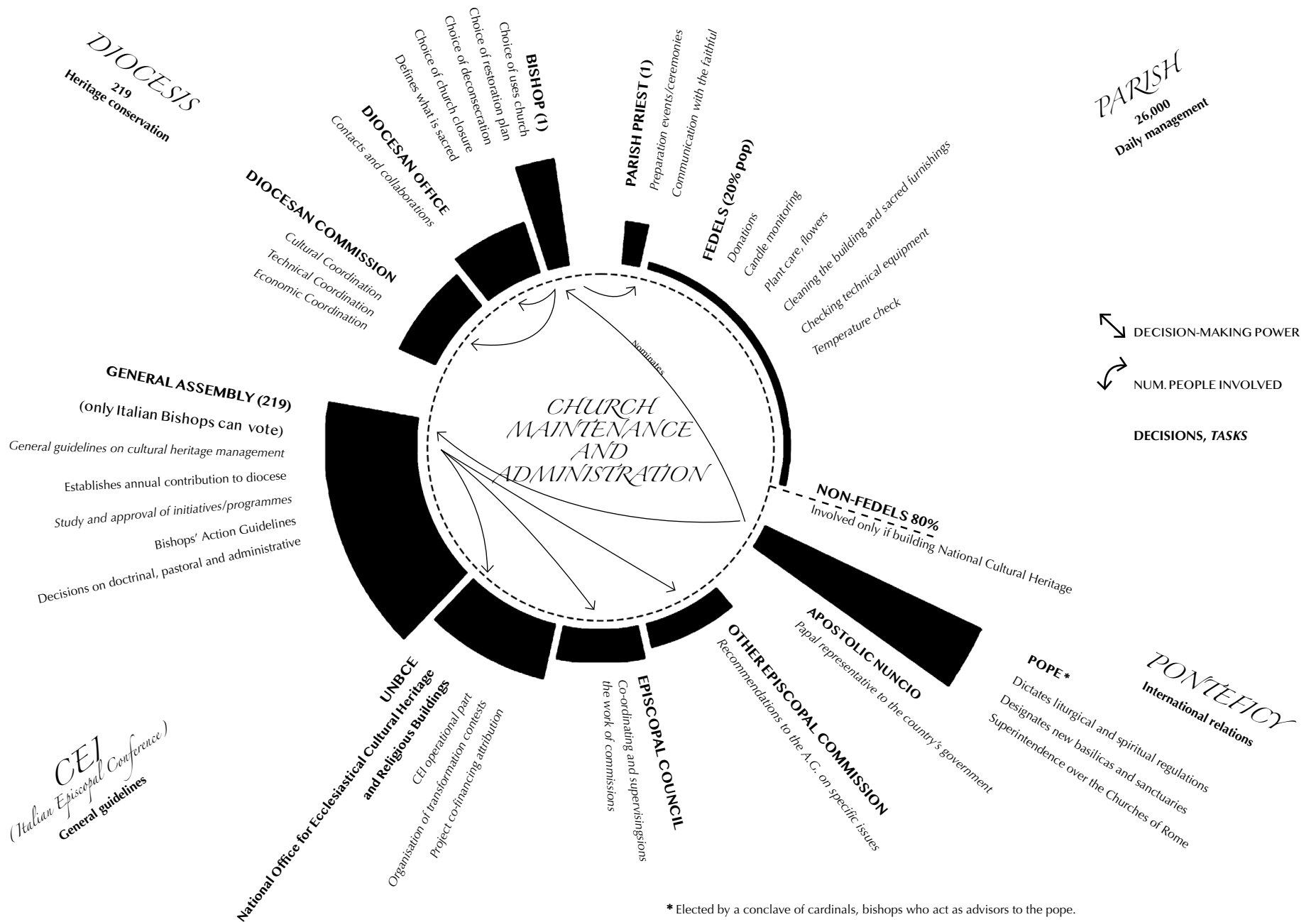
3.2 Behind the Facade

The omnipresence of the Church in the territorial and cultural sphere, both public and individual, has allowed the imposition of a moral, male-centric, and capitalist power in the form of the purity and beauty of the Sacred.

Behind the innocent religious facades lies a patriarchal hierarchy that today is still perfectly-recognized and accepted by other states. The structure silences women, atheists, and even its followers, who have no decision-making power in the administration of ecclesiastical assets despite being their main supporters. There is a need to unpack the layers of ecclesiastical power and silenced voices, starting with sacred spaces.

Churches serve as the link between decision-making power and people, between the Sacred and the Profane. Here, the consequences of the politics of a declining institution that increases the difficulties and challenges emerge, though there is potential for change. These are buildings designed to be visible in the physical and moral landscape of the inhabitants. To begin a restorative politics, their visibility can be harnessed, and a sacredness reestablishes that could provide horizontal social participation.





* Elected by a conclave of cardinals, bishops who act as advisors to the pope.

4. SACRED SPACES THROUGH TIME

4.1 From Private Worship to Monumental Structures

According to Canon Law, a church is “a sacred building dedicated to divine worship for the use of all the faithful and the public exercise of religion”.²² In other words, the Vatican institution provides a suitable building in which the faithful can gather to offer the Sacrifice of the Mass or other liturgical services protected from wind, rain, snow, frost, heat or extreme sunlight. The church’s main purpose is to protect the worshippers and objects used in worship.²³

In the early stages of Christianity, no buildings were specifically intended for public worship. Assemblies of the faithful to celebrate the Eucharist took place in private homes. It was not until the 2nd century that the term ‘Domus Ecclesiae’ (church house) appeared, indicating a building used for all the services of the Christian community in a city, with a space dedicated to worship.

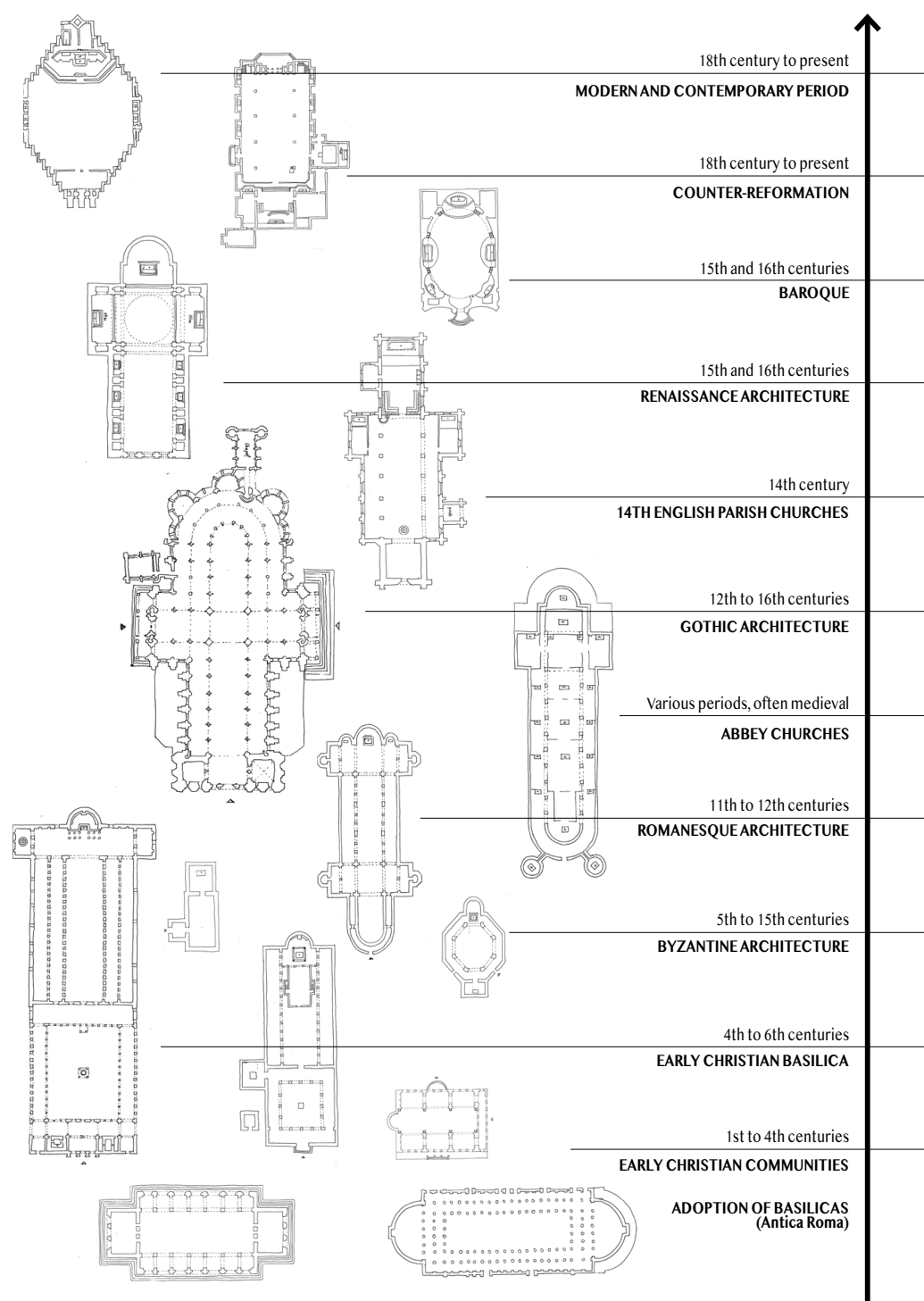
The model used was that of the ancient Roman basilica, a civil architecture capable of accommodating several people and events, such as a place of assembly, a courtroom or a marketplace. The term ‘basilica’ is derived from the Greek ‘basileus,’ meaning ‘king’ or ‘royal,’ indicating the importance of these buildings.

The inherent public nature of the church’s plan gradually becomes a space in which the sacred dimension is emphasized by the architectural space and the objects rather than by the union of people. The appearance of the altar in the Byzantine era, the search for verticality in the Gothic era, Renaissance richness, Baroque theatricality and the challenge of new materials in the modern era formulate the mainstream image of ‘sacred space’ today. The sacredness depends on the majesty of the space, the presence of certain objects and can have a collective or individual connotation.

As researcher Clara Greed points out in relation to the influence of religion on issues of gender and space,

“The sacred is not an essential quality, it is a matter of human agency and articulation. It depends on the ability of society to identify and protect particular spaces as ‘set apart’ as holy”²⁴

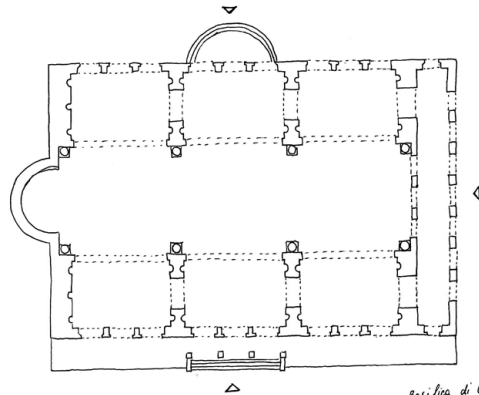
The church, moving away from its public aspect, takes on the form of only the ‘divine’ values upheld by the ecclesiastical class. The isolation of the building and the unquestionability of values cause a shift in people’s perceived meaning of sacram.



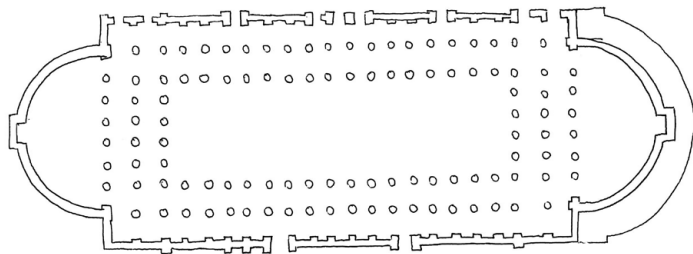
4. SACRED SPACES THROUGH TIME

4.1 From private worship to monumental structures

EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES AND BASILICAS

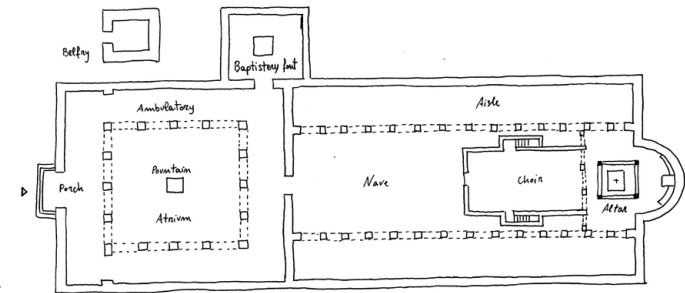


Basilica di Costantino
Roma, 308-312 d.C.

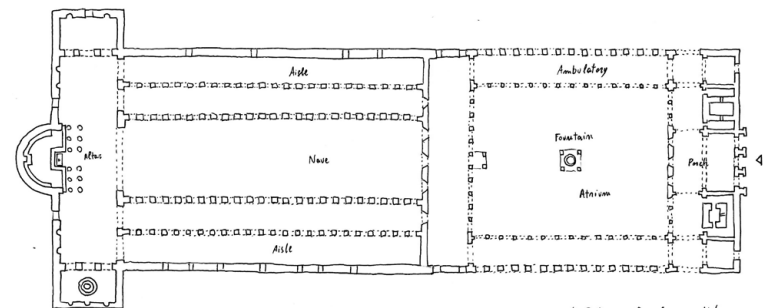


Basilica Ulpia
Roma, 112 d.C.

EARLY CHRISTIAN BASILICA

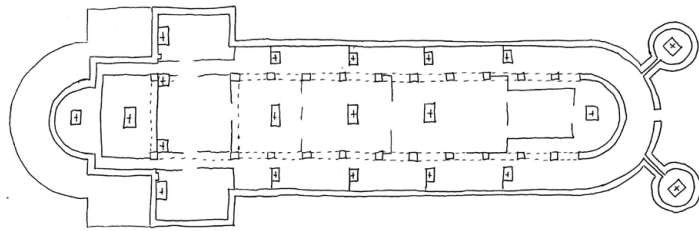


Early Christian Basilica

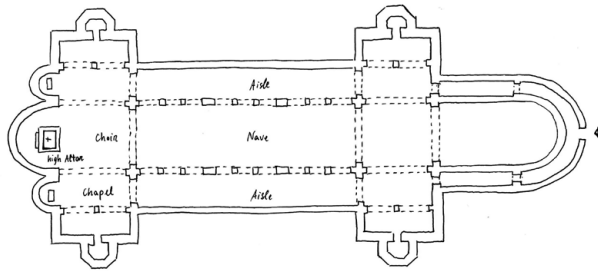


St Peter's Basilica in Vatican
Rome, 324 d.C.

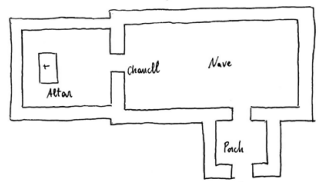
BYZANTINE, ROMANESQUE and MEDIAL ARCHITECTURE



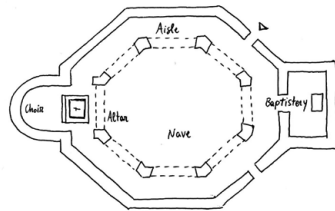
Abbey church of St. Gall
A.D. 800



German Romanesque Plan

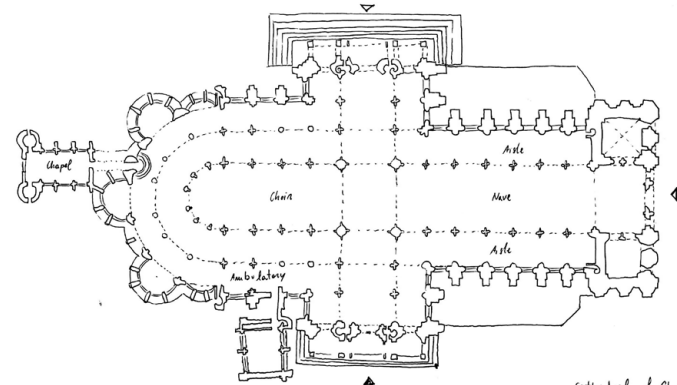


Anglo-Saxon Plan

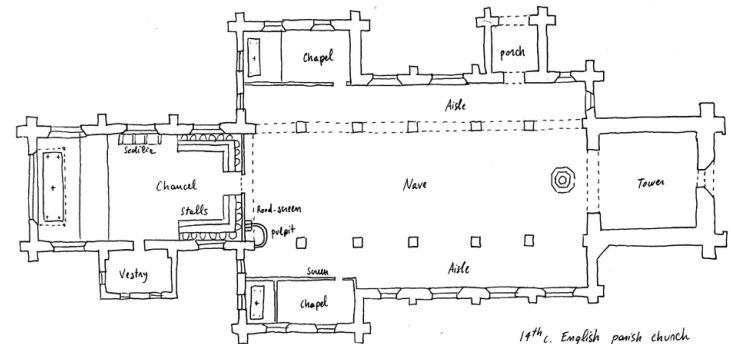


Octagonal plan
(Byzantine)

GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE

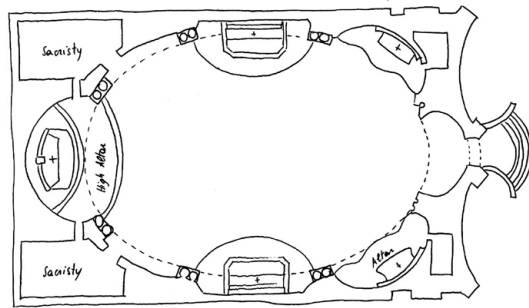


Cathedral of Chartres
Chartres, 1134-1220

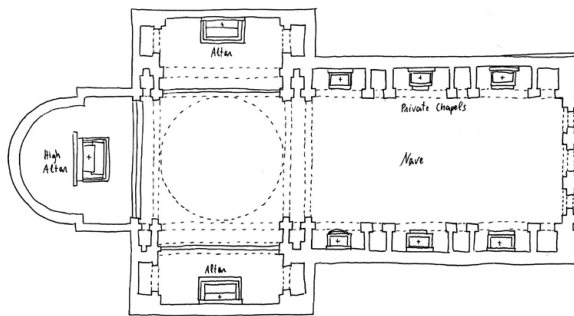


14th c. English parish church

RENAISSANCE, COUNTER-REFORMATION AND BAROQUE:

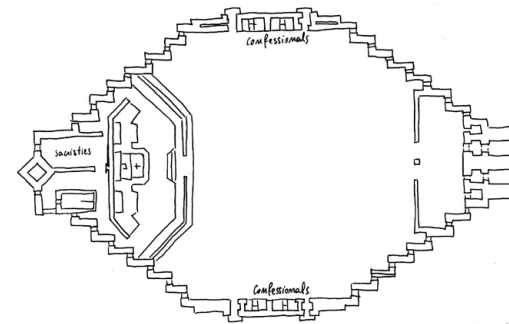


Baroque Plan

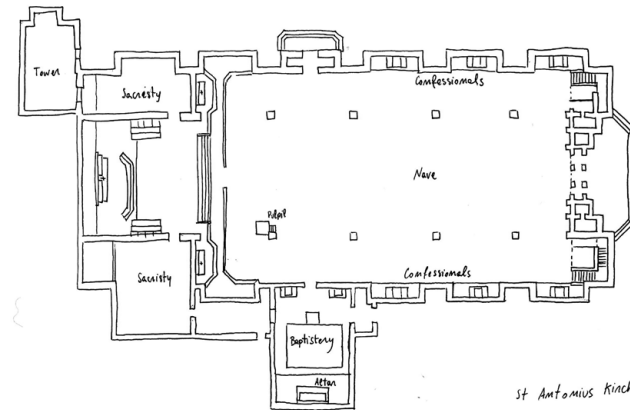


Italian Renaissance Plan

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY PERIODS:



Church of Christ The King
1926-1930 and 1936



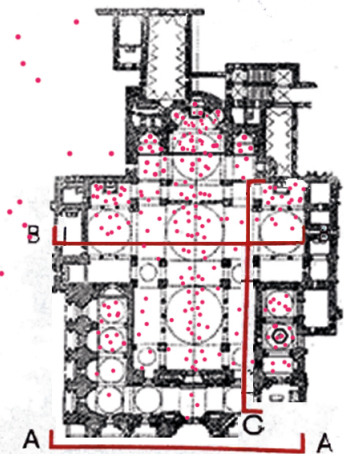
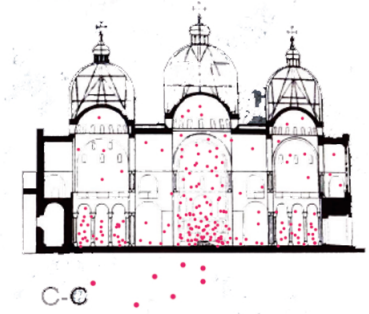
St Antonius Kirche, Basel 1927

4. SACRED SPACES THROUGH TIME

4.2 From the 'Sacrum' to the Divine

Viewed etymologically, the word sacred reveals its origins in the idea of restrictions and prohibition. In Latin, 'sacrum' refers to that which is consecrated by religion, set apart from the world and one of the main purposes was the experience of a 'different time.' The political and the sacred coincide as a stoppage or breaking of normality. The sacred, like the political, is the moment when everything that concerns human history comes to an end. The agora reveals the essential character of sacred space in ancient times: the suspension of the 'everyday' and the possibility of a space that is within the city, but totally 'other'.²⁵

Churches are the 'home of the faithful', a 'third place', where people can meet outside of work and home to strengthen social ties and create communities.²⁶ The Holy See, through regulations, has granted the Bishops in charge legislative, executive, and judicial powers, preventing the appropriation of spaces by the faithful.²⁷ They are not involved in decisions regarding space management, causing passive participation or distancing. The divine presence has filled the emptiness of human presence. The only permanent inhabitant of the churches is God, and silence confirms 'His presence.' The remaining silent worshippers go to the sacred building to establish a relationship with God (vertical), reducing social interactions with neighbors (horizontal). The sacred structures have socially and structurally crystallized, no longer changing appearance almost as if they do not want to disturb the divine presence.



4.3 From an issue to an opportunity

In the previous chapter, it has been discussed how the Church is undeniably connected to secular power issues, and how sacred structures reflect this connection. Despite that, these buildings have shown undeniable perseverance through time. In a capitalist world that continues to devour and modify 'inefficient' spaces, the church has proved to be a difficult adversary. Their management is difficult, maintenance costs are high and their structure is anything but easily commodified.²⁸ Built by leveraging the economic system, they serve as activators in a cycle of influences encompassing economic, political, cultural, and territorial aspects. Nevertheless, the values disseminated by the Vatican represent an alternative system to capitalist consumerism. If reinterpreted and expanded, the Sacred Catholic principle preserved in churches can contribute to strengthening a network of resistance against the global acceleration in the construction sector and beyond.

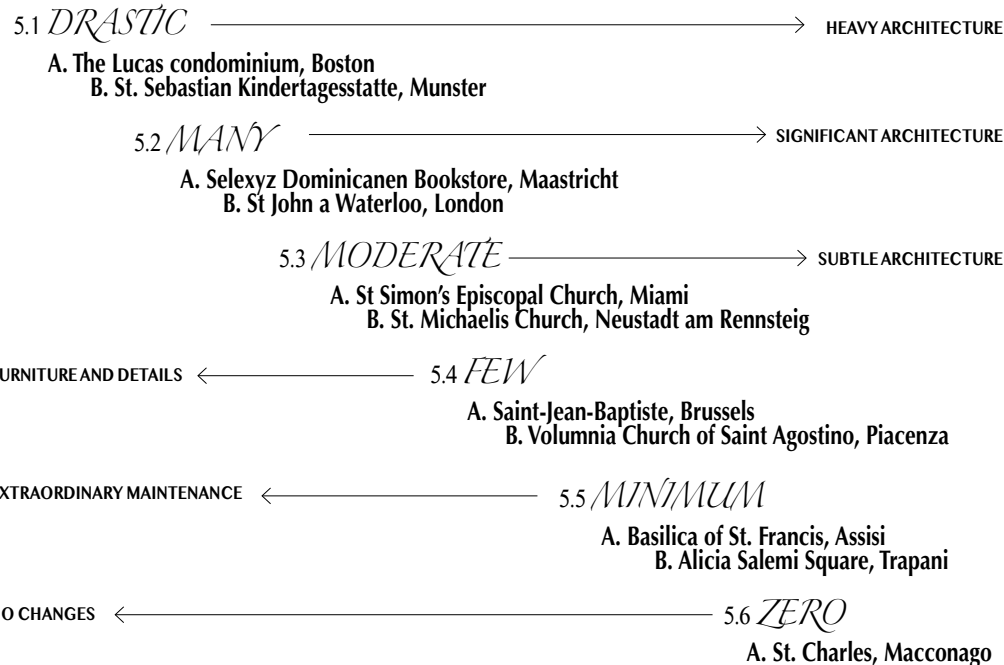
The Sanctuary model would allow churches to be transformed into refuges where diversity – social, political and economic – finds its place.²⁹ A place of worship born of popular will, where a shared sacredness is celebrated among people who have come together and created a community.

5. REDEFINING THE SACRED

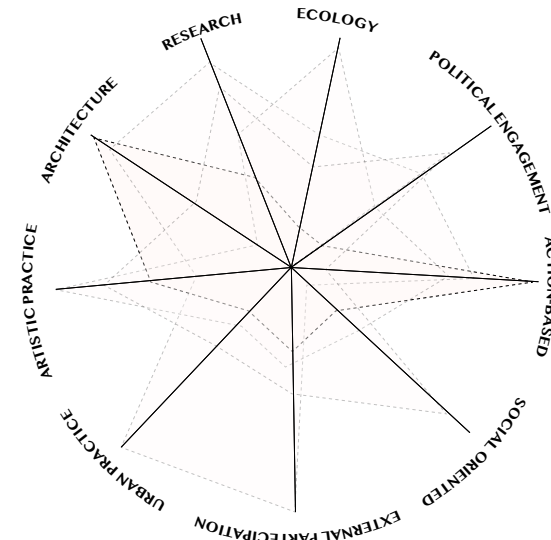
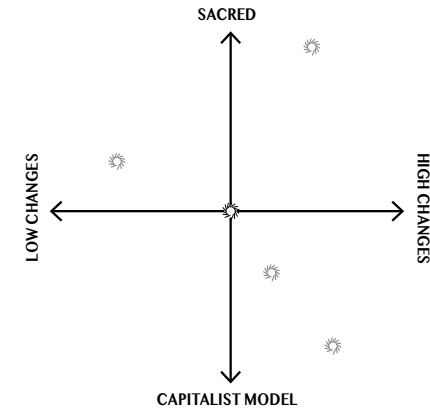
Case Studies of Interventions and Failures in Churches

Churches, similar to many obsolete buildings of the past, have witnessed various attempts at adaptive reuse in recent decades. In the pursuit of value creation, sacred structures have become more contemporary, but have found themselves in the service of capitalist productivity.³⁰

The second half of this theoretical statement é will seek to understand how changes within the architecture and management of the desacralized church can restore the building's relationship to the public - a place of community and refuge - without serving capitalist ventures. Eleven case studies of churches are organized according to six categories of level of intervention on the building:



Is it possible to create value through a change of meaning rather than a physical change?³¹



RESEARCH
 Studies done for recovery (even if not executed)

ECOLOGY
 Environmental impact of rehabilitation

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT
 Project's interest in current political issues

ACTION-BASED
 Physical interventions done for the result

SOCIAL ORIENTATION
 Developed with and for all people

EXTERNAL PARTICIPATION
 Involvement of other entities beyond owner or Vatican

URBAN PRACTICE
 Inclusion of outdoor spaces in recovery

ARTISTIC PRACTICE
 Expression of creativity of users

ARCHITECTURE
 Response to issues with traditional building architecture

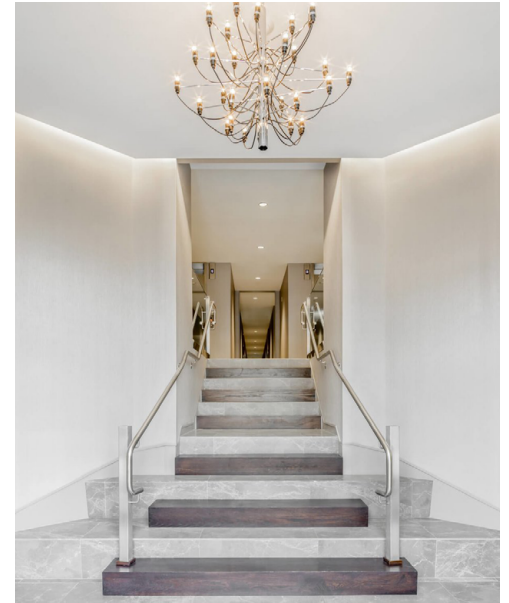
5.1 DRASTIC

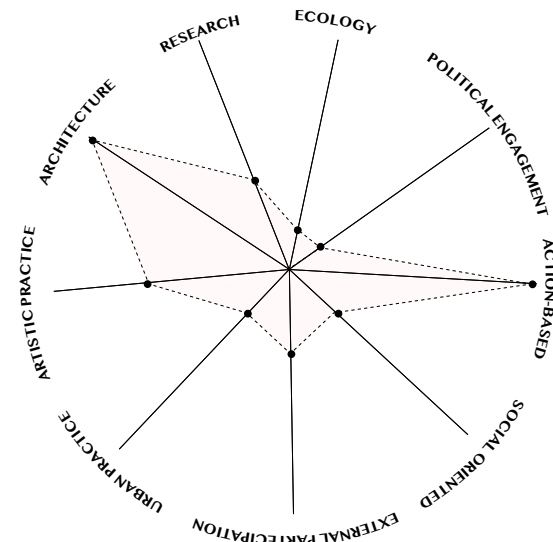
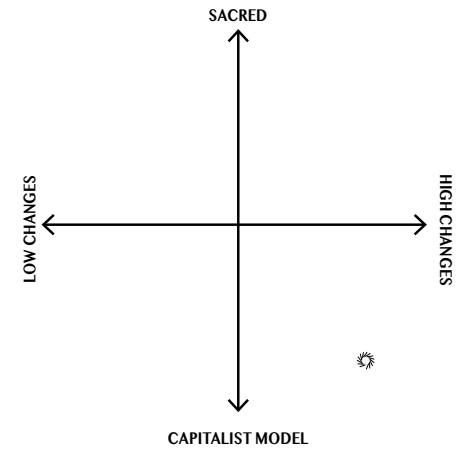
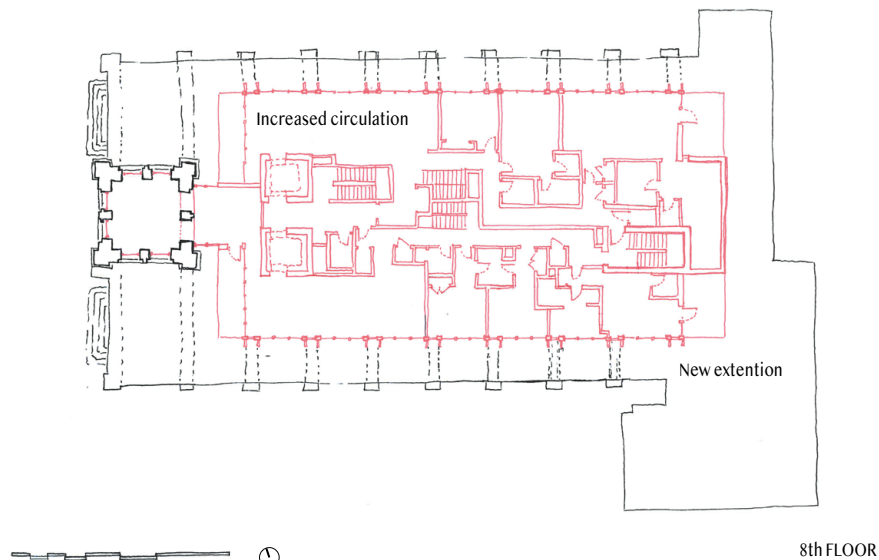
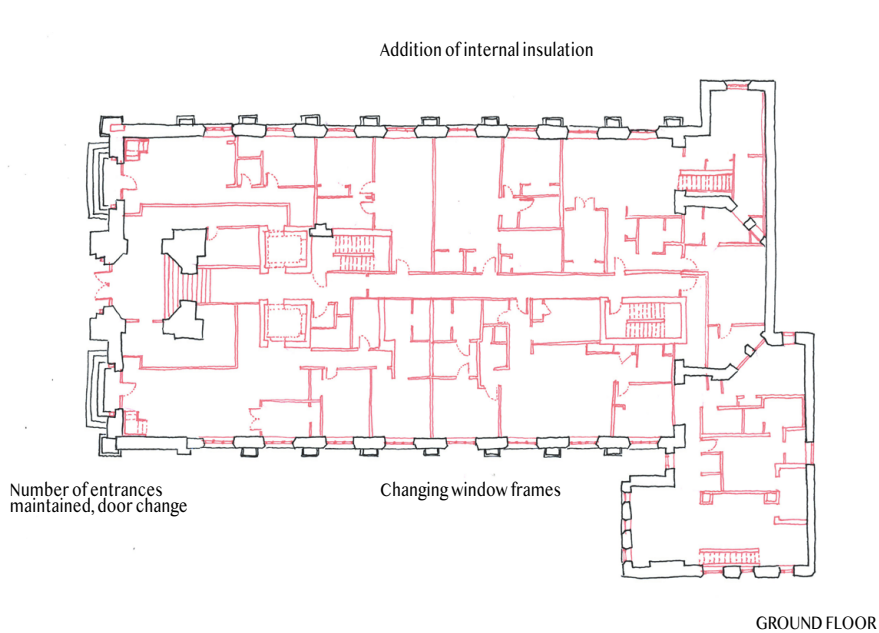
Churches are often the most imposing buildings in the neighborhood; their large size makes them challenging to manage and transform. The following case studies analyze different degrees of church intervention to fit rigid capitalist efficiency patterns in order to understand the futility of excess actions. The latter are undertaken to persist over time, condemning the building to be a victim once again in the future and to fail.

A. The Lucas condominium, Boston

Left unused for years, the desacralized German Trinity Catholic Church (19th century), was purchased and transformed into an 8-story luxury condominium by the company 'New Boston Ventures.' At the time of purchase, the church's conditions were such that only a major entrepreneur had the portfolio to fund the church's restoration. Since 2017, the former church has been offering 33 units of ultra-luxury condos complete with concierge services, a gym, lounge, and garage in Boston's South End neighborhood. To account for the city's rapid growth and investor returns, Finegold Alexander Architects subdivided the lot and constructed as many apartments as possible.

In such a move, the building and neighborhood's integrity has been irreversibly altered. The public space that once provided some public services has been privatized and commercialized. The renovation was a catalyst for significant gentrification that has led to the disappearance of the local community and the appearance of upper class commercial enterprises such as art galleries, boutique shops, and trendy restaurants.





RESEARCH
Efficienza energetica e spaziale

ECOLOGY
Use of more 'sustainable' materials in the flats

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT
Offering more dwellings

ACTION-BASED
Extensions, insulation, lighting, luxury items, garage construction

SOCIAL ORIENTATION
Gym, lounge for a fee

EXTERNAL PARTICIPATION
Builders and Finegold Alexander Architects

URBAN PRACTICE
Green spaces outside the entrance

ARTISTIC PRACTICE
Limited in the private units

ARCHITECTURE
Expanding spaces, creating luxury

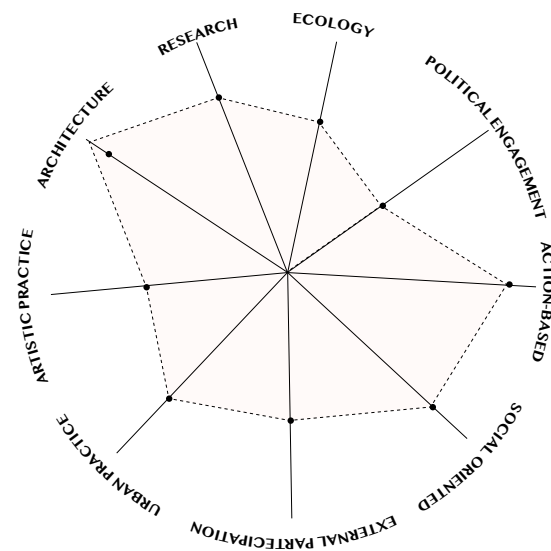
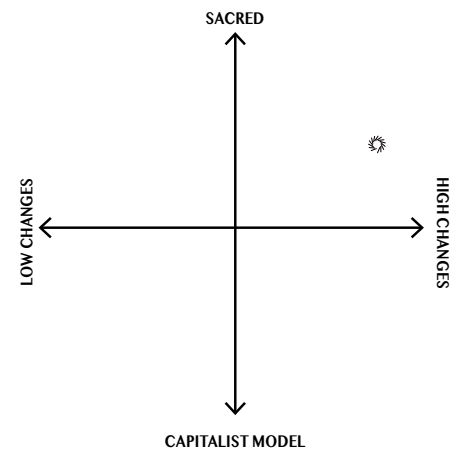
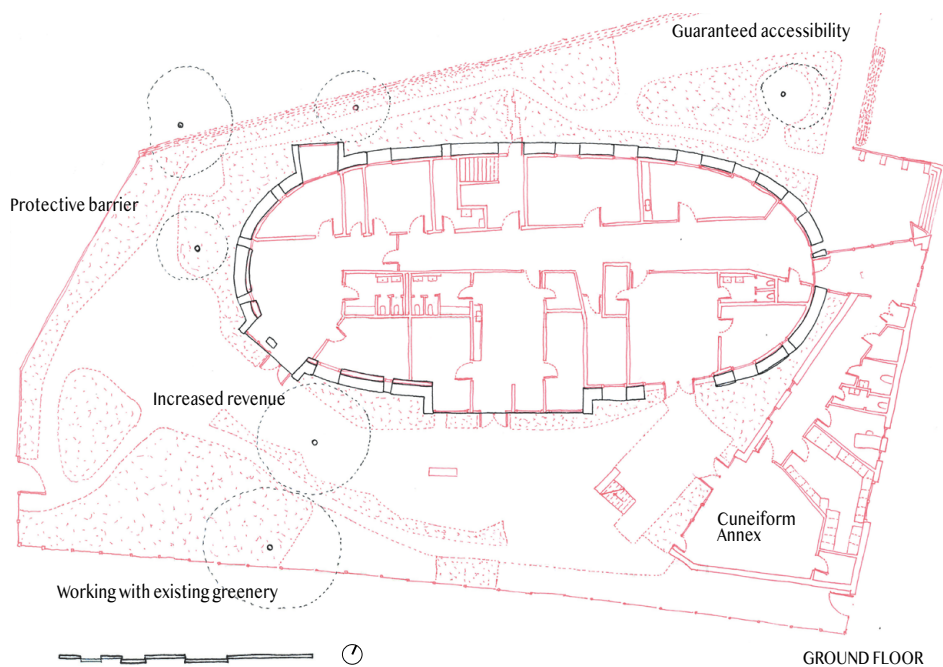
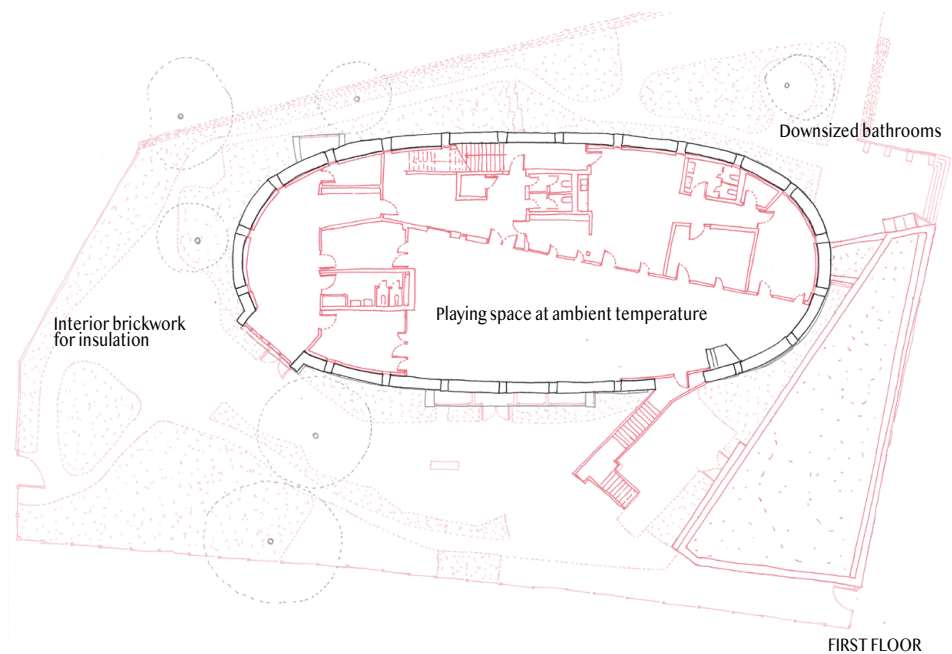
5.1 DRASTIC

B. St. Sebastian Kindertagesstätte, Munstern

*B*uilt in 1962 by Heinz Esser, the Church of San Sebastiano was deconsecrated in 2008 due to a decline in community members. It remained empty for several years before the municipality organized an architectural and investor competition for the conversion of the property. In 2013, the real estate company Wohn+Stadtbau, based in Münster, acquired it, and the architects Bolles und Wilson Studio started the conversion. While it would have been more economically affordable to demolish and build new, Bolles und Wilson studio's proposal sought to maintain the original appearance of the church as an identifying and familiar landmark for the neighborhood and proposed a cuneiform annex that would contain a multifunctional hall and additional spaces for the new daycare center, "Haus im Haus". The roof is replaced, the ground floor is lowered and a long ramp is built to create a year-round play environment. The modifications made to the former sacred building are exclusively aimed at the new small inhabitants.

Although the structure remains privately owned by Wohn+Stadtbau, AWO Arbeiterwohlfahrt's oversees the service and rental arrangement of the small cuneiform structure for the rest of the community.³² The Church of San Sebastiano in Münster demonstrates how crucial it is to continue providing a service to the local community, as the building is an integral part of the social and cultural heritage of the neighborhood.





RESEARCH
Neighbourhood needs, children's sizing, accessibility, external masonry renovation

ECOLOGY
Retained windows and ventilated double masonry. Unheated play space

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT
Responding to neighbourhood needs

ACTION-BASED
New brick cladding, new roof and lintels, 'Haus im haus' construction and triangular extension

SOCIAL ORIENTATION
Day-care service, meeting space

EXTERNAL PARTICIPATION
Architects Bolles und Wilson Studio, AWO Arbeiterwohlfaht for management

URBAN PRACTICE
Safe and accessible play space for children

ARTISTIC PRACTICE
Stimulating children's play

ARCHITECTURE
Expansion of spaces, adaptation of dimensions, landscape for children

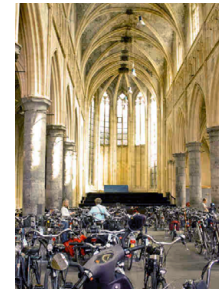
5.2 MANY

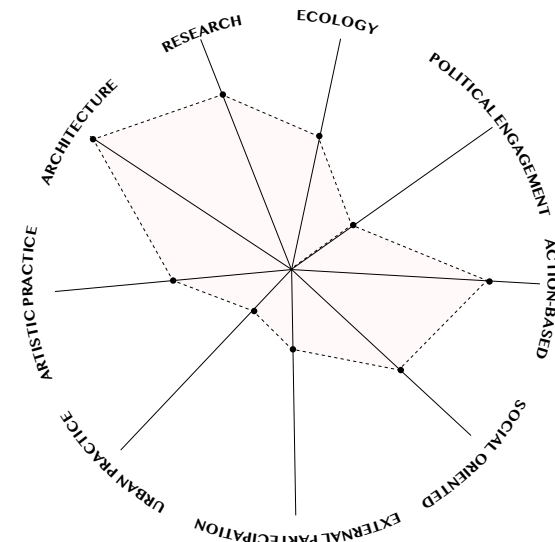
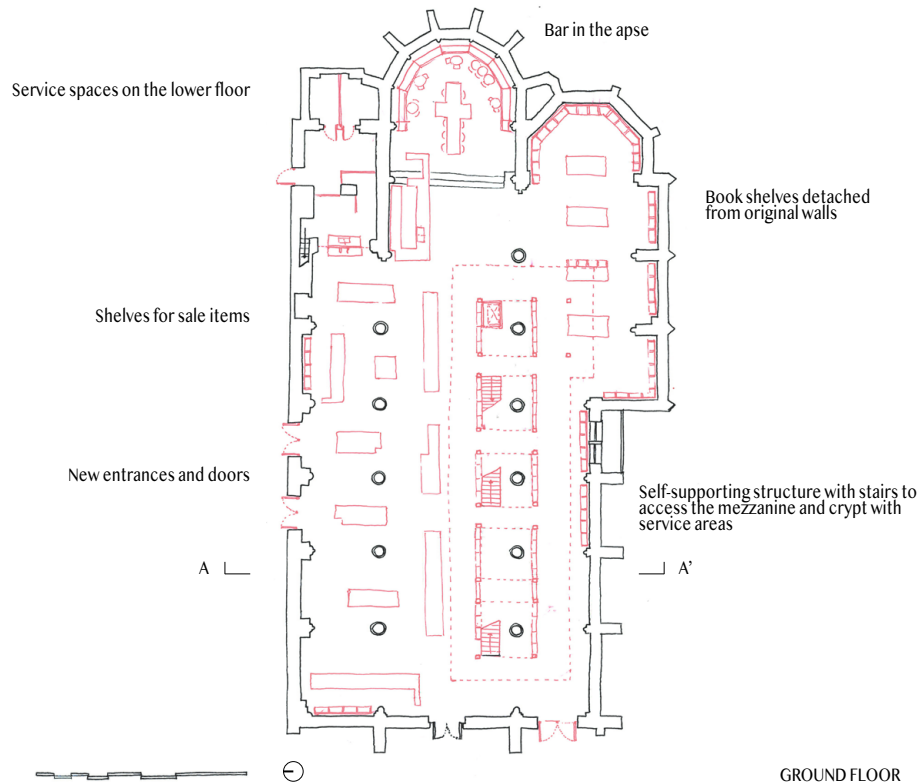
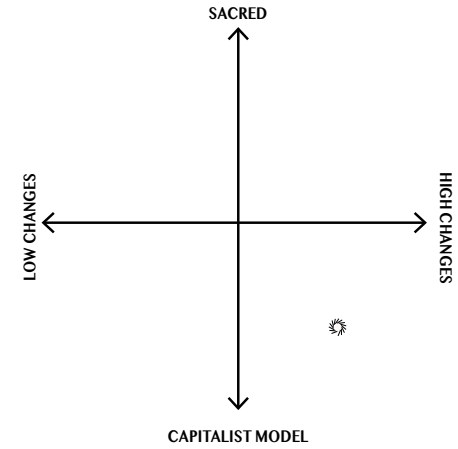
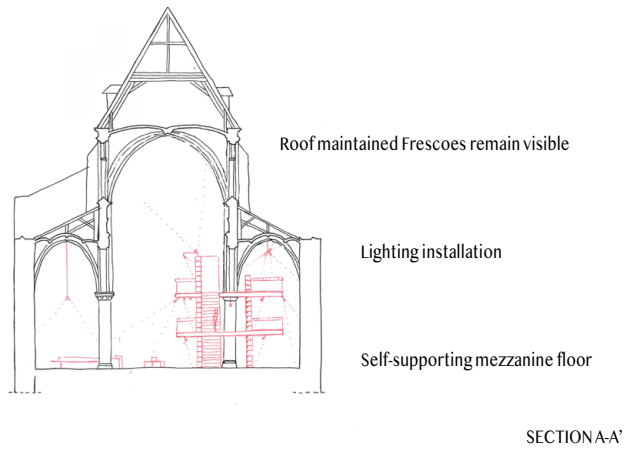
The following two case studies explore the desacralized church's ability to host multiple users and diverse activities while striving to preserve the solemnity of the architecture's grand space.

A. Selexyz Dominicanen Bookstore, Maastricht

Selexyz Dominicanen Gothic cathedral is situated in the historic center of Maastricht, Netherlands. Once a site of pilgrimage and Catholic worship, the church was converted into a military equipment warehouse during Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion in 1794. It was later abandoned, deconsecrated, and used as a municipal storage facility, public market space, and more recently, as a bicycle parking area. However without a clearly defined purpose and lack of public funds maintenance costs became excessively high. In 2005, the city sold the building to the renowned bookstore chain, Selexyz, which transformed the structure into a modern bookshop and café. Designed by architects Merkx+Girod, the exterior appearance of the church remained unchanged, while the interior was partially altered. A large three-story bookshelf was added and offset to one side of the nave in order to expand the commercial space and to preserve the main sightlines and spectacular appearance. The bookshelf has integrated lights that illuminate the remaining frescoes on the vaults. Technical installations, storage, and bathrooms are located in the existing basement, concealing all unwanted elements that could compromise the 'sacredness' of the space.

The drastic change in management and use has turned the building into a tourist attraction for consumerism. Local residents will only visit the church to shop; no community has been created to care for it. The owning company Selexys, famous for other bookstores in the country, has exploited the central location of the church to advertise, contributing to the gentrification and commercialization of the historic district, which is already being musealized.





RESEARCH
Touch the structure as little as possible

ECOLOGY
improved window frames for energy efficiency

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

ACTION-BASED
Mezzanine, relocation of service areas, technical plant, bar

SOCIAL ORIENTATION
Cafe, Shop, Monthly cultural meetings

EXTERNAL PARTICIPATION
architects Merckx+Girod, coffee company

URBAN PRACTICE

ARTISTIC PRACTICE
Making existing artistic heritage

ARCHITECTURE
Hidden service spaces, non-invasive restoration

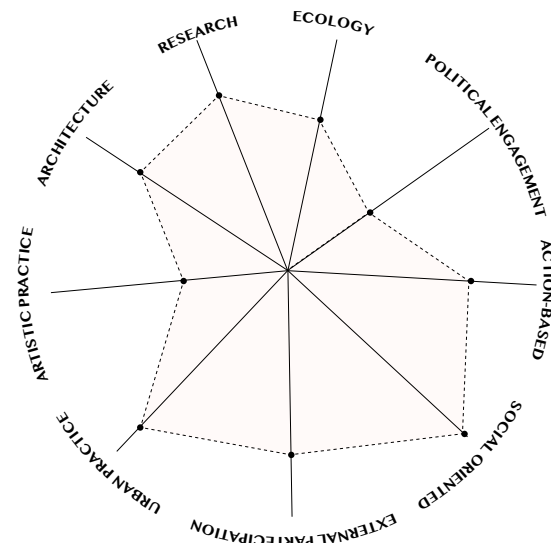
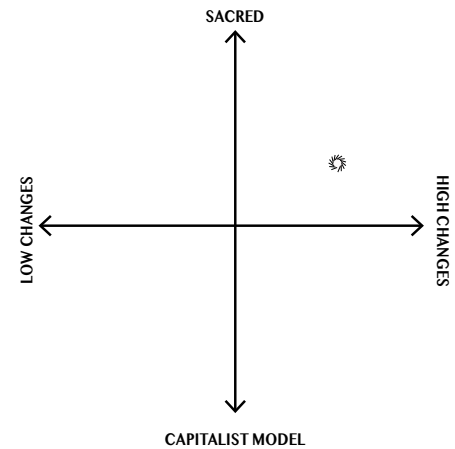
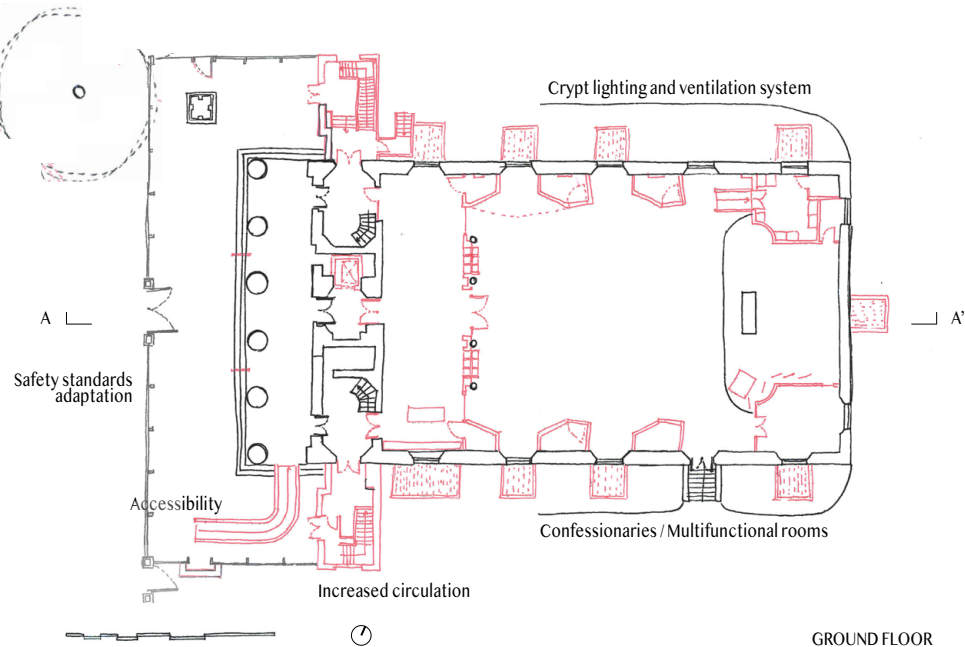
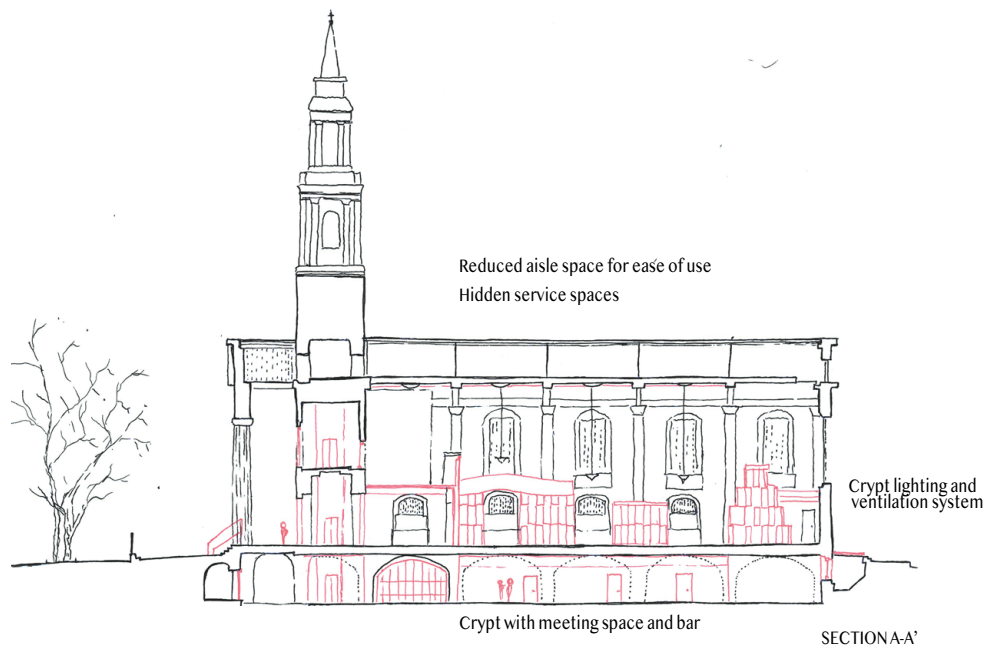
5.2 MANY

B. St John a Waterloo, London

*P*rotestant churches and congregations are an example of how a religious community can open up to a greater public. A vision of life is encouraged in which there is no fracture between what is spiritual and what is material, where the sacred building intertwines within the social fabric of the neighborhood. By continuing to care for the building and adding new functions, the number of participants grows. For instance, in 2022, the Protestant Church of St. John in London initiated a £5.5 million renovation project led by Eric Parry Architects. In order to fund the renovation, the Protestant community will host cultural, charitable, and commercial activities to ensure funds for the church's structural maintenance.

The form is maintained but enriched with elements facilitating various services and functions. The nave can host concerts and cultural events thanks to a series of side panels that divide the space, creating niches for the new baptistery and a new prayer chapel. Despite exceptions to safety, fire, and energy performance regulations for churches, the building's mixed-use (non-worship) status requires adaptations that incur additional costs.³³ To address such expenses, the crypt has been made accessible through an elevator and transformed into a café and is open for community use and rental. The space, with its bar and concerts, is managed by external entities, yet the church's authority remains unquestioned. Despite good intentions regarding the maintenance, the institution of the church continues to have full control over what can or cannot be done.





RESEARCH
Inclusive design, flexible spaces

ECOLOGY
Space used in multiple ways

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT
Promoting inclusive and social policy

ACTION-BASED
Modifications for flexible spaces

SOCIAL ORIENTATION
Concert hall, rental rooms, cultural meetings, coffee shop

EXTERNAL PARTICIPATION
Facilitated involvement of associations, musicians and citizens

URBAN PRACTICE
Limited to the space in the perimeter fence

ARTISTIC PRACTICE
Possible space for creative collective ideas

ARCHITECTURE
Adaptation of spaces into more flexible and accessible spaces

5.3 MODERATE

With moderate interventions, the following two case studies have utilized territory and strayed away from the commercialization of the existing structures. In the first case study, an American community returns to agriculture, while in the second case study, the natural beauty of Thuringia is rediscovered.

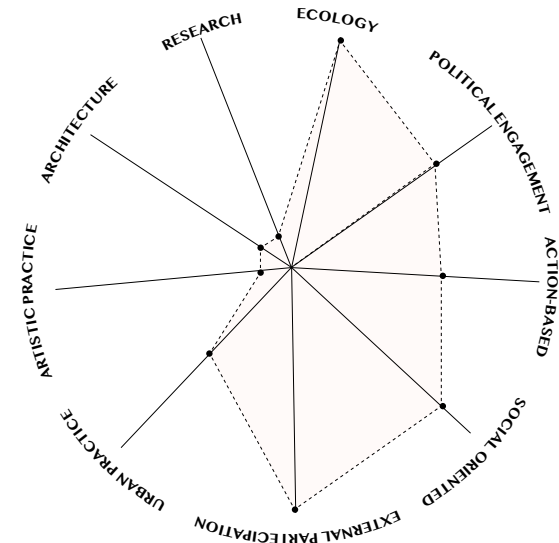
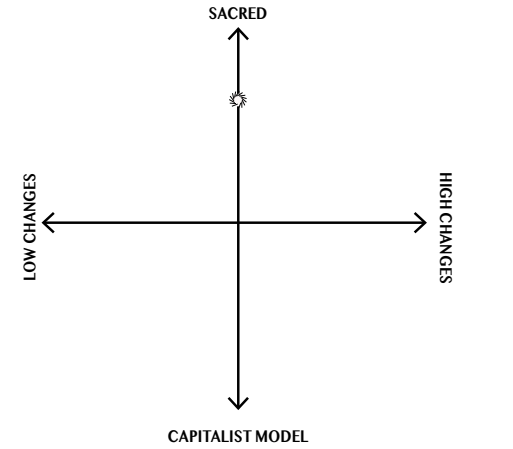
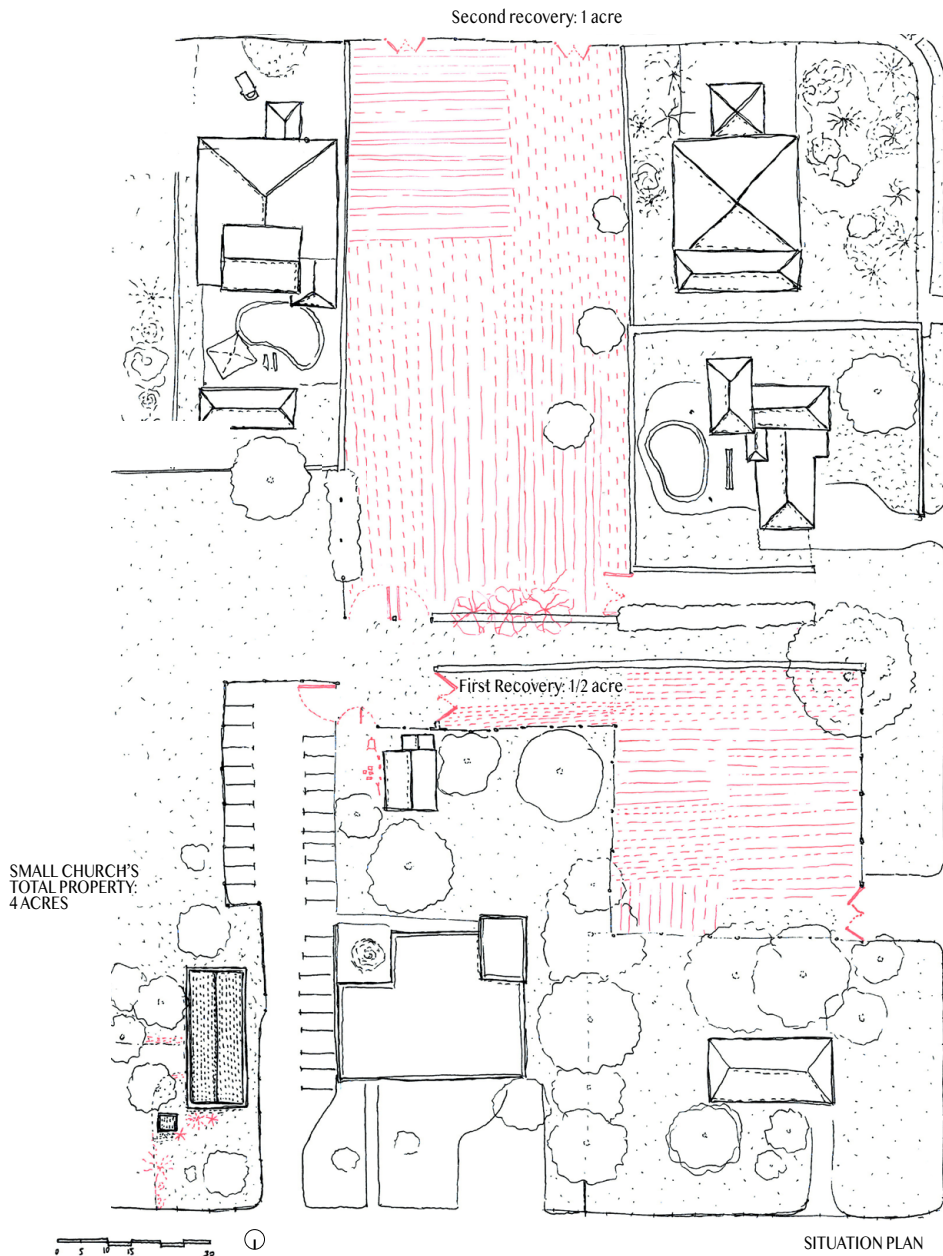
A. St Simon's Episcopal Church, Miami

Built in 1946, Saint Simon's Episcopal Church has faced significant challenges, including Hurricane Opal in 1995 and an arson attack in 1965. Despite such trials, the community has always come together to repair the damage and keep the church alive.

Nowadays, the small church still consecrated, faced with the growing challenge of maintaining both its structure and community, has agreed to lease the bishop's property to Moses Kashem, a young farmer, to transform it into a diversified agricultural enterprise.³⁴ In return, the church will receive 15% of the profits and participate in awareness initiatives through dinners and cooking classes. The building itself, however, is not directly involved; thanks to the rental income, the structure can afford to remain empty and unused for the majority of the time. The church's success in revitalizing its architecture has inspired other churches, and has created the project 'Faith Lands,'³⁵ a gathering that aims to promote agricultural sustainability, social well-being, and restorative justice, where injustice and violence have dominated for years.

This project exemplifies how churches, owning millions of acres of land worldwide, can preserve their sacredness and reconsider the site as potential reactivators and social healers.





RESEARCH
Agricultural knowledge

ECOLOGY
Unused church land recovery

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT
Offering fresh vegetables at sustainable prices for inhabitants

ACTION-BASED
Low-tech methods for land reversion

SOCIAL ORIENTATION
Dinners, cooking classes, awareness-raising

EXTERNAL PARTICIPATION
Moses Kashem, social associations

URBAN PRACTICE
Connecting different lands through cultivation

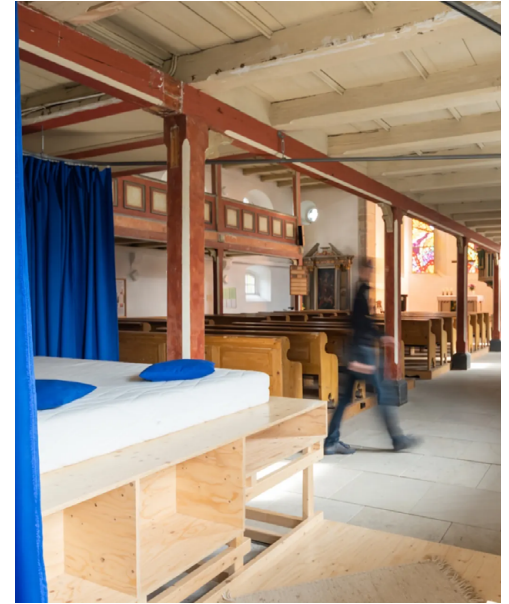
ARTISTIC PRACTICE
Diversity of fruit and vegetables

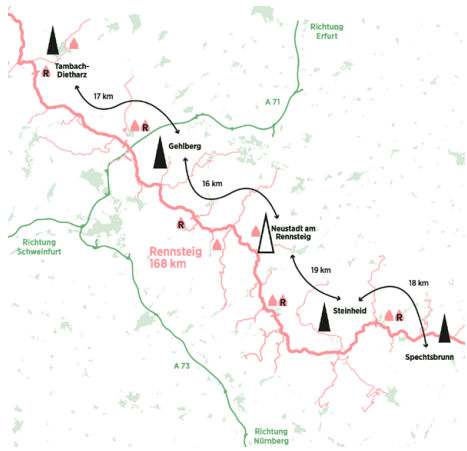
ARCHITECTURE

5.3 MODERATE

B. St. Michaelis Church, Neustadt am Rennsteig

St Michael's Church in Neustadt am Rennsteig is the pilot church of the project "HER(R)BERGSKIRCHEN Thüringer Wald " which has been an IBA project since March 2019. In collaboration with IBA Thuringia, the Evangelical Church of Central Germany EKM, parishioners, and the architectural firm Studioetcetera developed the idea of transforming churches along the Rennsteig hiking trail into multifunctional hostels. While maintaining their sacredness, the churches open their doors to diversified long-term uses according to the needs of their respective communities and surrounding areas. Each individual church seeks to address its underutilization, creating a network of small entities that form a trail. In particular, the church of St Michaelis regularly hosts film evenings, concerts, and communal meals prepared in the newly installed kitchen. It features a flexible bedroom, which can be single or double, connected or disconnected from the church hall. It highlights how the church can address its underuse during the night recalling the medieval tradition where sacred places offered refuge and protection. Fragility is valued and strengthened through sharing. The neighboring churches of St. Katharina's, St. Matthew's and Luther joined the project, taking a cue from the pilot project but making unique modifications tailored to their needs.





TERRITORIAL PLAN

Flexible apsidal area for evening events

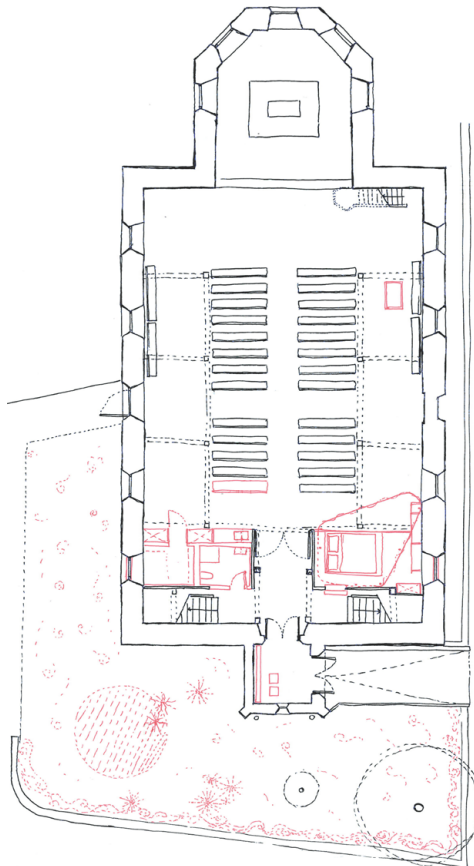
Service furniture included in existing furnishings

Dividing curtain for sleeping area

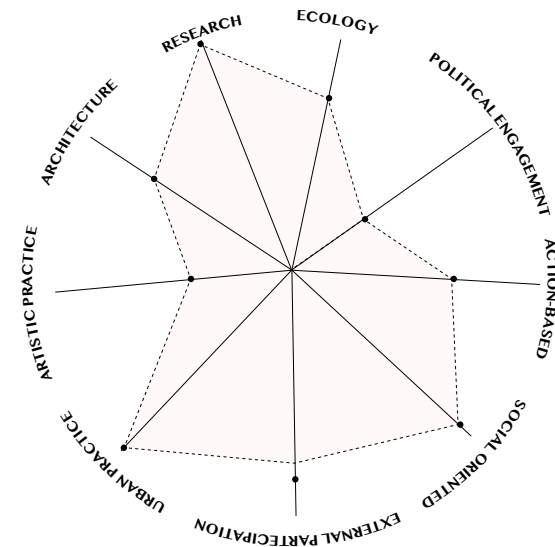
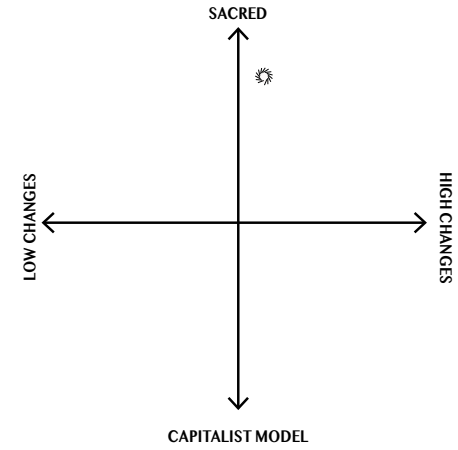
Bathroom and kitchen installation

Targeted window replacement

Front garden improvement



GROUND FLOOR



RESEARCH
Work with citizens to understand needs

ECOLOGY
Slow development, in different stages

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT
Activating declining territory

ACTION-BASED
Bathroom, kitchen and bed installation

SOCIAL ORIENTATION
Community dinners, social events, cinema, hostel service

EXTERNAL PARTICIPATION
IBA Thüringen, Studioet cetera, Evangelische Kirche, baucircus, SERC, Regional coop.

URBAN PRACTICE
Connection between different interventions

ARTISTIC PRACTICE
Temporary facilitated changes

ARCHITECTURE
Inclusive subtle interventions, phased development

5.4 FEW

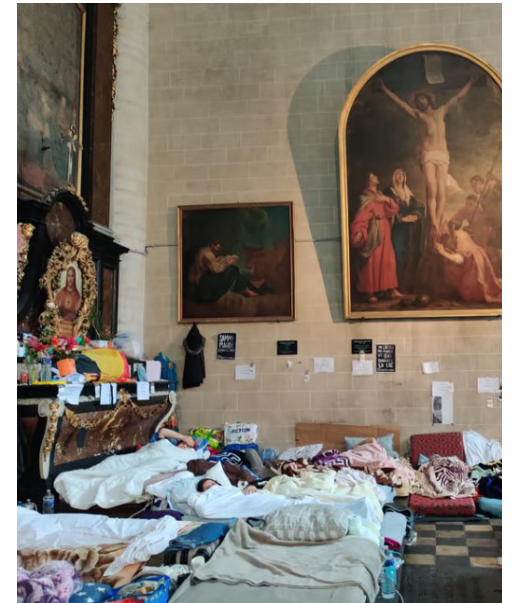
The following case studies examine how furniture can transform the church as a place of refuge, conferring the dimension of sacredness associated with diversity. In both cases, the visitor is welcomed and informed about various topics, but in very distinct ways.

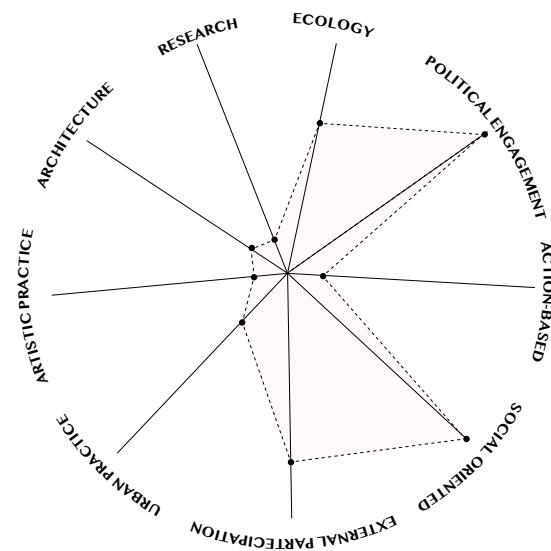
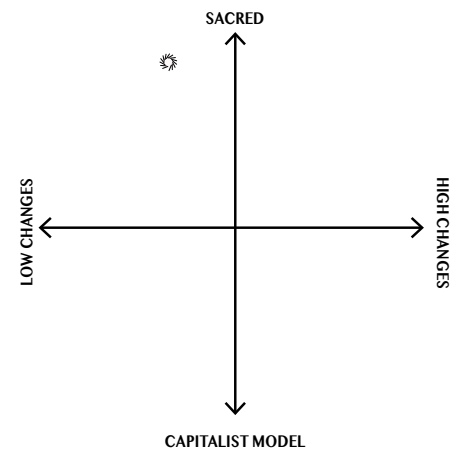
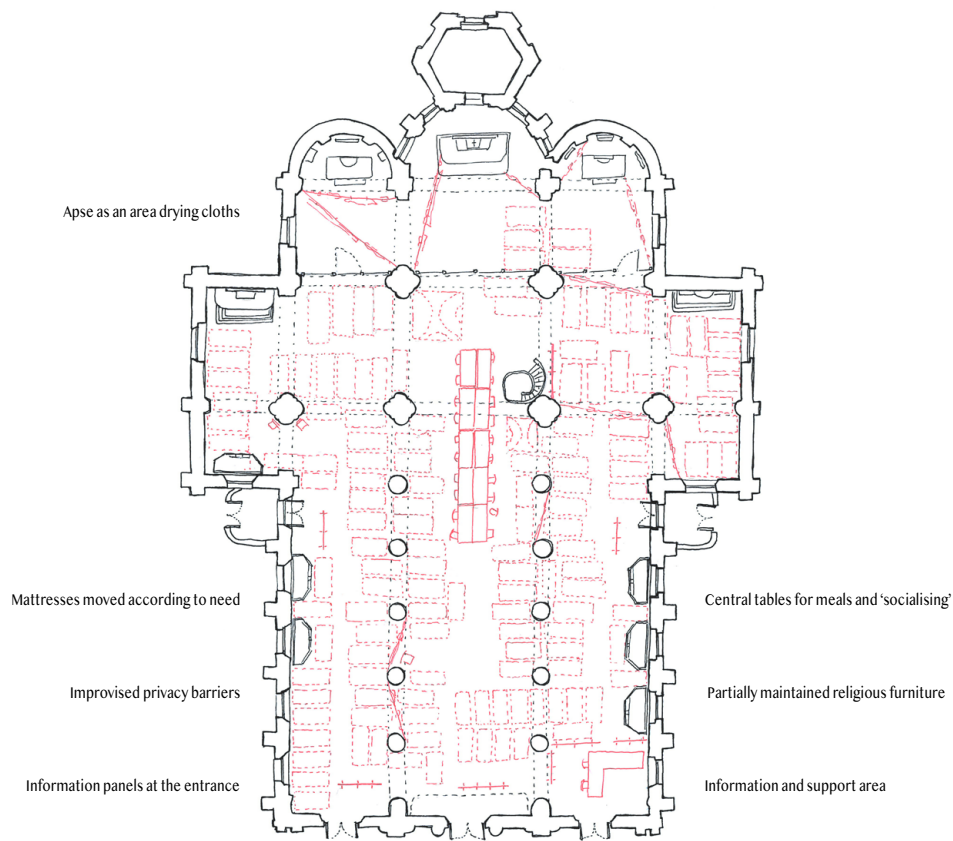
A. Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Brussels, Belgium

In the 1980s, a number of congregations in the United States declared themselves “sanctuaries.” Coining the term “Sanctuary movement,” the congregations were committed to providing protection, material goods, and legal advice to refugees from Central America fleeing civil conflict. This approach follows a biblical and medieval tradition that recognizes the right to protection for those seeking refuge in sacred places or sanctuary cities. Today, while sacred places are no longer state protected, there is an unspoken agreement that law enforcement will avoid intervening in spaces considered “sensitive.”

In one such example, The Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration recently designated Saint-Jean-Baptiste Church as a “neutral zone” where undocumented migrants can easily obtain information about their cases and available options. Built in Flemish Baroque style, the church was restored after a fire in 2000. Today while remaining sacred, it hosts hundreds of migrants each night through the rearrangement of pews.

However, the term “sanctuary” is only conceptual; the church’s atmosphere is not reassuring or hospitable. The pews have been replaced with mattresses, which, along with the guests’ belongings, create a confusing and messy tapestry of different colors and textures. Amid blankets, pillows, and tired faces, it becomes clear that the space is not the refuge promised. There is no idea of stability, only of alienation.





RESEARCH
Making information easy to understand

ECOLOGY
Precarious adaptation for emergency

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT
Helping immigrants get information

ACTION-BASED
Placement Panels, mattresses

SOCIAL ORIENTATION
Medical service and information centre

EXTERNAL PARTICIPATION
Immigration centre, Caritas, Red Cross

URBAN PRACTICE
Connection with immigration centre

ARTISTIC PRACTICE

ARCHITECTURE



GROUND FLOOR

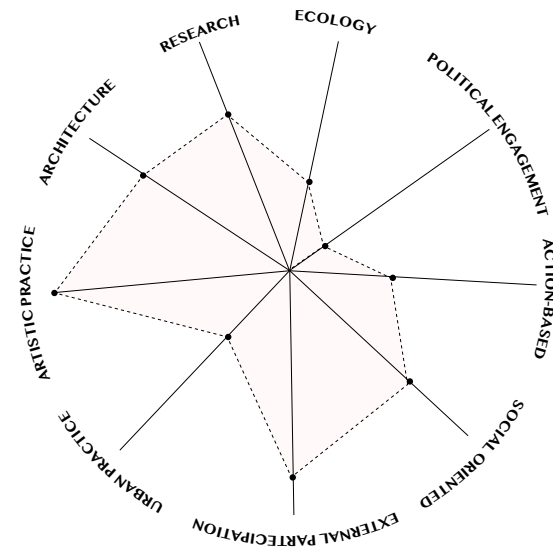
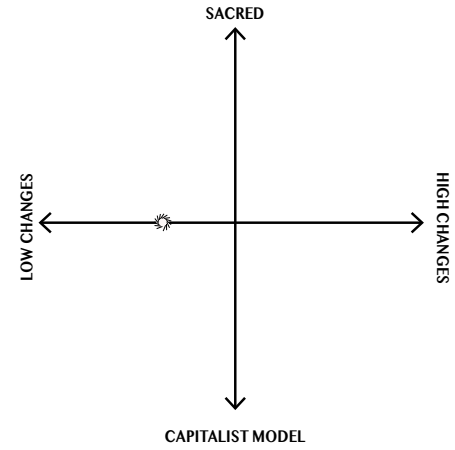
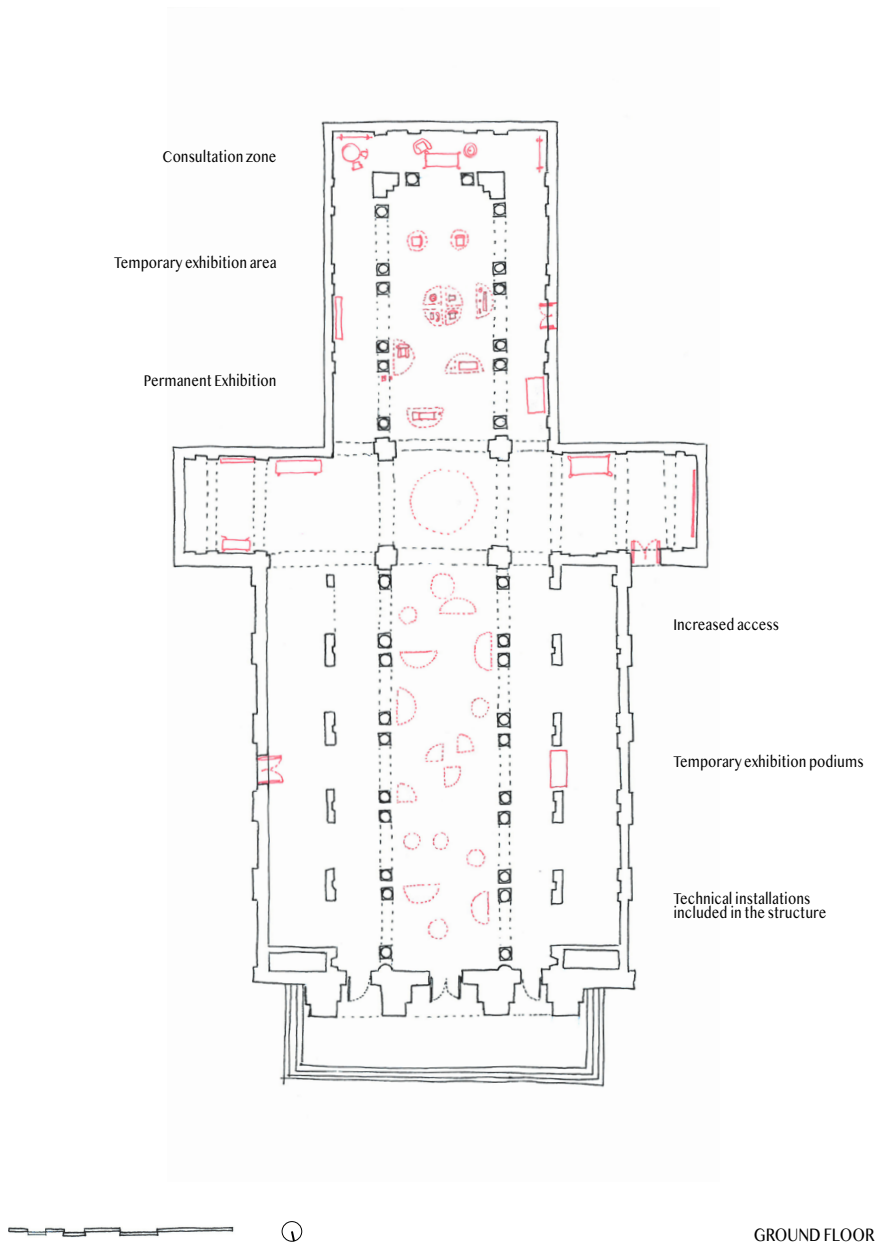
5.4 FEW

B. Volumnia Church of Saint Agostino, Piacenza

After forty years of abandonment due to safety concerns, the de-consecrated Church of Sant'Agostino in Piacenza reopened to the public in 2018 as the venue for Enrica de Micheli's new Volumnia gallery, specializing in modern Italian design objects. Once a military hospital, the sixteenth-century scenic space of Stradone Farnese is now an exhibition space that changes its appearance annually to create new dialogues between objects, architecture, and people. The lighting system has been upgraded to amaze visitors during tours. For each exhibition, the setting changes, and new pedestals, panels, and floors are repositioned.

Despite the stark contrast between the building and its new guests, a balance of stability and temporariness prevails. In these new theaters, temporarily housed works are intended to attract the curious and spark discussions. Works are accepted only if they meet certain standards by the owner to represent her art gallery. Like in a stage setting, visitors are the audience, design objects are the puppets, and the managers are the puppeteers who study and control the space. People experience what has been designed for them, living the image of the space rather than the space itself.





RESEARCH
Restoration, exhibition material

ECOLOGY
Partially heated space

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT
Space for discussion and visibility

ACTION-BASED
Technical installations, exhibition plates

SOCIAL ORIENTATION
Exhibition space, restaurant

EXTERNAL PARTICIPATION
Artists, cultural associations

URBAN PRACTICE
Connection with other exhibitions

ARTISTIC PRACTICE
Constantly changing creative space

ARCHITECTURE
Restoration, Interior Design, Furniture

5.5 MINIMUM

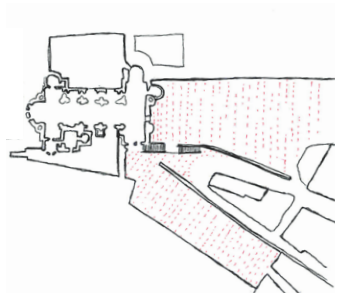
What happens when the actions taken are exclusively focused on the maintenance of buildings? In the first case study, this paper examines how Italian parishes currently organize themselves to secure the necessary maintenance funds, while in the second case, the paper analyzes the appropriation and stabilization of the structure itself.

A. Basilica of St. Francis, Assisi

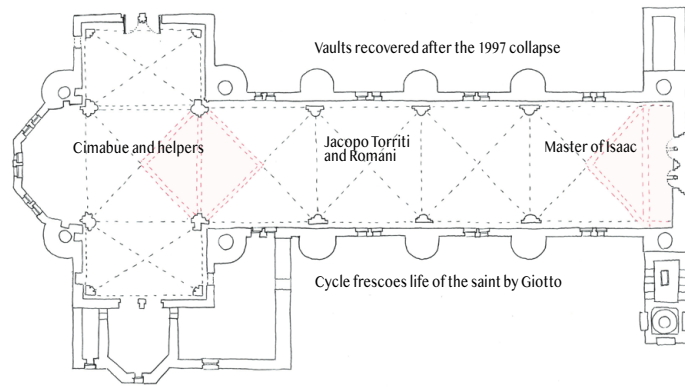
A place of worship that has preserved the relics of the Seraphic saint since 1230, the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi is now also an Italian national monument,³⁶ a World Heritage Site, and an iconic example of Gothic architecture. In 1997 a major earthquake caused part of the famous frescoes in the upper basilica to collapse, necessitating significant restoration.³⁷ This intervention delayed work on the lower basilica, which is currently underway. However, the costs of this work exceed the financial resources available to the friars of the Sacred Convent, and fundraising from donors and the faithful is necessary.

Basilica de San Francesco d'Assisi is a destination for millions of tourists every year, serving as an example of how tourism can provide the sufficient maintenance funds without desacralization. Observed religious holidays are minimized to enable visitors to admire Giotto's famous Magdalene Chapel for an extended period. Visitors must purchase a ticket, and are requested to remain silent inside the church. They will follow guides, who wave flags and wear headphones with their gaze directed upwards. Nothing social remains; the building has become a space of restrictions and profit. The church is crystallized in the image of the 13th century, preventing any kind of change unless it contributes to increasing revenue earmarked for the restoration of the frescoes.

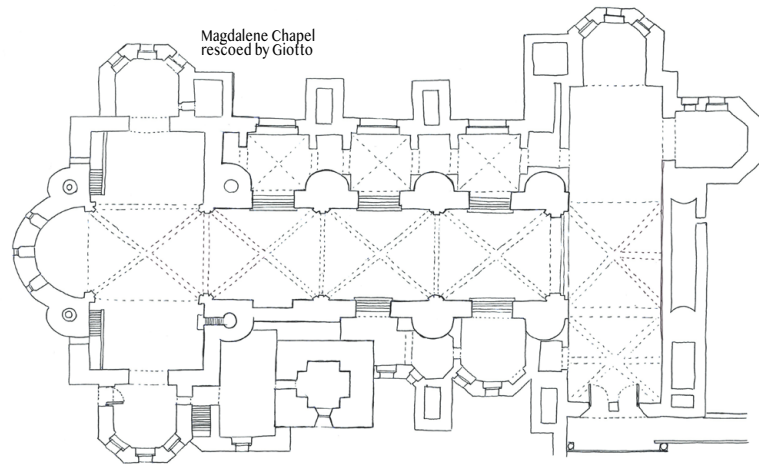




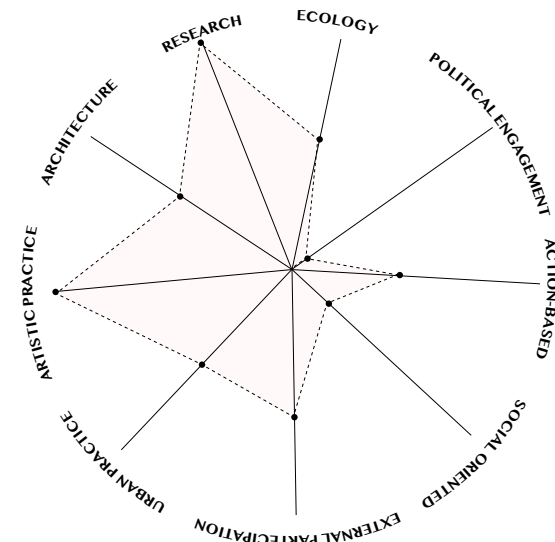
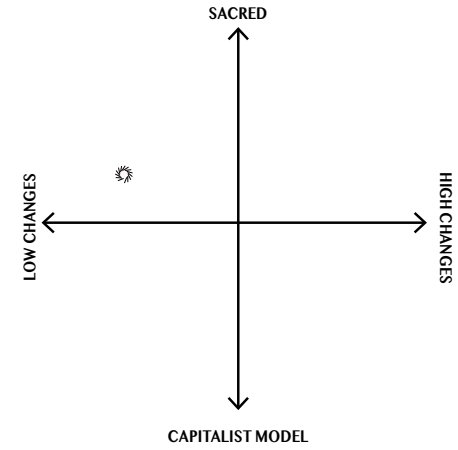
SITUATION PLAN



UPPER BASILICA FLOOR



LOWER BASILICA FLOOR



RESEARCH
Restoration and maintenance of frescoes

ECOLOGY
LED installations for lower consumption

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT
Making cultural heritage accessible

ACTION-BASED
Technical installation, temperature monitoring, fresco restoration

SOCIAL ORIENTATION
Opening for visiting artistic heritage

EXTERNAL PARTICIPATION
Italian government, faithful donations, private benefactors

URBAN PRACTICE
Strong connection with the square made pedestrian

ARTISTIC PRACTICE
Expression of creativity of users

ARCHITECTURE
Restoration of frescoes

5.5 MINIMUM

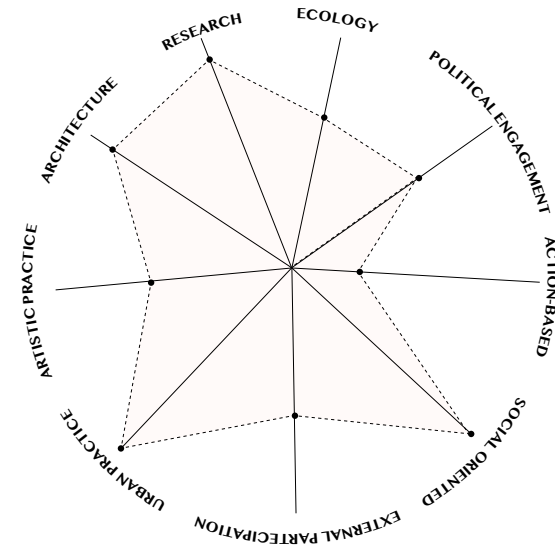
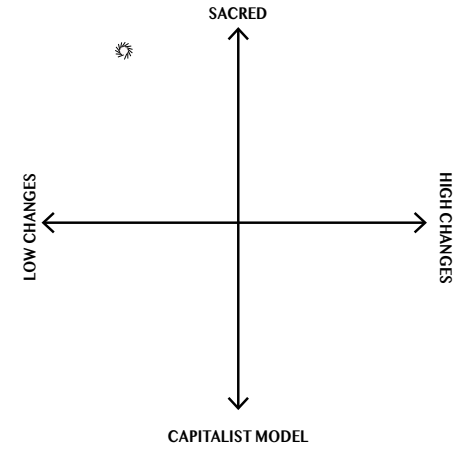
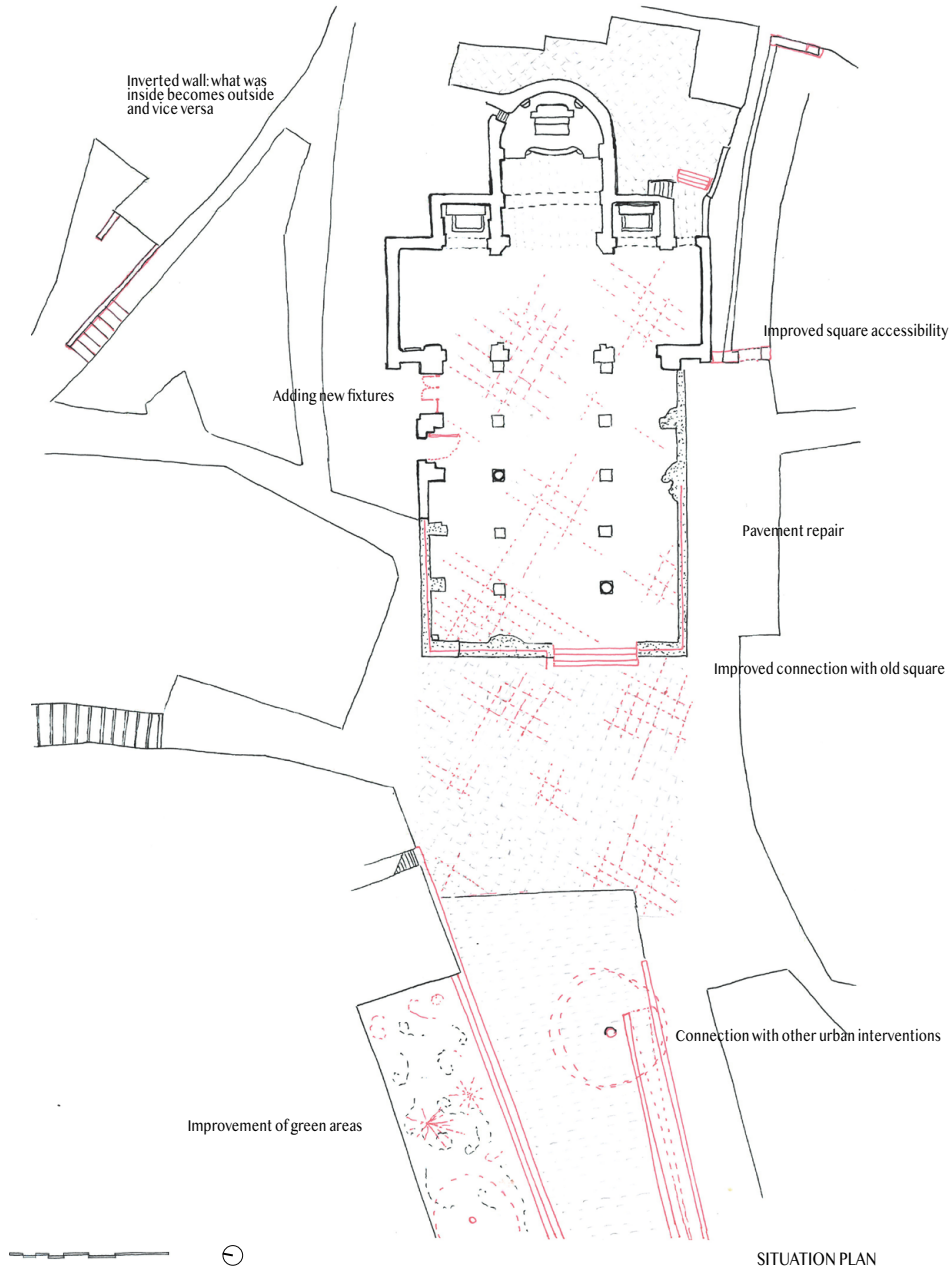
B. Alicia Salemi Square, Trapani

Severely damaged in the 1969 earthquake, The Mother Church and Piazza Alicia Salemi was subsequently deconsecrated. The recovery project involved renowned architects such as Alvaro Siza Vieira and Alberto Collovà, who proposed maintaining the ruins and the empty spaces created during the earthquake. Their idea is well reflected in a statement that Alvaro Siza liked to make:

“Tradition does not mean closure, immobility. On the contrary, the value of traditions lies in their being open to innovation. Tradition is not the opposite of innovation, but rather its complement”

Although administratively separate, the Church and the adjacent Square, become part of a single project: two squares that interpenetrate and mutually generate. The remaining elements of the church unfold as an open and secular space. The Church is able to retain its sacredness thanks to the raised base that delimits the original perimeter and reconstructs the space through the principle of subtraction. The building is a true Agorà. The removal of the rubble and securing of the remaining parts has allowed it to be opened to the public. Doing so, the church maintains its sacred status, while assuming the role of a secular and civic space. Services are no longer offered to the community, but conditions are created to actively engage the population, which remains exclusively human. The designed landscape remains entirely mineral, excluding plants and animals, considered sources of disorder and in need of additional maintenance.





RESEARCH
Recovery, restoration, public accessibility

ECOLOGY
The subtraction becomes construction

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT
Transformation into a public square

ACTION-BASED
Restoration of remaining structure, Modification for safety regulations, accessibility

SOCIAL ORIENTATION
Market, fairs, meeting space

EXTERNAL PARTICIPATION
Alvaro Siza Vieira and Alberto Collova, Trapani city

URBAN PRACTICE
Ramps, stairs, paving, green spaces for greater connectivity

ARTISTIC PRACTICE
Temporary exhibitions only

ARCHITECTURE
Restoration, ramps, stairs, paving, green spaces

5.6 ZERO

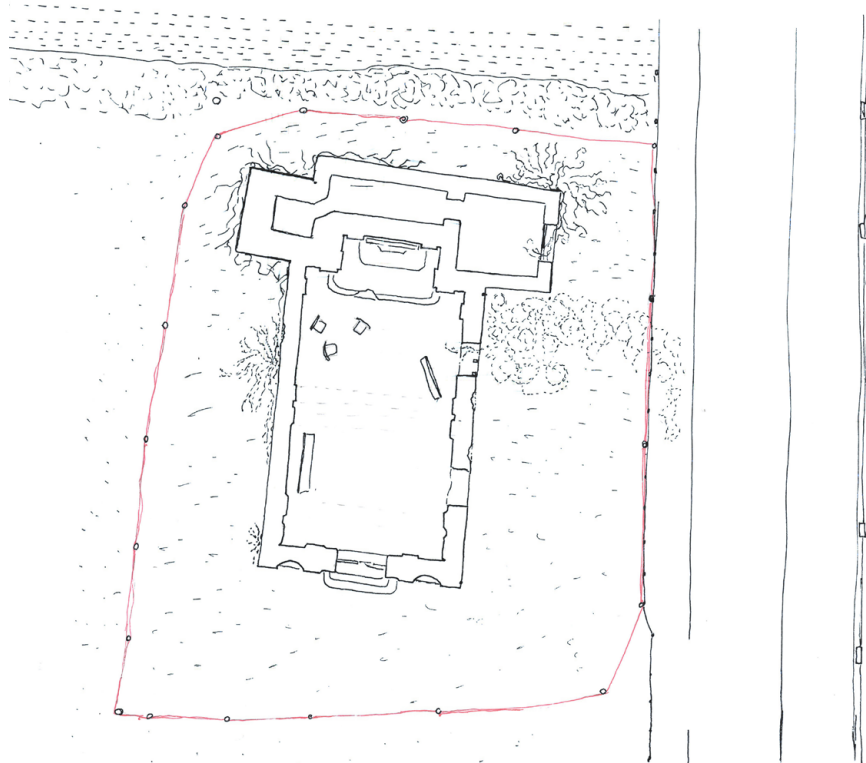
In case of abandonment by the human population, is it possible for other species to become its inhabitants? The final case study explores how the reappropriation of abandoned buildings by nature is experienced and addressed in Italy.

A. Church of St. Charles, Macconago (MI)

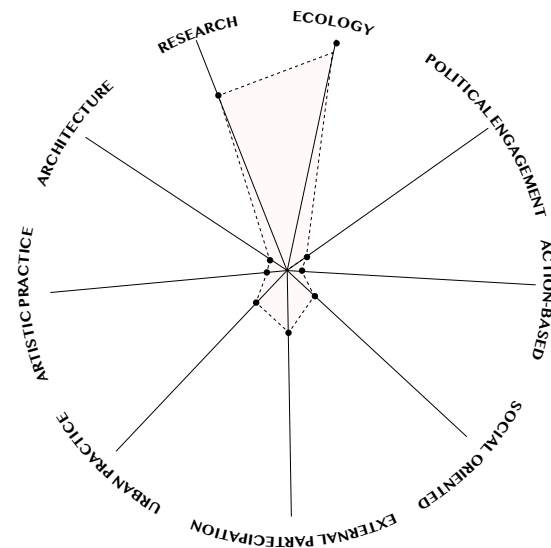
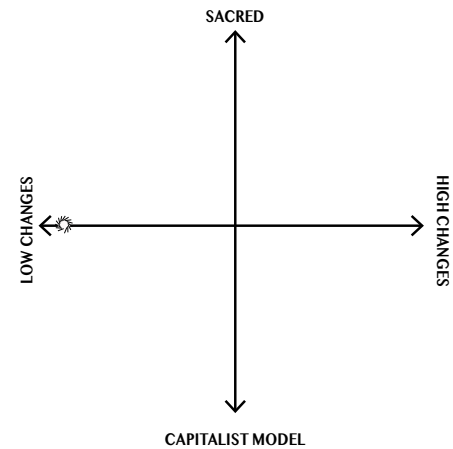
“We inform you that the Municipality could not include your report, submitted during the events of the Neighborhood Plan, in the scheduled works for the three-year period 2019-2021. The exclusion is due to the fact that the amount for these works does not fall within the available budget. It is understood that, in the event of any savings and/or economies, we reserve the right to include these projects in future schedules.”³⁸

In the '90s, Salvatore Ligresti acquired ownership with the intention to replace the building to build residences linked to the European Oncological Institute (IEO). The residents of the surrounding farms were evicted for construction, but the project ultimately failed due to protests and high costs, leaving the area irreversibly empty. Since then, despite various collaboration proposals, the church has remained neglected.³⁹ Without private funds for restoration, the Municipality of Milan delays decisions for the building's future.⁴⁰ The 'more than humans' are the only inhabitants left. The church of San Carlo is currently one of the many symbols of the failure of an institution. State neglect is most evident by the orange plastic barriers that line the church's perimeter. The fence symbolizes the long wait for security interventions. There is no intention to return the building to nature; recovery is still sought, albeit unsuccessfully. What remains is a barrier, an orange plastic surface that embodies the egocentrism of a society that is still unable to see the truth.





GROUND FLOOR



RESEARCH
Many restoration studies, never realised

ECOLOGY
Nature takes over the building

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

ACTION-BASED
Bureaucracy and projects never realised

SOCIAL ORIENTATION

EXTERNAL PARTICIPATION
Involvement of other entities beyond owner or Vatican

URBAN PRACTICE
Orange barrier prevents a true return of the building to nature

ARTISTIC PRACTICE
Expression of vegetation obstructed

ARCHITECTURE
Unsuitable projects never realised

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 A process of horizontal construction and deconstruction

The analysis of case studies reflects the diversity of approaches in the recovery of churches - highlighting opportunities, but also the challenges and related issues. Each example has brought to light certain issues and, in part, failures. Each building has or will have failed to achieve its purpose, or society has or will fail the building.⁴¹ In one way or another, at some point, every structure will become a victim of time and fall into a state of neglect. Failure is, therefore, an intrinsic part of human endeavor, and all we can do is accept it. After each act of reuse, a cycle of economic, political, cultural, and territorial powers will be set in motion, destined to wane one after the other. Accept the failure of capitalist productivity and remain in mourning.⁴²

In conclusion, this paper attempts to outline a series of possible steps and protocols to address the transition of churches - as buildings - from moral imposters to spaces of alternative value and resistance. And again how to transform the verticality of the church - as an institution - into a horizontality on an ideal, social, spatial, economic and political level. Embrace temporality and make room for recovery, resistance, preservation of history, continuous maintenance, participation, and creativity. Their possible failure provides a rich, if problematic, endless starting point that will ensure its active growth, as pointed out by architects H & Wolff in reference to the most controversial buildings of the 20th century in South Africa.

‘Only a lack of imagination could lead anyone to conclude that a blank site would be a richer starting point than the building as it stands today.’

So the slow and simultaneous process of construction and deconstruction begins. The first element to deconstruct is the Catholic sacredness. It can take on many more forms than those currently recognized. Every time one experiences ‘otherness’ compared to one’s daily life, it can be considered sacred. The substantial size compared to other places, the silence contrasting with the noisy streets, the diversity of activities compared to external mono-consumerism: if outside the laws of capitalism prevail, in churches, diversity finds refuge. At Saint-Jean-Baptiste, it is protected; at St Simon’s Episcopal, it is cultivated; at St Michael’s Church, it alternates; in Piazza Alicia Salemi, it is stimulated. Until reaching the Church of San Carlo, where one sacredness fails to be redeemed by that of Nature.

If expanded, sacredness can be preserved, simultaneously facilitating the construction of the new sanctuary. After desacralization, the building could remain unmaintained for several years, leading to a further increase in costs and restricting purchase opportunities to only large-scale entrepreneurs. Temporary abandonment and abrupt changes in management must be avoided. To ensure continuous maintenance, ecclesiastical ownership and its hierarchical structure need to be reconsidered to make room for multiple actors and managers, enriching the space with various possibilities that reflect the surrounding community. There is, therefore, a need to define a new sacredness capable of bringing social justice and horizontality.

Social horizontality:

After acknowledging its faults, the Church must address cultural violence and social injustices in the secular Italian territory. In addition to giving citizens more voice in decisions about the building, it should open partial sales to become a co-owner, with the city having priority in purchase.

Spatial horizontality:

The Church must collaborate with its surroundings to integrate into the city and territory as an equal part, not as a moral overseer. Connecting different lands to create a network that meets the needs of citizens and ‘more than humans.’

Economic horizontality:

By selling part of the property, the Church will be compelled to diversify income sources and investments. Avoiding desacralization, the building will maintain the status of a ‘sacred building,’ continuing to benefit from tax exemptions and less stringent safety and energy regulations. Economic efforts will focus on cultural and social services.

Political horizontality:

A micro-organization will form around each church, where all citizens will have decision-making power. The church is the ‘home of the faithful,’ and all citizens can be owners of their home as faithful to the sacredness of diversity. The church will remain the ‘Third Place’: neither work nor home, but a space free from social, political, and economic norms. It can be a space for ‘Degrowth’ where industrial values can be questioned. Safety standards, technology, energy efficiency, ambient temperature, and aesthetic sense will be redefined in this context.

6. CONCLUSION

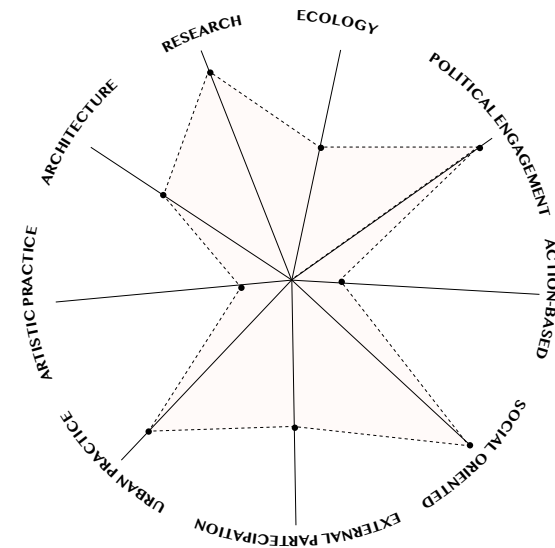
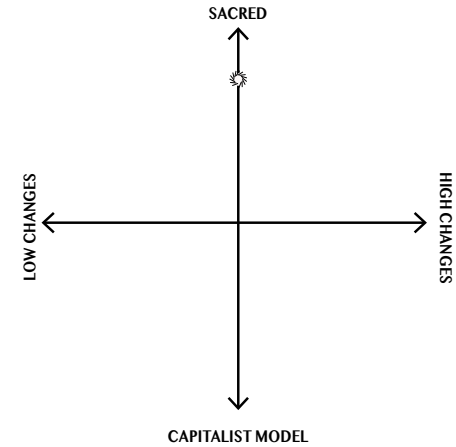
6.1 A process of horizontal construction and deconstruction

As argued by theorist and philosopher Donna Haraway, challenging the idea of 'neutral' and 'objective' knowledge, knowledge is always situated in a specific social, political and cultural context. It must be listened to and understood before a response can be given.

“(...) We seek not the knowledges ruled by phallogocentrism (nostalgia for the presence of the one true Word and disembodied vision. We seek those ruled by partial sight and limited voice-not partiality for its own sake but, rather, for the sake of the connections and unexpected openings situated knowledges make possible. Situated knowledges are about communities, not about isolated individuals.”⁴³

Donna Haraway

The role of architecture is to tackle the question of how each church can find its ordinary utopia and establish a balance with the surrounding community. Given the absence of a universally 'scalable' solution, the future work will aim to examine different recovery solutions 'scaled' for the specific context of the selected church. It will follow the intervention scheme used in the case studies - drastic, many, moderate, minimal, zero - to understand how, at each level of action, it is possible to contribute to transforming the church into a temporary monument. A monument dedicated to recovery and ongoing maintenance, promoting active community participation and serving as a bastion of resistance against the rush of capitalist growth.



RESEARCH
Situated knowledge

ECOLOGY
To recover and transform

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT
Instrument of Social justice

ACTION-BASED
Not always necessary

SOCIAL ORIENTATION
To empower the faithful as hosts

EXTERNAL PARTICIPATION
Necessary to decrease the verticality of the church

URBAN PRACTICE
Work with surroundings to develop horizontality

ARTISTIC PRACTICE
When expression of community

ARCHITECTURE
The minimum of interventions



RENOVATIONS LIST DISCOVERED

DRASTIC

- Greyfriars Charteris Centre, former church, Edinburgh, 2016
- House in a Church, Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 2010
- **Lucas Condominiums Boston, MA, USA, 2017**
- Tap Holding Headquarters Paderborn, Germany, 2020
- Vertige Escalade Sher, Canada, 2009
- Quarry theatre at St Lukes Bedford, UK, 2015
- Hotel Mercure Centre, Poitiers, France, 2010
- Martin's Patershof Hotel in Mechelen, Belgium, 2016
- **Kirche St. Sebastian zur Kita, Münster, Deutschland, 2008**

MANY

- The Church Bar, Dublin, Ireland
- Il Gattopardo, Milan, Italy, 2001
- Kruisherenhotel Maastricht, the Netherlands, 2005
- **Selexyz Dominican Bookstore Maastricht, the Netherlands, 2007**
- Duddell's London (London, UK)
- Barcelona Supercomputing Barcelona, Spain, 2005
- **St John in Waterloo Church, London, UK, 2022**
- St Martin in the fields Church, London, UK, 2008
- Kaos Temple Llanera, Asturias, Spain, 2015
- Waanders in de Broeren, Zwolle, the Netherlands, 2013
- Montante Cultural Center Buffalo NY USA 2000
- Sinan Books Poetry store, Shanghai, China 2019
- The Jane Restaurant, Antwerp, Belgium
- Santa Maria de Vilanova de la Barca Lleida, Spain 2016
- San Juan de Ruesta Hermitage Ruesta Spain 2022
- De Petrus Library, Museum, and Community Center, Vught, the Netherlands, 2018
- Sheerness Dockyard Church, England, UK, 2023
- Kruisherenhotel Maastricht, the Netherlands, 2017

MODERATE

- Theater school 'Arsenale', Milan, Italy, 1978
- Library and Lecture Hall Madrid, Spain, 2003
- Cultural Center of the Piarists in Lavapiés Madrid, Spain, 2004
- Chapel of Saint-John in Cathedral of Our Lady, Café Cathedral, Antwerp, Belgium, 2018
- Monastery of San Juan, Burgos, Spain, 2015
- **St. Michaelis Church, Neustadt am Rennsteig, 2019**
- Art in the Chapels Brittany, France, 1992
- Club Paradiso, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 1968
- **St Simon's Episcopal Church, Miami, 2003**
- The Limelight Club, NYC, 1986

- Mediateca di Santa Teresa, Milan, Italy, 2023
- Children's Day School San Francisco, CA, USA, 2015

FEW

- **Volumnia, Church of Sant'Agostino, Piacenza, Italy**
- The church of St. Katharina, Hirschberg, Germany, 2023
- Espai Santa Eulalia, Gironella, Spain, 2020
- Culture House DC, Washington DC, USA, 2013
- Jesus, Son of Mary Mosque Syracuse, NY, USA, 2015
- Grey Nuns Reading Room, Montreal, Canada, 2014
- The Limelight David Barton Gym, USA
- Taft's Ale house Cincinnati, OH, USA
- Museum F. Messina in Church of San Sisto Al Carrobbio, Milan, Italy, 1974
- **Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Brussels, Belgium, 2000**
- Théâtre Paradoxe Montreal, Canada, 2009
- Church of San Teonisto Museum, Treviso, Italy
- König Galerie Berlin, Germany, 2015

MINIMUM

- **Piazza Alicia Salemi, Italy, 1997**
- Matthäuskirche, Spechtsbrunn, Germany, 2021
- Santa Caterina church museum, Treviso, Italy
- Nyamata Genocide Memorial Center, Kigali, Rwanda, 2016
- St Mary the Virgin in Fordwich, Kent, UK
- Royal Abbey of Fontevraud, France, 2014
- Former Church of San Carpofo, University room, Milan, Italy, 1993
- Former Church of San Vittore and 40 Martiri, Exposition hall, Milan, Italy, 2023
- Former Church of San Pellegrino, Lucca, Italy, 2015
- St. George Church in Hatay district, Iskenderun, Turkey, 2023
- **Basilica di San Francesco, Assisi, Italy**

ZERO

- Church of San Bonaventura, Canale Monterano, Italy
- **Church of San Carlo, Macconago, Italy**
- Church of San Gallo, Venice, Italy
- Church of San Ruffino, Cerendero, Italy
- Church of Sant'Egidio, Bussana Vecchia, Italy
- Church of San Giovanni ad Insulam, Isola del Gran Sasso nel Teramano, Italy
- The Church of Sanzanello, Spoleto, Italy
- The Church of San Ciro a Maredolce, Palermo, Italy
- Abbey of San Giuliano, Monteluco, Italy
- The Church of San Pantaleo, Martis, Italy

NOTES

1. The ceremony involves the closure of spaces, the interruption of masses, and the dissolution of the community that has formed. These activities are symbolized by the building. By bringing them to an end, the ritual marks the conclusion of the church's vitality, and in this sense, the building fades away.

2. How indicated in the website: Orario Sante Messe - Il motore di ricerca per gli orari delle Sante Messe

3. Calculation based on a 40 hour work week

4. "Fewer and fewer churches and priests in the last 30 years", Carlo Marroni e Antonello Cherchi, *Il Sole 24ore*

5. Policies that prefigure for national and local churches a more religious and spiritual presence, more involved in the life of the people, more at the service of the marginalized, less prone to interventions and cultural-identity oppositions. Franco Garelli 'Religion and politics in Italy: the new trends, Le nuove strategie per la chiesa e il mondo cattolico', p. 26

6. Code of Canon Law, Book IV, Part III, Canon 1214

'Doesn't God dwell here anymore?'. International conference on cultural heritage, organized in November 2018 for Guidelines for Decommissioning and Ecclesial Management of a Former Church.

7. ISTAT (the National Institute of Statistics) data 2022

8. According to ISTAT data only 8% of practicing Catholics are young people (under 21), data 2022

9. The Fondo Ambiente Italiano (FAI) is the National Trust of Italy Established in 1975. Its purpose is to protect elements of Italy's physical heritage which might otherwise be lost. So far, there are 70 institutional assets in the Foundation's care throughout Italy.

10. Good Lands <https://good-lands.org>

11. Giulia Foscari, "Elements Of Venice. Foreword by Rem Koolhaas" 2014

12. Easterling, Keller. "Enduring Innocence: Global Architecture and Its Political Masquerades" (2005).

13. Greed, Clara. "Sacred Spaces in Urban Environments." Professor Emerita of Inclusive Urban Planning, University of the West of England, Bristol.

14. Documentary 'Divine Beauty: Discovering Sacred Art in Italy with Alberto Angela', 2017

15. Documentary 'Divine Beauty: Discovering Sacred Art in Italy with Alberto Angela', 2017

16. Franco Garelli 'Religion and politics in Italy: the new trends, Le nuove strategie per la chiesa e il mondo cattolico', p. 26

17. Gianfranco Gasperini e Giuseppe Cucchi 'L'influenza vaticana sull'azione internazionale dell'Italia' su *Limes: Rivista italiana di Geopolitica*

18. Included in the list of the seven sacraments at the Second Council of Lyon in 1274 as part of the profession of faith required of Michael VIII Palaiologos

19. Alessandro Barbero, National History Festival Lecture 'The birth of the traditional family and the influence of the Church.', 2019

20. Silvia Federici, *Witches, Witch-Hunting and Women*, PM Press 2018, p. 52

21. Catechism catholic church, sixth Commandment, 2332, 2333

Look at Zan Law 2020 and the church's anti-abortion stance 2022

22. Canon law (in Latin *ius canonicum*) is the set of legal norms of positive or natural law, regulations and doctrinal documents formulated by ecclesiastical authority in order to regulate the activity of a Christian Church and its faithful as well as its relations with external society

Code of Canon Law, Book IV, Part III, Canon 1214

23. Anson, Peter F. Croft-Fraser, e H. A. Reinhold. *Churches: Their Plan and Furnishing*. Bruce Publishing Company, 1 gennaio 1948.

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25. Pier Vittorio Aureli and Maria Shéhérazade Giudici, "On architecture of Sacred Space in Rituals and Walls: The architecture of Sacred Space, 2016.

26. 'Third place' concept of the Ray Oldenburg to address the church, a place that wasn't home or work, but a third gathering point.

27. Code of Canon Law, Book II, Part II, Canon 391 - §1. It is the duty of the diocesan bishop to govern the particular Church entrusted to him with legislative, executive and judicial power, in accordance with the law.

28. De Ridder, Roel. "Beyond Functionalism: How the Everyday and the Utopian Meet in Reused Parish Churches."

29. The Sanctuary is a place of worship that arises from the will of the people, spontaneously. It is recognized as a sacred space, but is not necessarily linked to ecclesiastical authorities

The church and basilica are born directly at the behest of the Vatican, which imposes its vision of sacredness and calls the faithful to it.

30. How to mourn. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wZBFDMqvX4>

31. Mathias Rollot, *Obsolescence: Opening Up the Impossible*, Metis Presses, 2016

32. AWO Arbeiterwohlfahrt's : German social welfare organization focusing on the well-being of workers and their families

The potential for a multifunctional meeting space with various activities has not been explored in this case.

33. In Italy in Article 3 of Decree Law 63/2013

34. Local benefactor Liza Jackson donated the land in 1945, enabling the church to obtain mission status.

35. National movement to connect faith communities and Greenhorns in realizing the transformative potential of their land. The first FaithLands Gathering was hosted at Paicines Ranch in California in March 2018

36. Italian national monuments are those monuments that the Italian state has classified as relevant for their historical characteristics, landmark symbols for the national community. This entails some extraordinary state contributions in favor of the Basilica to carry out routine maintenance work

37. Frescoed by the most distinguished artists of the time, such as Giotto,

Cimabue and Simone Martini.

38. Statement by the Municipality of Milan on the 2019-2021 works schedule for the Macconago Neighbourhood Plan

39. Proposals for collaboration with the European Oncological Institute (IEO), the nearby 14th-century Sforza Castle, the diocese of Milan and the 'Parco sud di Milano' association.

40. Schena, Roberto. Milano. La città dei 70 borghi. Illustrated by Ettore Tamagnini and Barbara Trabalzini. Magenes, 2017

41. The significance of failure, 2012, Wolff, H & Wolff

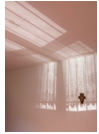
42. How to mourn. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wZBFDMqvX4>

43. Concept by sociologist and theologian Ray Oldenburg

44. The concept of '*degrowth*', by economist and theorist Serge Latouche, proposes alternative ideas to those of the dominant economy, which is often based on the illusion of infinite growth in a world with limited resources.

45. Donna Haraway, *Situated Knowledge*, p.590

ICONOGRAPHY



Self-made, 2022, Crucifix hanging in the bedroom in a house of Valdieri [Photograph]



Xavier Gorau, 2015, Procession and Transfer of Sacred Objects, Belfort [Photograph]



Self-made, 2023, Parking in Trastevere, Rome [Photograph]



Self-made, 2023, View of the church and loggias of Santa Chiara from Porto Maurizio [Photograph]



S. Botticelli, 1477, Painting 'Primavera', Galleria degli Uffizi, Firenze [Detail]



Michelangelo, 1498, sculpture Madonna della Pietà, Saint Peter's Basilica, Vatican City [Detail]



Self-made, 2023, Detail Loggia of Psyche in the Farnese Palace, Rome [Photograph]



Xavier Gorau, 2015, Dernière messe à l'église Notre-Dame-des-Anges avant sa démolition, Belfort [Photograph]



Self-made, 2022, View of Madonna della Costa from the port of Sanremo [Photograph]



Self-made, 2024, Entrance to the Cathedral of San Donato, Mondovi Piazza [Photograph]



Self-made, 2022, Flower market in Piazza Duomo Cremona [Photograph]



Self-made, Borromini's Church of Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza, Rome [Photograph]



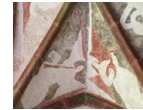
Arnolfo di Cambi, Brunelleschi, Giotto, 1296-, Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Flower with bell tower [Detail]



Unknown, 532-547, Basilica of San Vitale, Ravenna [Photograph]



Manuscript, parchment with 'De vita Christi', by Ludolf of Saxony, Liber II



Self-Made, 2023, Entrance to Saint-Herbot Cathedral, Brittany [Photograph]



Cesare Cantù, 1858, Iron Crown of Lombardy [Incision]



Unknown, 12th century, Family tree, a page from Liber Floridus [Drawing]



Eiichi Yamamoto, 1973, Scenes of 'Beladonna of Sadness' [Movie]



Anthony van Dyck, c. 1639, Marie Ruthven, Lady Van Dyck, Warsaw [Detail]



Jan van Eyck, c. 1425, The Ghent Altarpiece [Detail]



Cima da Conegliano, 1504, Madonna and Child, Uffizi, Firenze [Detail]



Antonello da Messina, c. 1460, 'Vergine leggente', museo Poldi Pezzoli di Milano [Photograph]



Self-made, 2023, Palazzo Bianco Exhibition Hall, Genoa [Photograph]



Frisoni, Cavagna Sangiuliani, 1794, The cathedral in the Historical Memoirs of Monza and its court [Drawing]



Pietro Perugino, 1500-1504, Marriage of the Virgin, Milano [Painting]



Unknown, about 1535, formerly known as Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury, [Detail]



Sandro Botticelli, 1489, The Annunciation of Cestello, Uffizi Gallery, Florence [Detail]



Alessandro Allori(?), 1540, Portrait of a Florentine Noblewoman Italian, San Diego [Detail]



Anthony van Dyck, 1624, St Rosalie in Glory, Menil Collection [Detail]



Hugo van der Goes, 1479, The fall, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria [Detail]



Antoon Van Dyck, 1624, Portrait of Caterina Balbi Du-razzo, Royal Palace of Genoa [Detail]



IBA Thüringen, 2019, Sanitary facilities, a kitchenette and lockers in the church hall.



IBA Thüringen, 2019, Church corner to sleep in [Photograph]



Michelangelo, 1537-1541, Last Judgment Fresco Cappella Sistina, Vatican [Detail]



Self-made, St Mark's Church in Venice, Sacredness and Spatiality Study [Diagram]



Jean-Christophe Guillaume, 2021, Hundreds of migrants are in their second month of hunger strikes Photograph]



Camille Gijs, 2022, Women corner where to sleep [Photograph]



Finegold Alexander Architects, 2018, Exterior of The Lucas, Boston [Photograph]



Finegold Alexander Architects, 2018, Entrance of The Lucas, Boston [Photograph]



Delfino Sisto Legnani, 2017, Cruising the Church of Saint Augustine, Piacenza [Photograph]



Delfino Sisto Legnani, 2017, Volumnia, temporary furniture exhibition by Gabriella Crespi, Piacenza [Photo-



Studio Bolles+Wilson 2013, Playground in the new kindergarten, Münster [Photograph]



Archive photo, c. 1950, Interior of St. Sebastian Church, Münster [Photograph]



- , Giotto's frescoes from the cycle of St Francis in the Upper Basilica, Assisi [Photograph]



2000, Restoration And Consolidation Of The Lower Piazza Of The Basilica, Assisi [Photograph]



Unknown, 2017, Dominican Church as library, Maastricht [Photograph]



Archive photo, c. 1884-1899, Dominican Church as city store, Maastricht [Photograph]



Roberto Collovà, 1998, View of reconstruction of the Mother Church, Salemi [Photograph]



R. Collovà, 1998, Reconstruction details of the Mother Church and Alicia Square, Salemi



Archive photo, c. 1899-1903, Dominican Church as flower market, Maastricht [Photograph]



Unknown, 2004, Dominican Church as bicycle depot, Maastricht [Photograph]



Roberto Collovà, 1998, Details of the redesign of Alicia Square, Salemi [Photograph]



Daide Polimeni, 2020 Video 'The magic of Macconago from a bird's eye view, Macconago [Video]



Eric Parry Architects 2022, Central nave of St John's Church in Waterloo, London [Photograph]



Eric Parry Architects 2022, Reconverted crypt in St John's Church in Waterloo London [Photograph]



Daide Polimeni, 2020 Video 'The magic of Macconago from a bird's eye view, Macconago



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The Urban Vegetable Project, 2013, Moses Kashem of St. Simons Farm [Photograph]



Unknowns, 2013, St. Simons churchgoers at mass [Photograph]



Archive photo, 1925-29, the Interior of San Carlo, Macconago [Photograph]



Self-made, 2022, Entrance Mother Church of Gibellina Nuova, Sicily [Photograph]

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