CONGREGATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS:

Case studies in Bologna and Milan

Supervisor: Prof. Siniša Zrinščak

Ph.D. student : Martina Mignardi

INDEX

CHAPTER 1

" Religion and Human Rights: a sociological perspective"

CHAPTER 2

"Congregations and Human rights in USA and Switzerland"

Chapter 3

"Congregational Studies in Italy"

Chapter 4

"Research questions, Hypothesis, Methodology and Challenges"

Chapter 5

"Congregations in Bologna and Milan: Results"

Introduction

This study deals with the ambivalent relationship between religion and human rights. One particular aspect of this relationship is that religion has to be considered a dynamic social phenomenon conceptualized in terms of practices of worship, contemplation, socialization, and involvement in religious groups' activities including human rights and humanitarian action. The internal patterns of religious traditions in their relationship toward human rights necessitate being examined at the level of religious congregations and their internal conceptualization of human rights, together with their application of human rights principles and practices. In this perspective, this contribution focuses on the field of Congregational studies, considered a privileged approach to further develop the sociological analysis of the nexus between religion and human rights.

Understanding the extent to which congregations are engaged in addressing social needs, promoting or preventing social and cultural change, and in fostering or restraining gender equality, homosexuals inclusiveness, and self-determination in end-of-life issues, is crucial in determining how religious congregations deal with human rights.

The perspective is to go beyond the value frameworks and paradigms of the different religious traditions, and detect how specific issues related to human rights are declined in practice.

Structure of the thesis

The *first* chapter of this thesis explores the relationship between religion and human rights from a sociological perspective, considering the different approaches and stances that characterize the analysis of this relationship. In particular, it deals with the role of sociological analysis of human rights in addressing the contemporary issues, tensions, and debates within the national and global scenario, raised by some challenging circumstances. Among them, the context of post-secularism which emphasized the return of religion in the public sphere (even though some authors claim that religion has always been public), the increasing religious diversity in Western societies, and the growth of religious restrictions, blasphemy laws, and religious hatred episodes around the world.

The *second* chapter highlights the importance of Congregational studies in the development of the sociological analysis of the nexus between religion and human rights. In particular it provides an excursus on American and European Congregational studies, and analyzes the concept of *congregation*. Moreover, it systematizes the findings of the National Congregation Studies in the United States and in Switzerland.

The *third* chapter deals with the challenges of Italian religious diversity. First, it delineates the recent transformations in the Italian socio-religious field, underlying how the contemporary process of global mobility has triggered a transition from the social, cultural, and religious homogeneity of society to the acknowledgment of diversity. Against this background, the chapter considers the dimension of the normative practices that regulate religious diversity, depicting the pyramidal articulation of religious denominations within the Italian legal system. Later, it introduces the Italian City Congregation study and provides the socio-religious profiles of Bologna and Milan, the two case studies of the survey.

The *fourth* chapter presents the research questions and the hypothesis of this study. Then it addresses the methodology of the survey - largely drawn on the National Congregation Study approach - portraying the religious diversity of Bologna and Milan and deepening the mapping phase, describing the structure of the questionnaire employed and discussing some specific language issues, depicting the challenges of the contact and interview phases, and finally presenting the list of religious communities mapped and interviewed in Bologna and Milan.

The *fifth* chapter explores how - and if - religious congregations support human rights practices and principles. First, it considers the main characteristics of congregations concerning: membership tendency, participations in rituals and activities, social composition, political and theological orientations, and places of worship. Then it investigates the civic engagement of congregations in Bologna and Milan considering their social, caritative and political activities, along with their interreligious commitment. Later, it addresses some 'hot' issues linked to ethical\moral\religious values. In Italy, the rising role of the media, together with the development of a new international discursive context regarding human rights rights, and the influence of religion-centered debates in neighboring countries, favored a polarization - between secular and religious stances - on sensitive issues

related to ethical\moral values. This new Italian debate arose in the 2000s and mainly concerned three particular fields: gender, bioethics and sexuality. In this perspective, the last chapter deals with the role of women and gender equality in the religious sphere, with euthanasia and homosexuals' civil and religious rights. The first two issues are addressed through the stances of religious leaders towards the female spiritual leadership and end-of-life issues. The issue of homosexuality is examined through the attitudes of religious leaders towards: the full-fledged membership of homosexual individuals; the possibility for homosexuals to hold all of the volunteer lay positions open to other members; the spiritual leadership open to people regardless of their sexual orientation; and the possibility of performing the wedding of a same-sex couple.

Central question

The central question of this research is as follows: *What is the engagement of local religious groups in Bologna and Milan in relation to human rights?*

More specifically this research question addresses caritative, social, and interreligious activities of religious communities in two cities - Bologna and Milan - and their civic engagement practices. Moreover, it explores the attitudes of religious communities toward specific human rights issues, such as euthanasia, homosexuality, gender equality, and the rights of immigrants.

Method

This doctoral research adopts the Congregational studies approach as a privileged methodology to further investigate the relationship between religion and human rights (Witte and Green 2012), and assumes religious congregations as the cardinal observation point. This study is largely drawn on the approaches and research methodology of the National Congregation Study (NCS), first conducted in the USA by Chaves (Chaves *et al.* 1999; Chaves 2004, 2018; Chaves and Anderson 2008, 2014) and in Switzerland by Monnot and Stolz (Stolz *et al.* 2011; Stolz and Chaves 2017; Stolz and Monnot 2017, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c).

This project carries out a survey on religious congregations in two Italian cities: Bologna and Milan. In particular, I conducted the first City Congregation Study (CCS) in Italy, combining the quantitative NCS methodology and as well used the mapping studies (O'Gorman and MacIntosh 2015) for the analysis of religious diversity in Bologna and Milan, detecting the different locally based congregations with their particular organizations following 3 steps: *first*, I adapted and developed the questionnaire previously employed in the NCS - Switzerland, with the further addition of a specific focus for the investigation of congregations and human rights issues. These adjunctive questions have been taken from the NCS - USA and NSRL (National Survey of Religious Leaders) questionnaires. The *second* step of this survey produced a complete list of local religious groups in Bologna and Milan, using different types of sources. The mapping of religious congregations identified 727 religious communities, 263 in the metropolitan city of Bologna and 464 in the metropolitan city of Milan (158 and 260 Catholics; 105 and 204 minorities respectively).

During the *third* phase, one key informant - the religious leader - per religious community has been interviewed face to face. This survey submitted a total number of 476 questionnaires: 174 religious leaders were interviewed in Bologna (122 Catholics and 52 minorities) out of 263 mapped congregations (66% of response rate), while in Milan, 302 interviews have been conducted (195 Catholics and 107 minorities) out of 464 mapped congregations (65% of response rate). Data analysis has been conducted with the SPSS statistical package.

Results

The findings of this study (a) shed light on the religious diversity of Bologna and Milano; (b) portray the structure of local religious communities, and highlight the differences between the two cities; (c) deepen the levels of civic engagement of congregations in Bologna and Milan, underlying the differences among the two cities; and (d) explore the attitudes of religious communities towards gender equality, end-of-life, and homosexuality issues.

CHAPTER 1

" Religion and Human Rights: a sociological perspective"

This chapter first presents the premises on which the sociology of human rights initiated its genesis. Then, it deals with the sociological approaches toward religion and human rights, and their role in addressing the contemporary issues, tensions, and debates within the national and global scenario, raised by several circumstances, such as the context of post-secularism which emphasized the return of religion in the public sphere (even though some authors claim that religion has always been public), the increasing religious diversity of the Western societies, and the growth of religious restrictions, blasphemy laws, and religious hatred episodes around the world. Moreover, it examines the ambivalent relationship that religion and human rights can assume, analyzing two antithetical approaches structuring this relationship. In fact, on one hand, religion is considered as something that conflicts with the human rights discourse; on the other hand, it is regarded as a determinant for dialogue and peace processes and charity activities and as a cardinal factor in the development of human rights issues.

1. The development of the Sociology of Human Rights

It is well established that the study of human rights emerged in the aftermath of World War II atrocities (Donnelly 1999) and the creation of the United Nations with the consequent formulation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Morsink 1999). However it is only in the last few decades that the human rights culture has encountered a global diffusion, mainly attested in the massive production of international human rights law, and in the public adoption of human rights discourses (Morgan 2009). Human rights practices and rhetoric are so universally widespread, that many academics were induced to talk about "the age of rights" (Bobbio 1996:54), and "the rise and rise of human rights" (Sellars 2002:112). Among the main reasons that led the human rights discourse to occupy such a prominent position, there is their 'political agnosticism' (Anleu 1999; Morgan 2009). Indeed they can be employed in support of a multitude of interests, disregarding where those interests stand on the political spectrum, and can frame even opposing interests. For instance, the pro-life and pro-choice movements, where both factions rely on the language of rights to frame their divergent claims. Together with the widespread of human rights culture, also the academic study of human rights - until the 90s mainly dominated by legal, international relations, and political science analyses - has expanded and has increasingly come to involve scholars from a broad range of disciplines, including sociology (Morgan and Turner 2009). An important determinant for the late engagement of sociology with human rights has been a certain degree of skepticism towards the normative idea of individual rights, which can be found in the sociological tradition itself (Deflem and Chicione 2011; Turner 1993, 2006; Somers and Roberts, 2008). According to many authors the heritage of sociologists such as Max Weber - who underlined the decline of natural law and the related rise of juridical rationalism - and Karl Marx - who considered individual rights as mere ideology - has long hindered the development of a sociology of human rights. The assumption that individuals have rights on the basis of their human nature was predominantly considered a philosophical - and sometimes an ideological - abstraction. The skepticism of important sociologists such as Durkheim, Marx, and Weber towards the hypothesis - and the necessity - for a universalistic and normative basis for human rights

emphasized the roles of law and morality in relation to the development of particular societal constructions. Another obstacle - posed mainly by Marx and Durkheim - was the idea that rights are inherent in society and/or the state, rather than in the individual. As a consequence, there was the conviction that the debate around human rights had to be bound to the capacity of the state and society to ensure the enjoyment of those rights (Madsen and Verschraegen 2013). In this regard, it should not be surprising that during the post-war era, the sociology of citizenship in many ways came to function as a sort of surrogate of the sociology of human rights (Somers and Roberts 2008; Turner 1993). Nonetheless, the concept of citizenship - defined by Marshall (Marshall 1950) as an involvement in the civic, political, and welfare institutions of modern societies - offers «a theoretically viable and empirically tangible sociological substitute to the abstract and universalist idea of human rights» (Madsen and Verschraegen 2013). The idea of citizenship was connected with the modern state as a source of particularistic, state-dependent and territorially circumscribed rights and freedoms. According to the majority of the post-war sociologists carrying out research in Western societies, such tangible civil and political rights had more relevance and significance in the configuration of social life than abstract human rights, which were broadly «beyond the scope of national sociologies in which the boundaries of the nation-state have been assumed to correspond to "society"» (Hynes *et al*. 2010:812). Although these 'epistemological obstacles' (Madsen and Verschraegen 2013), the reflection around the field of the sociology of human rights, started in the '90s mainly thanks to the contribution of Turner (Turner 1993; Turner *et al*. 1995) who grounded human rights in a foundationalist approach - considering them as foundational moral principles based upon human ontological frailty, the precariousness of social institutions, and moral sympathy - and Waters (1996), who advanced a social constructionist position, where human rights were social constructs and instruments of sociopolitical relations. While Turner stressed the importance of considering these perspectives as two concomitant discourses, arguing that universalism ontology of human rights intended to cooperate to the "universal basis for normative evaluation of rights abuse" (Turner 1997:566); Waters proposed another stance by opposing two universalization processes: human frailty and human interest (Waters 1996; Breskaya *et al*. 2018). Starting from the early 2000s, the sociology of human rights initiated his genesis, with an effort to draw a distinction between human rights and citizenship rights (Turner 2009;

Somers and Roberts 2008); and to introduce sociological cardinal principles for the universal character of human rights (Joas 2013; Nash 2015; Breskaya *et al*. 2018).

2. Religion and human rights: a recent sociological perspective

Over the last decade, the search for a new disciplinary language and the creation of theoretical discourses and topics of research in the sociology of human rights, resulted in a growing number of empirical studies on human rights culture and religious freedom regulations, which contributed to the development of the sociological analysis of human rights and religion (Breskaya *et al*. 2018). Such sociological analysis has at its core the contemporary issues, tensions, and debates on human rights and religion within the national and global scenario; and cannot disregard the ambivalent relationship between religion and human rights (Witte and Green 2012). Banchoff and Wuthnow (2011) proposed two antithetical approaches to structure the relationship between religion and human rights. The approach of the opposition of these two concepts suggests that the «modern conception of human rights triumphed only as traditional religious authorities eroded» (Banchoff and Wuthnow 2011:3) and it is not possible to reconcile religious precepts with individual freedoms and rights (Giordan and Zrinščak 2018). The alternative approach highlights the possibility of cooperation of religions with human rights fundamentals by "*providing a 'transcendental foundation' for the concept of human dignity or by practicing human rights principles*" (Giordan and Zrinščak 2018:63). These two different approaches fall at the two extremes of the continuum of the 'ambivalence of the sacred' (Appleby 2000), where religion can be the ground for dialogue and peace processes and charity activities; and at the same time the determinant of persecutions and acts of violence perpetrated in the name of God (Witte and Green 2012). In the contemporary world, religions are still key factors in influencing - according to the different purposes and interpretations that social and institutional actors attribute to religion - positive and harmful practices in different social, cultural and geopolitical contexts. As some religious skeptics argue, human rights norms and formulations challenge and run counter to some cardinal beliefs of various religious traditions (Witte and Green 2012). It is arduous to refer to a single set of precepts of religions or beliefs - considering the various interpretations of the sacred texts to be found in religious

teachings - but it is possible to recognize a set of recurring precepts that may be the cause for such clashes (De Jong 2007). These conflicts are mainly concerned with some contemporary 'rights discourse' which are in tension with some teaching and practices of a broad range of religious traditions, such as the issues of gender and homosexuality (Weller 2007). On the other hand, it should be stressed that religious doctrines have played an important role in the development of human rights discourses and have brought to it the charitable impulse and non-consumerist attitudes to the demand for rights (Harhoff 2007). Furthermore, some religious traditions have always been committed to religious freedom, assumed as a principle of theological anthropology grounded in a particular interpretation of the divine nature and the human and the relationship between them (Weller 2007). As stated by Witte and Green: «*Each tradition has produced a number of the basic building blocks of a comprehensive theory and law of religious rights - conscience, dignity, reason, liberty, equality, tolerance, love, openness, responsibility, justice, mercy, righteousness, accountability, covenant, and community, among other cardinal concepts. Each tradition has developed its own internal system of legal procedures and structures for the protection of rights, which historically have and still can serve as both prototypes and complements for secular legal systems. Each tradition has its own advocates and prophets, ancient and modern, who have worked to achieve a closer approximation of human rights ideals*» (2012:). Hence, it is possible to affirm that religious values and human rights are not necessarily mutually incompatible and that their overlapping paths do not always lead to a conflict, but also that human rights and religion appear to be interrelated in the sense that they exercise a mutual influence on one another. The impact of religion on human rights has been widely ascertained, but whether human rights have performed an analogous role the other way around as a doctrinal source of stimulation in religion is perhaps less obvious. In fact, integrating human rights norms within religious traditions' polities and theologies, would challenge the structure of religious bodies and would raise many inconvenient issues (Witte and Green 2012).

2.1 Sociological approaches to the analysis of religion and human rights

Nowadays, the sociological analysis of human rights and religion has a cardinal function in addressing the contemporary challenges posed by several relevant circumstances. Among

them, increasing religious diversity of Western societies, the growth of religious restrictions, blasphemy laws, and religious hatred episodes around the world (Finke 1990; Finke *et al.* 2017; Grim and Finke 2006, 2007). Another significant issue is the context of post-secularism which emphasized the return of religion in the public sphere - even though some authors claim that religion has always been public - and its implications for cultural, social and religious processes.

Moreover, this sociological focus allows us to further situate the place of human rights within religion and *vice-versa,* analyzing how - and if - they exercise a mutual influence on one another. In this perspective, the sociological analysis of human rights and religion can be articulated according to several different perspectives. Among them, the first perspective is the Church-State relations which «go to the heart of religion and human rights» (Witte and Green 2012). This approach deals with lived, experienced and governed religion; and shows how states regulate different religions. The patterns of Church-State relations across the world's legal systems are heterogeneous, reflecting differences in history, philosophy, religious demography, culture, constitutional and political systems, and several other factors. Moreover, Church-State relations in every country are in constant flux. Sometimes these relationships undergo radical transformations, but more frequently, they remain steady. However, a broad variety of relationships are recognizable, and the nature of these relationships can have significant implications for more general human rights implementation (Durham 2012). The main outlook of this approach is the difference between the recognition and rights of various religions in line with different Church-state traditions we can find among different countries (Ferrari 2003; Bader 2007). This includes both normative or legal positions at the state level, and the factual positions and opportunities in various social fields, such as education, workplace or family relations; which usually result in different degrees of religious freedom. A second approach is the one which analyzes the role and the concrete implications of different religious teachings, values, and doctrine for the improvement or limitation of specific human rights, such as rights of women, children, and minorities, rights to education, healthcare, and labor, and rights to peace (Rehman 2007; Sherr 2007; Leith 2007). Another approach is the one which looks at how specific religious rights are respected and which further differentiates among legal or social/political proclamations, and the reality where these proclamations are - as witnessed by a growing

body of scholarship - rather restricted. This approach includes the search for the legal, political, and social determinants that affect the implementation of religious freedom in particular contexts (Fox 2015; Durham 2012; Richardson 2006, 2015; McCrea 2016); the analysis of the role of the European Court of Human Rights in protecting religious freedom (Fokas and Richardson 2017); or many large scales comparative research on discrimination in the field of religious rights (Finke 2013; Fox 2015). The research strategy to measure religious discrimination around the world and the impact of state's favoritism, political regimes, social and cultural pressures, and the role of an independent judiciary resulted in the identification of sociological levels of religious discrimination (Finke *et al.* 2017) and social factors correlated with them (Breskaya *et al.* 2018). While not underestimating the relevance of these approaches, this research adopts the congregational studies approach as a privileged methodology to further investigate the relationship between religion and human rights, and assumes religious congregations as the cardinal observation point.

CHAPTER 2

"Congregations and Human rights in USA and Switzerland"

One particular aspect of the relationship between human rights and religion is that the latter has to be considered as a dynamic social phenomenon conceptualized in terms of practices of worship, contemplation, socialization, and involvement in religious groups' activities including human rights and humanitarian action. The internal patterns of religious traditions in their relationship toward human rights necessitate being examined at the level of religious congregations and their internal conceptualization of human rights, together with their application of human rights principles and practices. In this perspective, this chapter focuses on the field of congregational studies, considered a privileged approach to further develop the sociological analysis of the nexus between religion and human rights. The first part of this chapter, provides an excursus on American and European congregational studies, focusing on the most significant research in this field - the National Congregation Studies (NCS) - and analyzing the concept of congregation. The second part highlights congregational studies' relevance from a human rights perspective.

Relying on the analysis of the findings of the National Congregation Studies in the USA and in Switzerland, it explores many key features of American and Swiss congregations' civil engagement - such as congregational efforts in social service programs and project, and nature\extent of congregations' political activities - describing how various structural conditions in congregations relate to the support of particular human rights.

1. Congregational studies in USA and Europe

In recent decades, there has been a considerable increase in scholarly attention to the meso-level phenomenon of religious congregations (Chaves 2004; Ammerman 1997; Harris 1995; Monnot and Stolz 2020). The scholarly study of the dynamics of congregational life has developed into a separate academic discipline of study called congregational studies (Carroll *et al.* 1986; Ammerman *et al.* 1998). This approach applies quantitative methods of research and focuses on religious communities instead of individuals and their specific beliefs and practices. Congregational studies provide representative data revealing many aspects of religious congregations, including clergy characteristics, social composition, norms and values, social and political activities, worship services, and social dynamics in collective religious life.

1.1 Defining Congregations

In congregational studies, scholars must define and operationalize their unit of observation by specifying what counts as a congregation and what should be excluded from observation (Monnot and Stolz 2018). The term *congregation* has been defined in different ways. Harris, for example, defines *congregations* as *'local institutions in which people regularly gather for what they feel to be religious purposes'* (1996:13). Ammerman (1998) describes *congregations* as *'local, voluntary, lay-led, religious assemblies'* and as *'places where ordinary people gather (…). If congregations do nothing else, they provide a way for people to worship'* (1998:7). Cnaan and Bodie (2001) are the first researchers who employed an operational definition of congregation to create a census of religious congregations. They defined *congregations* as: "any religious gathering that meets the following seven criteria: (1) a cohesive group of people with a shared identity; (2) a group that meets regularly on an ongoing basis; (3) a group that comes together primarily for worship and has accepted teachings, rituals, and practices; (4) a group that meets and worships at a designated place; (5) a group that gathers for worship outside the regular purposes and location of a living or work space; (6) a group with an identified religious leader; and (7) a group with an official name and some formal structure that conveys its purpose and identity" (2001:563-564).

A more transversal and adaptable definition to both the European and the American contexts is the one given by Chaves[1]. He defines *congregation* as: "*a social institution in which individuals who are not all religious specialists gather in physical proximity to one another, frequently and at regularly scheduled intervals, for activities and events with explicitly religious content and purpose, and in which there is continuity over time in the individuals who gather, the location of the gathering, and the nature of the activities and events at each gathering. This distinguishes congregations from other religious social forms such as monasteries or denominational agencies, which are constituted mainly, perhaps exclusively, by religious specialists; religious television and radio productions, whose audiences are not in physical proximity to one another; seasonal celebrations, holiday gatherings, and other religious assemblies that may occur at regular but infrequent intervals; rites of passage, corroborees, and other events that occur neither frequently nor at regular intervals; and camp meetings, post-game prayer circles, pilgrimages, religious rock concerts, passion plays, revivals, and other religious social forms that lack continuity across gatherings in participants, location, or content of activities*" (2004:1-2).

This definition enables us to make a distinction between congregations and other social forms of religion, and does not differentiate groups according to a typology, but as specific organizational units regardless of the religious tradition (Monnot and Stolz 2020). Moreover, this definition fits many religious traditions aside from Christianity, Judaism and Islam (Chaves 2004). It should be therefore stressed that even religious traditions that are not organized congregationally elsewhere, such as Hindu traditions or Buddhism, tend to take the congregational form in Western countries (Bankston III and Zhou 2000; Ammerman *et al.* 1998) when they attempt to survive in the diaspora. Monnot and Stolz (2018) operationalized Chaves definition for the census of Swiss religious congregations, giving rules of how empirically include a certain number of phenomena into the domain of observation, thereby excluding other phenomena, as explained in Figure 1.

---

[1] This definition has been used by the National Congregation Studies (NCS) and by the National Congregation Studies - Switzerland to discriminate what should be included and excluded by the domain of observation.
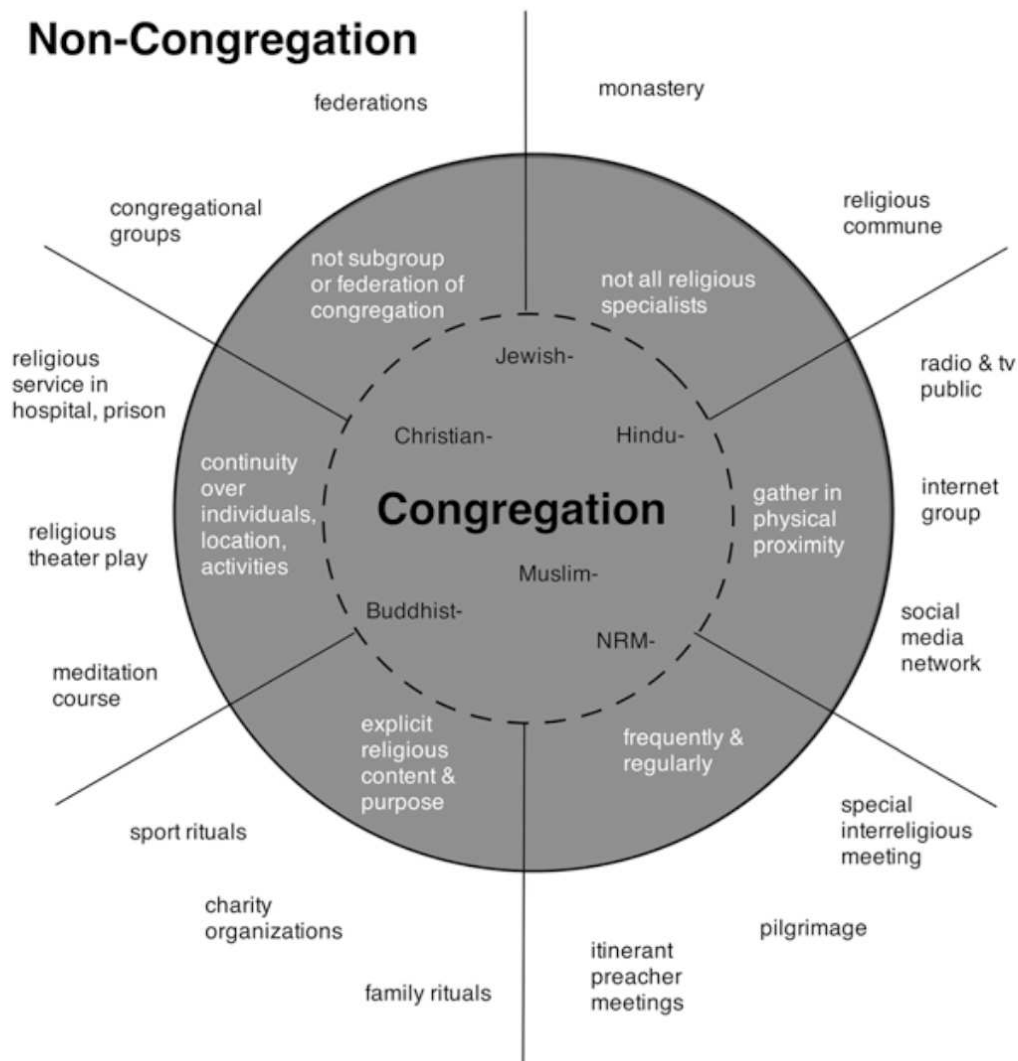
1.2 The Concept of Congregation: from the United States to Europe

The term *congregation* has appeared rather exclusively suited to the American religion field (Ammerman 2018). The diverse and voluntary character of American religious life, where people from all sorts of religious traditions voluntarily organize religious groups and expect to have a say in how things run (Ammerman 2017), is what Warner defined "de facto congregationalism" (1993). According to Warner, congregations constituted '*by those who assemble together rather than by the geographic units into which higher church authorities divide their constituents*' (1994) are the norm in American religious life. This voluntarily self-organizing form of religious communities in the USA, offers a different picture from the

one provided by the parochial model in Europe (Wegner 2017), and this is the reason behind the doubts of the cross-national validity of the concept of the *congregation*. Due to the social and cultural changes in the European religious field, the assumption that the concept of *congregation* is only suitable to the American context, seems to be no longer well founded. There is indeed some reason to wonder whether the religious basis of European societies are shaking enough to open space for the kind of local autonomy and voluntary character that would make some catholic parishes – and religious communities in general – more like congregations (Ammerman 2018). In many European countries - such as Italy, France and Germany - the established majority churches have suffered two generations of constant vertiginous decline. As the number of worshippers has reached record lows, attendance is progressively seen as a voluntary choice, instead of a social convention or family tradition (Davie 2000, 2015). Together with this decline phenomenon, is the presence of significant numbers of immigrants in many European countries that is changing the religious field. In Europe, scholars have recognized the tendency toward a 'congregationalization' of immigrants as a consequence of the diasporas (Monnot and Stolz 2020). Religious traditions and communities are crucial in supporting immigrants in their new countries, and in order to maintain traditions and transmit rituals, they tend to congregate. Over the last few decades, in parallel with the decline in participation in established majority churches and with immigration, alternative spiritualities with collective expressions (e.g. yoga groups for meditation) have emerged alongside the historic minorities (Ammerman 2018). As voluntarily established local spiritual groups, their occurrence reinforces the assumption that the use of the term *congregation* in Europe is no longer incorrect and that this conceptual category has a substantial cross-national validity (Chaves 2018).

1.3 Congregational Studies in the United States

In recent years, few topics in the sociology of religion in the USA have enjoyed more attention than congregations (Demerath and Farnsley 2007). Congregations – the local organizations in and through which people engage in religious activity – are a basic unit of American religious life (Chaves *et al.* 1999), and the principal spot of religious ritual activity. Congregations provide an organizational model, sociability and community, opportunities

for political action and voluntarism, support of religious identities and traditions through education, and engagement in a variety of community and social service activities (Warner 1994; Wuthnow 1991). Sociologists have long acknowledged congregations' relevance as an organizational population and their potential as a research area (Chaves *et al.* 1999). With two-thirds of the US population declaring affiliation with a local congregation, and almost 40% claiming to attend with some frequency, the organizational forms and dynamics of the groups to which they belonged were not irrelevant (Monnot and Stolz 2020). There was good reason to believe that congregations were deeply diversified and that the differences might have real and interesting implications (Chaves 2004).

The study of congregations as units of analysis was initiated in the prominent work of H. Paul Douglass and Edmund deS. Brunner, by combining case studies with surveys of large numbers of congregations in a variety of denominations (Douglass and deS. Brurmer 1935; Morse and deS. Brunner 1923). According to Chaves (1999), the latest studies on congregations can be mainly split into two groups. On the one side, scholars and journalists have conducted case studies of limited numbers of congregations to investigate many issues, such as fundamentalism, conflict, adaptations to changing communities, and leadership. On the other, sociologists have studied broader numbers of congregations conducting surveys mainly within one (or small number) denomination, within a single (or several) limited geographic areas, and selecting congregations randomly. These studies provided information about many topics concerning congregations such as growth and decline, finances, leadership dynamics, and social service activities. The major gap in these works and in the study of congregations in general, has been the absence of a nationally representative sample of congregations. This gap has been fulfilled by the National Congregation Study.

1.3.1 The National Congregation Study

The National Congregation Study (NCS) has been the first systematic survey and a major step forward in congregational studies and the sociology of religion in general (Stolz *et al.* 2011). Besides other significant interfaith studies, this is considered «a decisive methodological breakthrough» (Körs 2018b:120). Focusing on congregations instead of

individuals, it has provided representative data on a variety of topics that were never available before about American collective religious life. NCS was conducted in the USA by Mark Chaves and the team, and produced results on a representative sample of America's churches, synagogues, mosques, and other local places of worship. Based on four nationally representative surveys of congregations from across the religious spectrum – the NCS waves were conducted in 1998, 2006 - 07, 2012, and the last wave in 2018-19[2] – NCS helped to collect information about many aspects of American religious congregations. The National Congregation Study (NCS) was conducted in conjunction with the General Social Survey[3] (GSS), and between the four waves, the NCS findings involved 3,815 congregations. Before 1998, a national snapshot of American congregations did not exist because there was no good way to create a representative national sample (NCSIII Final Report 2015). The problem was that no official register of all congregations subsisted. The National Congregations Study (NCS) employed an innovation in organizational sampling technology to create a nationally representative sample of congregations. NCS gathered data about congregations in this sample by an interview with a key informant from each religious community. The generated dataset filled a gap in the sociological study of congregations by providing data that has been used to draw a national picture of congregations (Chaves *et al.* 1999).

- Making the NCS Sample

The methodological innovation behind the NCS sampling strategy was the insight that organizations attached to a random sample of individuals represent a random sample of organizations. Consequently, it was possible to create a representative sample of religious congregations despite the absence of a sampling frame that entirely lists the existing religious congregations (Chaves *et al.* 1999). This procedure was called 'hypernetwork sampling' (McPherson 1982), and the NCS was the first study implementing this method for religious congregations. It is therefore possible to create a hypernetwork sample of congregations starting with a random sample of individuals and invite them to name the religious congregation to which they are affiliated. The General Social Survey asked

---

[2] Results available at: https://sites.duke.edu/ncsweb/
[3] A national survey conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago

respondents who said they attend religious services at least once a year, to report the name and location of their religious congregation[4]. The congregations named by these people constituted a representative cross-section of American congregations (Chaves *et al.* 1999).

- Collecting NCS Data

The NCS collected congregational data using a one-hour interview with a clergy-person or other leader from each nominated congregation. The majority of the interviews were conducted by telephone, gathering information about multiple aspects of the congregation, including social composition, structure, programs, activities, clergy characteristics, worship services, etc. The four waves of NCS, enabled statements on continuity and change as well as on expected future trends in the USA (Chaves 2020). The NCS examines what people do together in congregations, and what religious communities do together, which tell something significant about the condition of religion in the USA, whatever the specific beliefs and practices of individuals in those congregations (Chaves 2004). In general, the National Congregations Study provides a broad and varied cross-section of American collective religious life, and offers some grounded observations about the state of congregational life. It has been stated that the NCS findings allow to discriminate the truth from false myths about American religious communities, and help to assess the extent to which certain features of congregational life permeate the religious landscape (NCS IV Final Report 2021).

1.4 Congregational Studies in Europe

In Europe, research on the meso-level of social forms of religion, including local religious groups, remained underestimated and greatly neglected for a long time (Monnot and Stolz 2018). On the other hand, theories of secularization, and the great trends of religious developments in a macro-perspective or with individual religiosity in a micro-perspective have dominated the field for decades. A significant increase of interest in local religious

---

[4] The possibility that a congregation will appear in this sample is proportional to its size. Because congregations are nominated by their affiliates, larger congregations have more possibilities to be in the sample than the smaller ones.

groups and in congregational studies has begun only recently. Monnot and Stolz (2018) described how this renewal of interest has its roots in many areas of research. The first area of research identified by the authors resides in the so-called 'religious mapping studies' that began in the 1980s when researchers started regularly counting, describing, and locating all the existing places of worship in a specific territory. This type of research especially concerned religious studies focused on religious diversity and its impact on the socio-religious landscape. This area of research was initially focused on new or immigrant religions[5], but is now progressively including traditional local religious groups. On an international level, one of the first significant studies of this kind was guided by Cnaan and Boddie (2001) in Philadelphia[6]. The second area of research is grounded in the studies of Margaret Harris. In a series of studies begun in the 1990s, she started to guess that local congregations of different religious traditions in the UK behaved in an analogous way to other non profit associations (Harris 1995, 1996). The last area of research that has encouraged interest in congregation studies, is grounded on organizational theories (Scheitle and Dougherty 2008). According to Monnot and Stolz, congregations started to be mainly considered organizational units due to the sociology of organizations (2018). These studies place emphasis on congregations' characteristics such as their size, membership, and activities. The attention toward religious communities in the USA has contributed to an intensive shift in the perspective of the religious field, by describing its transformations and continuities (Monnot and Stolz 2018).

1.4.1 The National Congregations Study – Switzerland

The first survey that looked at the congregation as the basic unit of analysis, compares congregations across religions, and permits to capture the social/organizational diversity of religious groups in a comprehensive way in an European state, was developed by Stolz and team (Monnot and Stolz 2018). Drawing on the experience of and largely replicating the National Congregations Studies conducted in the United States in 1998, 2006-07, 2012 and 2018-19 (Chaves *et al*. 1999; Chaves 2004; Chaves and Anderson 2008, 2014), the National

---

[5] A significant part of the research is specifically interested in Islam in Europe.
[6] In 2001 these researchers made the first attempt to identify all of the congregations in Philadelphia and their social services.

Congregations Study – Switzerland (NCS-S) was conducted in 2008-2009 (Stolz *et al.* 2011), by combining a census and the quantitative NCS methodology in order to map and analyze the religious diversity of Switzerland in a comprehensive way. In the first step of this research, Stolz and team operationalized the definition of *congregation* given by Chaves and conducted a census from September 2008 to September 2009, counting all local religious groups in Switzerland. Starting from the census dataset, the second phase of NCS - Switzerland consisted in drawing a representative sample of 1040 religious communities. For every chosen congregation, one key informant[7] was interviewed by telephone (CATI)[8]. The interviewer used a closed question questionnaire that was adapted from the NCS to the Swiss context. This research has been able to detect: (a) the main activities of congregations in Switzerland concerning worship, social, political, cultural and other activities; (b) how much success do congregations have in terms of membership growth and attractiveness of their collective activities, services and individual positions; (c) how are activity foci, vitality and structure shaped by structural and cultural determinants; and (d) how the activities differ across congregations in Switzerland and the USA, analyzing the similarities and differences with the findings that were produced with NCS in the USA (Stolz *et al.* 2011).

2. Congregations and Human Rights: findings from USA and Switzerland

2.1: American and Swiss congregations' civil engagement

Congregational studies provide representative data revealing many key aspects of American and Swiss congregations' civil engagement. These include congregational involvement in social service programs and projects (Chaves *et al.* 1999; Chaves 2004; Chaves and Anderson 2008, 2014), and what issues politically active congregations address.

2.1.1 Social Activities in the United States

Helping the needy in some capacity is the most prevalent way in which congregations are civically engaged (NCS IV Final Report 2021). Over the past three decades scholars have

---

[7] As in the NCS in most cases the key informant was a clergy person or the religious leader.
[8] CATI is the acronym of Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing.

conducted extensive research on congregation-based service provision in the USA (Fulton, 2016). One of the early recognized characteristics of congregational involvement in social service activities, is the frequent collaboration with other congregations and community organizations, mainly due to the resource requirements related to providing social services, that frequently overcome a congregation's capacity (Fulton 2016; Thomas 2009). NCS data analysis showed how the vast majority of American congregations (84%) reported some involvement in social or human services, community development, or other projects and activities intended to help people outside the congregation (NCS IV Final Report 2021).

Figure 2. *American congregational participation in social service program areas (Source: National Congregations Study 2018-19)*
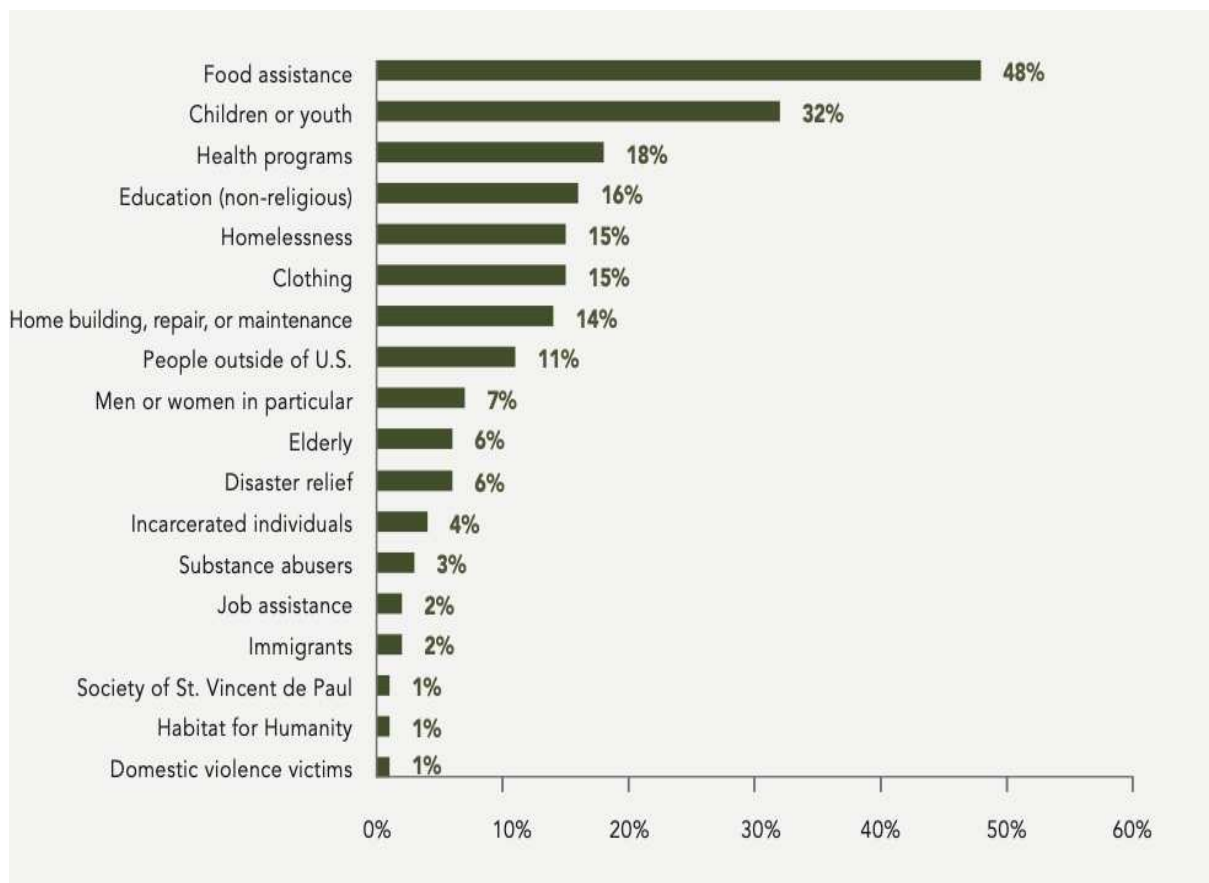
As displayed in Figure 2, the most common kind of helping activity involves food assistance, with more than half (48%) of all congregations mentioning feeding the hungry among their four most important social service programs. Food assistance encompasses a great deal of

variation in the nature of the specific activity, including for example, donating money to a community food bank, supplying volunteers who serve dinner at homeless shelters once a month, or operating a food pantry or soup kitchen. Other frequent activities are supporting children or youth (32%), addressing health needs (18%), delivering (non religious) education (16%), helping the homeless (15%), providing clothing or blankets to people (15%), and building or repairing homes (14%) . Less frequent activities regard substance abuse, domestic violence, prison-related issues and support for employment and immigration.

Usually, these social activities are pursued by providing small groups of volunteers to engage in well-defined and bounded tasks on a periodic basis; and the majority of the activities are focused on meeting short-term, immediate needs. American congregations reported less involvement in social service projects requiring longer-term commitments and more intensive interaction with the needy, such as drug abuse rehabilitation or jail programs (NCS IV Final Report 2021, Chaves and Eagle 2016). Furthermore, congregations also support social service work through donations to denominational social service organizations.

Another feature of congregational involvement in service-related activities highlighted by the analysis of NCS data, is its growth over the years. Between 1998 and 2018-19, the percentage of congregations involved in service-related activities has been increasing from 71% to 84% among most types of congregations, and along with the social activities, also the amount of money and congregational resources allocated to social service provisions has increased (Fulton 2016). This significant and general participation' increase, confirms the opinion that social provision is an institutionalized and almost universal practice of American congregations (Chaves 2004; Fulton 2016).

2.1.1.1 How do different factors influence congregations' involvement in social activities?

NCS data allowed to examine how congregations' involvement in social activities differs by different factors, such as religious tradition, ethnoracial composition, theological, and ideological orientation and economic resources and education (Chaves and Higgins 1992; Chaves and Tsitsos 2001; Tsitsos 2003; Fulton 2016; NCS III Final Report 2015).

- Religious Tradition: Mainline Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish congregations are more likely to report social service activity (almost 90% in each group) than evangelical or black Protestant congregations (almost 80% in each group) (Chaves and Eagle 2016).

- Theological and political orientation: Beyond denominational affiliation, self-described theologically and politically liberal congregations have higher and/or increasing participation rates in service-related activities than self-described theologically and politically conservative congregations (Fulton 2016). This result is consistent with previous research reporting that theologically conservative congregations tend to be less involved in service to the wider community (Chaves and Tsitos 2001; Chaves and Higgins 1992).

- Social Class: Congregations in poor neighborhoods provide more social services than congregations in affluent neighborhoods, and congregations composed of a larger percentage of college-educated members provide a larger number of services (Chaves and Tsitos 2001; Chaves 2004).

- Multiethnic membership: If, on the one hand, the ethnoracial composition of a congregation is not a significant predictor of service provision (Fulton 2016), on the other the presence of an ethnoracial diverse set of attendees is related to community engagement (Polson 2016). Recent studies found that multiethnic congregations tend to provide a broader variety of community services than other congregations do (Polson and Gillespie 2019). Indeed, the presence of an ethno-racially diversified group of attendees with transversal social links, represent a more spread set of community connections than is present in more homogenous religious congregations (Polson 2015; Polson and Gillespie 2019).

- Size and resources: Another significant factor determining the capacity of a congregation in providing services is its size. A possible explanation could be that larger congregations have more economic and human resources to invest (Chaves and Tsitsos 2001; Tsitsos 2003).

2.1.2 Social Activities in in Switzerland

Local religious communities in Switzerland are very involved in social issues. Congregational findings in Switzerland documented that most congregations (84%) support (at least financially) social programs (Stolz *et al.* 2011). However, the analysis of the social activities of Swiss congregations has not been as exhaustive as was of American congregations. The main reason is that there has not been an analysis of the type of social activity as extensive and exhaustive as the American one. In fact, if there were 4 waves in the USA, only one NCS was conducted in Switzerland. This allowed the development of comparative analysis among the different waves which offered the possibility to trace trends and discontinuities in the American congregations.

2.1.2.1 How does religious tradition influence congregations' involvement in social activities?

Christian communities are particularly involved in social-related activities, NCS - Switzerland reported that 96% of them supported at least one social program, 80% considered a program abroad, and 30% (also) a program in Switzerland. The free Evangelical churches are notably engaged in social activities, more than 90% of them carried out at least one social activity. Non-Christian communities engage in significantly fewer social activities for several reasons. Among these, their resources and financial situation is often so limited that additional social spending is problematic to address; many non Christian congregations are very small, which makes various forms of social help impractical; and many of them are purely religious/spiritual (e.g. Zen or yoga groups), so social assistance is not to some extent part of their community model (Stolz *et al.* 2011).

2.2 Political Activities

Religious congregations engage in a broad range of political activities that can take very different forms (Chaves and Beyerlein 2003). Some of these activities focus on helping members become politically informed, such as facilitating group discussions on political topics, distributing voter guides, and hosting political leaders. Other activities are more

driven by social issues, and focus on raising awareness and mobilizing members for participation in social movements and policy advocacy, such as participating in demonstrations or marches.

2.2.1 Political Activities in USA

NCS findings show how the majority of the American congregations (57%) are politically active, engaging in efforts to promote or prevent social and cultural change (Beyerlein and Chaves 2020; NCS IV Final Report 2021). The most common type of activities is getting out the vote during an election (26 % of congregations), distributing voter guides (24% of congregations), registering voters (23% of congregations), organizing or participating in demonstrations or marches to support or oppose a public issue or policy (17% of congregations), and offering political opportunities during worship services (16% of congregations). The fourth wave data analysis also showed that the least common forms of political involvement are discussing of becoming a sanctuary for undocumented immigrants (13% of congregations), organizing a group meeting to discuss politics (11% of congregations), lobbying elected officials (10% of congregations), hosting political candidates as speakers (6% of congregations), declaring themselves a sanctuary for undocumented immigrants (4% of congregations), and endorsing political candidate (4% of congregations) (Beyerlein and Chaves 2020; NCS IV Final Report 2021).

The NCS data analysis from the four waves (1998, 2006 - 07, 2012, 2018-19) allowed to depict change over time in the percentages of congregations engaging in political activities and to affirm that congregations were more politically mobilized in 2018-19 than they were in 1998. This is particularly true for congregational political mobilization on the left, which has increased more than the political mobilization of congregations on the right (Beyerlein and Chaves 2020; NCS IV Final Report 2021).

2.2.1.1 Religious differences in Congregations' Political Activities

There are important differences between religious groups in both the extent and character of political involvement of their congregations. This mainly differs according to religious tradition, size of the congregation, different political orientations, and government funding.

- Religious traditions: Black Protestants are the most likely to be politically active, in the sense of reporting at least one type of religious activity in 2018-2019. Predominantly white Evangelical Protestant congregations are the least likely to be active. Catholic and predominantly white mainline Protestant congregations fell in between. As regards types of political activity, Black Protestants congregations are particularly likely to participate in electoral politics, hosting political candidates as speakers, registering voters, and getting out the vote more than other groups. On the other side, Catholic congregations especially stand out when it comes to participating in demonstrations or marches (NCS IV Final Report 2021).

- Size and political orientation: Another difference in political involvement of different religious groups is the size and the political leaning. NCS findings highlighted that larger congregations are more engaged politically than smaller congregations, and self-described liberal congregations are more politically active than self-described conservative congregations (Beyerlein and Chaves 2020; NCS IV Final Report 2021).

- Government funding: Chaves, Stephens and Galaskiewicz (2004) investigated whether public funding depresses the political activity of religious congregations in the United States. The study concluded that congregations receiving government funding engage in more political activity than do congregations without the support of government funding. This result makes clear that there is no evidence that government funding of human service activities suppresses congregation-based political activity.

2.2.1.2 Differences in congregational marching and lobbying activities

NCS data analysis has also allowed exploring the different attitudes towards the issues for which congregations had marched on or lobbied for - which regarded in approximately equal measure around poverty and immigration (NCS IV Final Report 2021) - and how different religious traditions focused on different issues. Compared to other groups, Catholic and Evangelical Protestants congregations were particularly centered on the issue of abortion, while black Protestants were more politically active on poverty-related issues. Mainline Protestants and Catholics overcome other religious groups when it came to lobbying or marching on poverty-related issues. Concerning the same-sex marriage issue, Catholic and Mainline Protestants were the most involved, but taken as a whole, the varied group of non-Christian congregations lobbied or marched about same-sex marriage at a much higher level than Christian congregations (NCS IV Final Report 2021).

The trend of congregational lobbying and demonstrating\marching can be considered particularly one-sided. Even though many church-going Americans are on the pro-choice side, congregation-based activism about abortion is almost completely pro-life. Although many church-going Americans believe in restricting immigrants' rights, congregational activism on immigration is almost completely pro-immigrant. The only exception regards same-sex marriage and in general, equality of rights for homosexuals. On this issue, congregational political activism is about equally divided between the two sides (NCS IV Final Report 2021).

2.1.1.3 Congregations' involvement in immigrants' rights

American religious congregations have become more actively involved in one issue in particular: immigration. Chaves and Beyerlein (2020) hypothesize that this trend might have been particularly influenced by the Trump administration's hard-line policies against immigrants and immigration.

Figure 3. *Congregational Action Concerning Immigration, 2012 - 2019. (Source: National Congregations Study, 2012-19)*
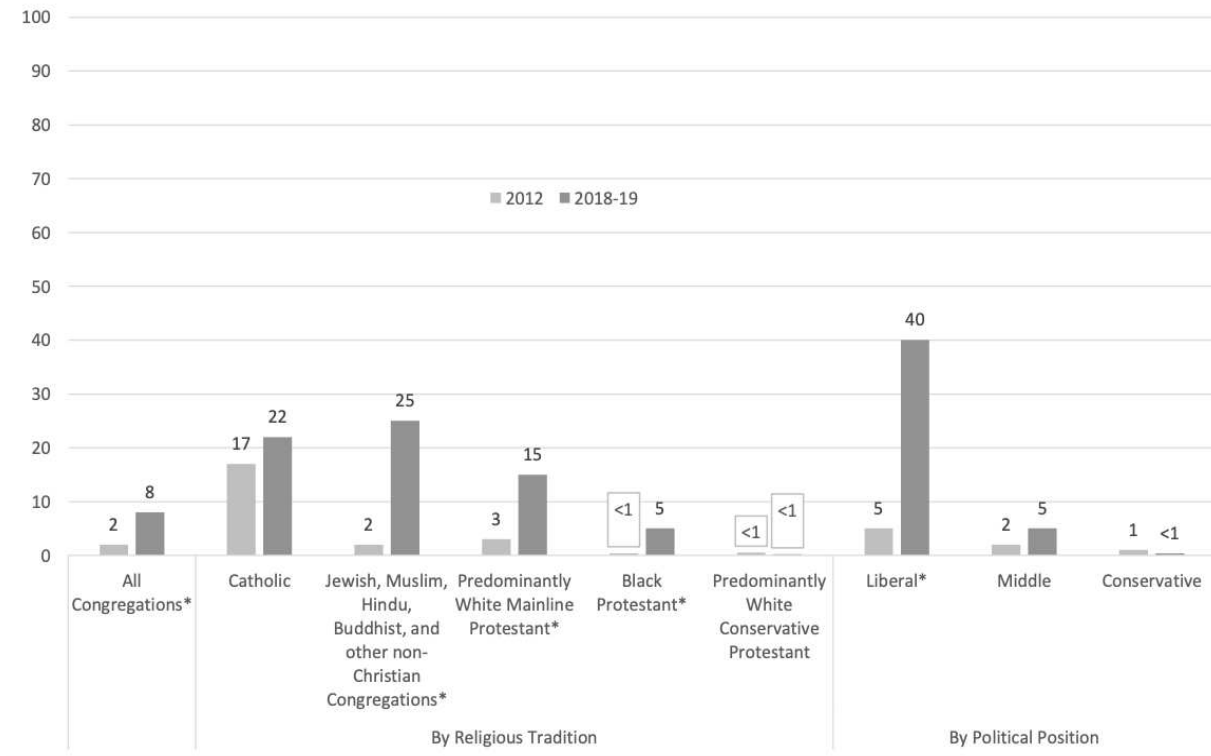
Figure 3 shows the activities of lobbying or marching about immigration in 2012 and 2018-19 for all congregations, and then separately by religious tradition and political orientation. NCS data of the fourth wave finds that 8% of American congregations lobbied or marched about immigration in 2018-19, four times more than in 2012.

Catholic congregations are the most active, with 22% of parishes committed to immigrant mobilization. The involvement of predominantly white mainline Protestant and non-Christian congregations has significantly increased, from 3% to 15% and from 2% to 25% of congregations, respectively. Black Protestant congregations are still quite disengaged on this issue, but more involved than they were in 2012.

Definitely, NCS data display how congregations' pro-immigrant mobilization is mainly concentrated among Catholics, predominantly white mainline Protestants, Jewish, Muslim, other non-Christian congregations, and among congregations with politically liberal orientation.

Congregations clearly mobilized more to defend immigrants in 2018-19 than they did before. According to Beyerlein and Chaves (2020), this circumstance is influenced by a mix of

congregations with traditions with more immigrant members and congregations with politically liberal convictions. In fact, a remarkable 40% of congregations self-described politically liberal lobbied or marched about immigration in 2018-19 - up from 5 % in 2012 - almost entirely on the pro-immigrant side. In 2018-19, besides the activities of lobbying or marching, 13% of congregations at least discussed becoming a sanctuary for undocumented immigrants, with 4% taking the step of declaring themselves as one. Sanctuary congregations are overwhelmingly Catholic. Almost a third of Catholic parishes (32%) reported declaring themselves as sanctuaries thereby underlining a longstanding Catholic focus on immigrant rights (Chaves and Beyerlein 2020).

2.2.2 Political Activities in Switzerland

The overall political involvement of religious congregations in Switzerland can be described as being of "medium importance" (Stolz *et al.* 2011; Stolz and Monnot 2019). Overall, the findings from the NCS-Switzerland display that 38.5% of Swiss congregations have encouraged their members to engage in political activity; 36.7% have collected signatures for an initiative, referendum, or petition; 33.8% have had discussions about politics in groups or reunions; 17.5% have encouraged members to vote in a particular way; 10.0% have a group that meets meeting for political activities; and 7.2% have endorsed a particular political candidate. Regarding the religious tradition, the NCS - Switzerland found that Roman Catholics, Reformed, and Evangelicals are more politically involved than other Christian or non-Christian congregations; and Evangelical congregations - a very small minority, around 2% of the population - are the most politically active group. According to Stolz and Monnot (2019), this can be interpreted in the light of their ideological homogeneity and in their high levels of religiosity, a characteristic that represents strong resources that may be used for political mobilization.

2.2.2.1 Central issues of politically active congregations in Switzerland

The NCS findings of Swiss congregations also allowed to determine the most discussed issues in the politically active congregations.

Figure 4. *Themes concerning which a group of the congregation has been politically active, according to religious tradition (Source: National Congregation Study - Switzerland)*

	Roman Catholic	Reformed	Evangelical	Other Christian	Other Religion
Human rights	46.0	44.6	46.2	21.4	60.0
Stop poverty	41.0	34.9	7.7	21.4	0.0
Refugee rights	17.0	19.3	6.6	14.3	13.3
Environment	4.0	3.6	3.3	14.3	20.0
Tabacco, drugs, alcohol	3.0	0.0	12.1	7.1	13.3
Pedophily	0.0	0.0	3.3	7.1	0.0
Abortion	4.0	0.0	6.6	00	0.0
Social action	3.0	6.0	5.5	7.1	0.0
State–Church relations	3.0	1.2	9.9	7.1	6.7
Education	1.0	4.8	12.1	0.0	0.0
Homosexuality	0.0	0.0	5.5	0.0	0.0
Workers' rights	2.0	3.6	1.1	0.0	0.0
Euthanasia	1.0	1.2	1.1	0.0	0.0
Other	3.0	8.4	12.1	7.1	6.7

Figure 4 displays the political themes of Swiss congregations which have a group that regularly meets for political activities. "Human rights", together with "Stop poverty" and "Refugee rights", are the most prominent issues in almost all religious traditions, particularly in Catholic and Reformed congregations. Issues of medium importance regard the area of addictions, "Tobacco, drugs, alcohol", especially for Evangelical and other Christian congregations; the "Education", mainly for Reformed and Evangelical congregations; the "Church-state relations", especially for Evangelical and other Christians congregations; "Environment" mainly for Christians congregations; and "Social action" particularly for Reformed, Evangelical, and other Christian congregations. "Pedophilia",

together with "workers' rights", "euthanasia," "homosexuality" and "abortion" are the less significant issues.

2.2.2.2 Establishment and the determinants of political involvement

Establishment is a cardinal aspect of the church-state system in most European countries, and «refers to preferential treatment of one or more religious groups, their members, or their institutions» (Stolz and Monnot 2018:93). Established religious groups in Switzerland have greater resources, due to church tax and state subsidies, and therefore have on average a much higher level of income. Thus, established congregations may be reticent to participate in political activities or take a political stance on contentious issues, if they know or suspect that they will be viewed critically by their state funders or political parties. The analysis of NCS - Switzerland data, found that the establishment does not suppress the political activities of Swiss congregations and at the same time does not lead to more political activities (Stolz and Monnot 2019).

2.2.2.3 Determinants of political involvement of Swiss congregations

Rather than the establishment, the main factors that determine the political involvement of Swiss congregations can be identified as religious tradition, level of income, and the political and theological orientation (Stolz and Monnot 2019).

- Religious tradition: Religious tradition is the most influential determinant. Congregational data analysis demonstrates that Evangelicals, Catholics, and Reformed congregations are much more politically active than other Christian or non - Christian congregations. Among the non - Christian congregations, Jews congregations are much more politically active than all other groups, and groups belonging to the "holistic milieu" are among the least political groups.

- Level of income and size: Congregations with a higher level of income show more political involvement. Political activities request substantial resources - often financial - and congregations that simply do not have these resources, such as many small groups, cannot engage in many of these activities, even if they want to. In fact, congregational data analysis

shows that in Switzerland larger congregations have a higher likelihood of becoming politically involved than smaller congregations (Stolz *et al.* 2011).

- Political and theological orientation: Also the political and theological orientation influence the political involvement of congregations in Switzerland, where congregations that tend to see themselves on the political left and self-described theologically liberal, are politically more active than congregations that tend to see themselves on the political right and self-described theologically conservative (Stolz and Monnot 2019).

2.3 American and Swiss congregations' levels of inclusivity

2.3.1 Congregational leadership and membership inclusivity

The extent to which women exercise formal public leadership (or lay leadership) and the levels of acceptance of homosexuals full-fledged membership and lay leadership within congregations, are two important markers of congregational levels of inclusivity, and two interconnected issues. Whitedhead (2013), in a recent study based on NCS data, provided evidence of the intersection of gender and sexuality within congregations, showing that a congregation's stance toward allowing women to serve as head clergyperson is considerably connected with its acceptance of gays and lesbians as members or leaders within the congregation. This could also mean that as one dimension moves toward greater equality, it could influence the other dimension. In this sense, greater numbers of female clergy, or greater numbers of congregations that allow for women to be head clergy, could lead to a greater level of acceptance of gays and lesbians as members or leaders. Moreover, the different attitudes and practices towards female and homosexual leadership (or lay leadership) of congregations are two of the most salient indicators of the progressive-conservative divide in religious traditions across the religious spectrum (Stolz *et al.* 2011; NCSIII Final Report 2015). Whether or not women and homosexuals are ordained to full clergy status or can exercise official leadership (or lay leadership) roles, are issues that often are determined at the denominational level instead of the congregational. But there is still a considerable variation among congregations in the norms and practices regarding leadership inclusivity, even within denominations that officially welcome or prohibit women and homosexuals as leaders or lay leaders (NCS IV Final Report 2021).

- Women's access to leadership positions in religious congregations

Women's access to positions of leadership in the religious field is a controversial issue in Western societies, both inside different religious traditions and in societal discussions of religion (Chaves 1997; Whitehead 2013).

Not only is the debate around women's leadership the result of transformations within religious organizations themselves, but also it is the outcome of substantial pressures exerted on these organizations by external forces such as the feminist organizations and more broadly, civil society (Chaves 1997).

Such discussions concern, for example, the question of whether the Catholic Church should allow women to be ordained and whether there should be female rabbis in Judaism and female imams in Islam. Different religious traditions may establish certain principles on female leadership - providing the related theological legitimation - but these rules and legitimations are not always steady, and thus may mutate over time (Stolz and Monnot 2019).

Hence, female leadership depends in important ways on religious traditions and sub-traditions. Evangelicals have a heterogeneous approach toward women's spiritual leadership. Evangelical conservative groups are strict in excluding female pastors, on the contrary, charismatic and traditional Evangelicals may allow female pastors. The same heterogeneous approach can be found among Jews. The most conservative groups, such as Haredi and Orthodox, do not normally allow female rabbis, but other Jews groups may do so (Bear 2019). Catholics for example do not allow women to be ordained, but, in cases where there is no priest available, non-ordained pastoral assistants (many of whom are women) may lead the parish. In many mainline Protestant denominations, the introduction of female ordination as a legal possibility has not automatically led to the actual ordination of many female pastors (Stolz and Monnot 2019). In Islam, the overwhelming majority of Muslim groups agree in considering the role of imam suitable only for men. In Buddhism, both women and men can learn to provide Buddhist teachings, even though different schools and groups think about gender and leadership in different ways.

- Acceptance of gays and lesbians as members or lay leaders within the congregation

The acceptance of gay men and lesbians as full-fledged members within congregations is another contentious issue. The contrast between some religious teachings and homosexuality is nothing new. Over the past millennia, major religions have disapproved homosexuality, qualifying it as something 'unnatural' or 'impure' (Yip 2005). Recently, the increasing acceptance of homosexuality by Western societies has legitimated the claims of equal rights among homosexuals. The way in which the different denominations have faced this new scenario has influenced the patterns of homosexual membership in the different congregations. In fact - although, it is not uncommon that congregations decide for themselves their position towards lesbians and gays full-fledged membership (Whitehead 2013) - denominations have a strong influence on congregations' attitude and practices towards homosexuality. This results in a wide range of possibilities regarding the position, and the different levels of acceptance\exclusion of homosexuals within religious groups.

2.3.2 Inclusivity in the United States

American congregational studies document a clear trend towards greater inclusiveness of both women and homosexuals within religious congregations, although with significant differences between different religious traditions and sub-traditions (NCS IV Final Report 2021).

2.3.2.1 Women and Congregational Leadership

Data analysis from American congregational studies found that women served as senior or solo pastoral leaders in only 14% of congregations (NCS IV Final Report 2021).
The presence of female leaders differs significantly across religious groups. Mainline and Black Protestant churches, and Jewish synagogues are much more likely than evangelical Protestant congregations to be led by women. Female leadership in Roman Catholic congregations remains near zero with a few rare exceptions: some priestless parishes are led by women, who usually are members of religious orders. From the 1990s, congregational studies data do not detect any increase in the overall percentage of congregations led by

women; but at the same time, report an increased level of acceptance *in principle* of female pastoral leaders - 56% of congregations - which is much higher than the actual presence of female pastoral leaders (Chaves and Eagle 2015; NCS IV Final Report 2021). This increase of acceptance *in principle* mainly regards Protestants (95%), with some differences: 90% of congregations within mainline denominations accept female leaders in principle, compared to 66% of black Protestant churches and 33% of white evangelical churches (NCS IV Final Report 2021). As expected, NCS findings documented that congregations are more accepting of women exercising leadership in ways other than full pastoral status, as lay leadership roles. This trend is particularly true among Catholic parishes, which are extremely inclusive of women as lay leaders (with 90% allowing women to serve in any lay leadership position), and among all white mainline Protestant congregations. White evangelical Protestant groups are the most restrictive, with about one-quarter prohibiting women to serve in lay leadership positions (Chaves and Eagle 2015; NCS IV Final Report 2021).

2.3.2.2 Gays and Lesbians membership and lay leadership

The increasing acceptance of gays and lesbians is one of the most well-known public opinion shifts in recent years, and this trend also appears to be occurring at a remarkably fast pace within religious congregations (NCS IV Final Report 2021). Exploring which congregations continue to show resistance towards gays and lesbians and which congregations allow them, along with the processes that govern these stances is an important issue, since religious congregations influence more Americans than any other voluntary social organizational form (Chaves 2004; Chaves and Anderson 2008).

Figure 5. *Increasing acceptance of gays and lesbians in American congregations (Source: National Congregation Study, 2018-19)*
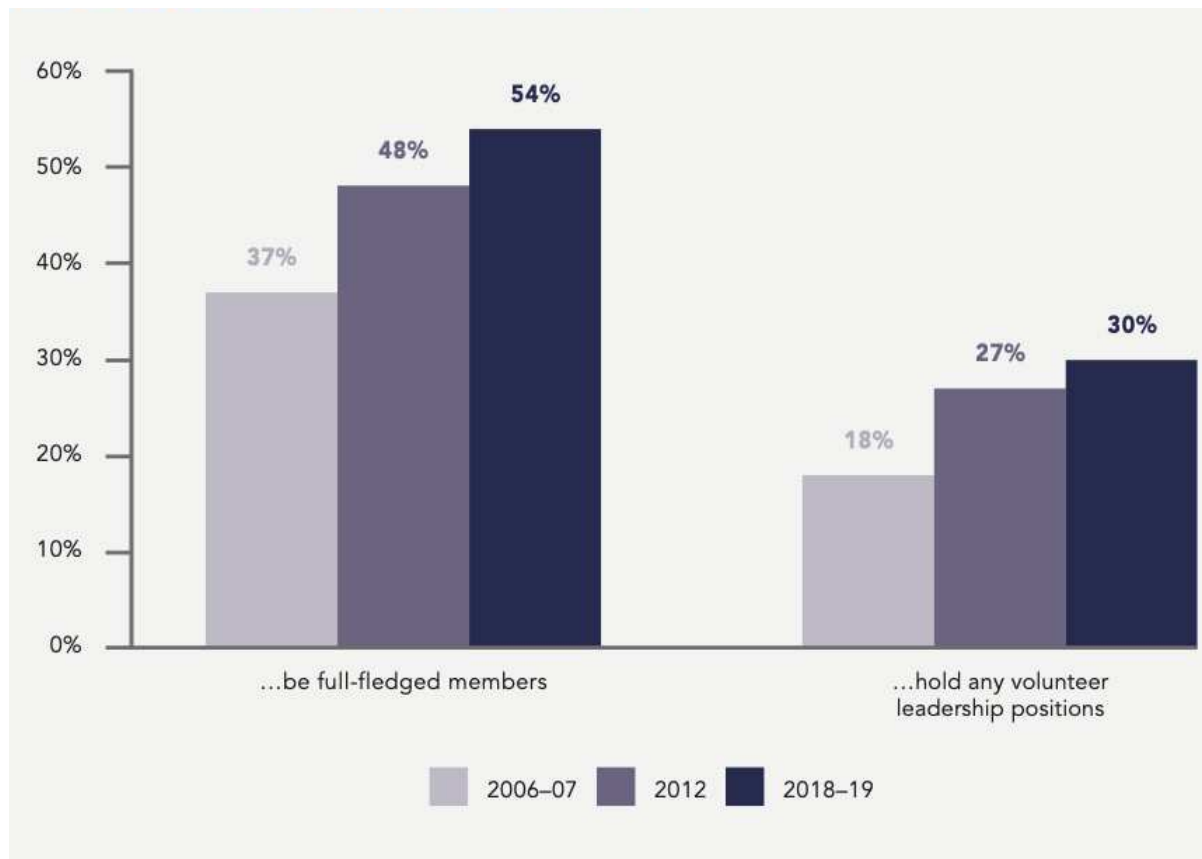
As displayed in Figure 5, from 2006 to 2018-19, the number of congregations whose leaders said that openly gay or lesbian couples in a committed relationship could be full-fledged members, increased from 37% to 54%; and the number of congregations whose leaders said that gays and lesbians could hold any volunteer leadership position, increased from 18% to 30%. As gender inclusiveness, congregational acceptance of gays and lesbians vary widely across religious traditions.

However, while every religious tradition has shown increases between 2006 and 2018- 19 in their acceptance of gays and lesbians as full-fledged members of their congregation, the number of Catholic parishes whose leaders affirmed that homosexuals could be accepted as full-fledged members decreased from 74 % to 54 %; and the same can be said about the acceptance of gay and lesbian lay leaders (from 39% in 2006, to 26% in 2018-19).

This decline «*may reflect a backlash among some Catholic Church leaders against the legalization of gay marriage, a backlash evident in well-publicized instances of long-term teachers in Catholic schools losing their jobs, and long-term members denied communion, after marrying a same-sex partner. This result should not be interpreted as declining acceptance of gay and lesbian members and volunteer leaders among the Catholic rank and file, who, in line with national public opinion trends, have become more accepting of homosexuality*» (NCS IV Final Report 2021: 61).

Despite the overall increasing acceptance of gays and lesbians, it should not be assumed that in American congregations, full inclusion for gays and lesbians is fully or truly implemented (Whitehead 2013; NNCS IV Final Report 2021). NCS findings underline that even those congregations that claim to allow gays and lesbians to become members and lead may display "loose coupling"[9] (Chaves 1997; NCS IV Final Report 2021). Actually, some congregations may formally allow lesbians and gays to become members or leaders, then in practice do not fully accept homosexual couples. There is a wide gap between ideals and practices (Whitehead 2013; Ammerman 1997; NCS IV Final Report 2021).

2.3.3 Inclusivity in Switzerland

In Switzerland, the perspective of female leadership inclusivity has been more expanded than the perspective on homosexuals membership inclusivity, by many studies grounded on NCS - Switzerland data (Stolz and Monnot 2019). Probably, as in other European countries such as Italy, the discourse around the membership of homosexuals is still only beginning; and it is not a central issue such as the debate about female leadership; which is more taken into account also considering that in Switzerland, the membership percentage of Churches which provide a theological legitimation regarding the female priesthood is 23% (membership of the Reformed Churches)[10].

---

[9] "Loose coupling" refers to a situation where the actual practices of the organization do not directly reflect their formal stance.

[10] Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 2019
https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/it/home/statistiche/popolazione/lingue-religioni.gnpdetail.2021-0098.html

2.3.3.1 Female leadership and lay leadership in Switzerland and its determinants:

In Switzerland, female spiritual leadership is rather uncommon. The presence of a female head pastor, rabbi, priest, or spiritual guide within Swiss congregations is around 10% or lower. The possibility for a woman to serve as a spiritual leader in a congregation varies according to different factors (Stolz *et. al* 2011; Stolz and Monnot 2019).

 - *Religious traditions:* The most important predictor is the religious traditions and ideologies that regulate - through their theological legitimations - the way in which women have or don't have access to leadership positions.

Figure 6. *Access norms regarding female leadership and actual female leadership according to religious traditions (Source: National Congregation Study - Switzerland)*

	Catholic	Reformed	Evangelical traditional	Evangelical charismatic	Evangelical conservative	Ortho-dox	Other Christian	Jewish	Muslim	Buddhist/Hindu non-autochthonous temples	Buddhist/Hindu alternative spirituality	Other alternative spirituality	Total CH**
Access norms: Women may be … (%)													
leading clergy person or primary religious leader	9.8	100	58.7	68.5	4.5	4.5	44.3	22.2	36.9	54.5	94.2	81.6	52.4
preachers at a main service of worship	55.3	98.4	79.3	80.9	4.5	22.7	51.5	27.8	42.4	81.8	82.4	62.7	67.5
teachers by themselves in class with adult men	99.6	100	97.1	85.4	45.5	90.9	94.9	88.9	76.9	100	97.2	100	94.6
fully fledged members of governing body	98	100	91.4	95.5	40.9	100	74.7	94.4	92.4	100	100	100	93.7
holding all voluntary leadership positions that men can hold	97.3	100	86.3	85.2	45.5	100	61.6	82.4	87.9	100	98.6	100	90.2
Power: actual female leadership (%)													
% female leading clergyperson [1]	3.9	24.2	8.6	5.6	0	4.5	10.2	6.3	8.5	0	42.9	58.5	12.8
% women on board [2]	49.5	55.9	28.4	30.5	19	35.5	31.7	40.7	23	35.2	60.9	63.3	43

As displayed in Figure 6, the highest percentage of female spiritual leaders can be found in Reformed congregations (100%), in Buddhist/Hindu alternative spirituality groups (94.2%), and in other alternative spirituality groups (81.6%). Other groups are more or less open, such as Jewish (22%), Buddhist/Hindu non-autochthonous temples (54.5%), Evangelical-charismatic (68.5%), and Evangelical-traditional (58.7%). While public discourse

often singles out Muslims as having particularly closed gender norms, 36.9% of Muslim congregations stated that their head clergyperson may be a woman (Bochinger 2012; Stolz and Monnot, 2019). This percentage is the result of Muslim women groups that organize prayers or Sufis; in fact, in mainstream Muslim groups, it is not possible for a woman to be an imam (Stolz and Monnot, 2019). Congregational data found the lowest percentage among Evangelical-conservative (4.5%), Orthodox congregations (4.5%), and Catholics (9.8%).

- *Progressive-conservative dimension:* Another very important determinant is the progressive-conservative dimension. Congregations that describe themselves as both theologically and politically conservative are on average significantly more closed to female leadership than congregations that see themselves as more progressive or liberal.

- *Social composition and education :* Also the social composition and the members' levels of education of a congregation have some effect on female leadership. The presence of more female members leads to more female head clergy, and congregations with higher percentages of younger and more educated people - and curiously poorer people - are also slightly more likely to be led by a female spiritual leader (Stolz *et. al* 2011; Stolz and Monnot 2019). Finally, congregational findings reported that Swiss congregations are more restrictive in the access to female spiritual leadership than female lay leadership positions. In fact, almost all religious traditions are quite open and liberal in allowing women to teach classes or participate in governing bodies, but much more restrictive when women wish to preach at worship services or act as head clergy (Stolz and Monnot 2019; Monnot *et al*. 2019). Another interesting result is the divide between the levels of acceptance in the principle of female pastoral leaders and the actual levels of female leadership. In all Swiss congregations - even in those with the higher levels of acceptance in principle of female pastoral leaders - the percentage of actual female leadership is about 10% or lower (for instance, 68.5% of Evangelical-charismatic groups stated that a woman could be their head pastor, but only 5.6% of Evangelical-charismatic groups actually have a female head pastor). Thus, there is not necessarily a strong correlation between the norms governing women's access to leadership positions and the actual power that women have in a religious group (Stolz and Monnot 2019).

3. Similarities and differences between NCS findings in USA and Switzerland

Nonetheless congregations' political activity may receive more media attention than their social service work - both in Switzerland and USA, congregations are more socially involved than politically. Congregational studies in the USA documented how the percentage participating in service-related activities is substantial and increasing, while the percentage participating in political activities is less substantial but increasing, mainly due to immigrant mobilization (Stolz *et al.* 2011; NCSIII Final Report 2015; Fulton 2016). Congregational studies in Switzerland weren't able to report any increasing or decreasing trend in social or political activities, since it has been conducted only once NCS in 2008-09. In general, Swiss and American congregations play a substantial role in addressing social needs, but the lower political participation has implications for congregations' broader contribution to improving social conditions. Providing short-term assistance for immediate needs through service provision without also pursuing long-term strategies to improve social conditions through political participation, can limit congregations' ability to effectively and comprehensively address social needs. This modality probably derives from the fact the commitment and resources required for addressing immediate needs are lower than that required for achieving long-term goals. As suggested by Fulton (2016) and by the III NCS Report, congregations could address social needs more comprehensively by combining acts of service with political engagement. In doing so, they can relieve immediate needs while at the same trying to effect systemic change. Another similarity which emerged in this contribution between Switzerland and the USA concerns the effects of government funding on political activities. Although it was plausible that public funding could limit political activities in some way, both in Switzerland and the USA public funding for religious congregations does not depress congregational political activity (Stolz and Monnot 2019; Chaves *et al.* 2004). Regarding congregations' levels of female leadership inclusivity, congregational studies findings in both American and Swiss contexts indicate two common features. The first refers to the gap between the levels of acceptance in principle and the actual presence of female pastoral leaders. Indeed, in both countries, the level of acceptance in principle of female pastoral leaders is much higher than the actual presence of female pastoral leaders. The second common feature within Swiss and American congregations is the closest access to spiritual leadership for women than lay leadership positions.

4. Final remarks

This chapter analyzed the relationship between religion and human rights through the lenses of religious congregations, systematizing the results and the evidence of the Congregational studies in the USA and in Switzerland (NCS-USA and NCS-Switzerland) concerning the civil engagement of American and Swiss congregations and their levels of acceptance of women formal public leadership (or lay leadership) and homosexuals full-fledged membership and lay-leadership.

Overall, in light of the NCS findings, it can be affirmed that American and Swiss congregations support human rights especially through caritative and social activities. Still, the results about political activities show how this aspect of civic engagement does not have an incisive impact on human rights endorsement.

On the other hand, the matter of congregational inclusivity is quite complex to address. Looking at the results, it can be seen that both within Swiss and American congregations, the presence of a female head pastor, rabbi, priest or spiritual guide is respectively around 10% and 11%; but at the same time, there are high level of woman inclusion in ways other than full pastoral status, as lay leadership roles. Hence, it cannot be said that American and Swiss congregations discriminate against women, especially considering the aspect of theological legitimization; but neither that their inclusivity towards women is at optimal levels. Regarding homosexuality, although the overall increasing acceptance of gays and lesbians within congregations, the NCS findings highlight the gap between human rights principles and congregational practices.

Chapter 3

"Congregational Studies in Italy"

This chapter deals with the challenges of Italian religious diversity. The analysis delineates the recent transformations in the Italian socio-religious field, underlying how the contemporary process of global mobility has triggered a transition from the social, cultural and religious homogeneity of society to the acknowledgment of diversity.

Against this background, the chapter considers the dimension of the normative practices that regulate religious diversity, depicting the pyramidal articulation of religious denominations of the Italian legal system. Later, it introduces the first Italian City Congregation study and provides the socio-religious profiles of Bologna and Milan, the two case studies of the survey.

1. The Challenges of Italian religious diversity

The migration process that Europe has been witnessing for decades has radically transformed the European socio-cultural landscape. Such processes, as stated by Giordan and Pace "*has caused a transformation from the cultural and religious homogeneity, either real or socially constructed in many nations, and especially in Europe, to the acknowledgment of diversity*" (2014:7). Under the influence of increasing migration, Europe recorded an impressive proliferation of multi-religious presence even in countries such as Italy.

The Italian case is a good example of how, and to what extent, a symbolically "quasi-monopoly" religious system can be transformed (Ozzano and Giorgi 2015; Pace 2014), while remaining a predominantly Catholic country (Ferrari and Ferrari 2015; Garelli 2012). Thus, even though Catholicism in Italy is experiencing a decline, it is the majority religion and still holds its symbolic role (Garelli 2014; Pace 2013; Giorgi 2019b) - 74.4% of Italians declare themselves Catholics, and 27% regularly attend Sunday Mass or otherwise engage in religious activities (Ipsos 2017)[11].

Religious pluralism is not a recent phenomenon in Italy, since various religious minorities, such as the Evangelicals, Jews, and Jehovah's Witnesses, have long been present on the national scene. Nonetheless over the last decades the non-Catholic religious communities are becoming increasingly visible at the local level (Giordan and Pace 2012).

Foreign citizens with a regular residence in Italy are 5.255.503 (8.7 % of the resident population)[12]. Among them, 53 % are Christians (1.560.000 are Orthodox and 1.000.000 are Catholic) and 29.5% are Muslims (1.580.000)[13]. The rest are mainly Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jewish, and Baha'is (Giorda 2015). The unexpected increasing differentiation of the religious field in Italy, have produced deep controversies around religion-related issues in current public debate (Ferrari and Ferrari 2015; Ozzano and Giorgi 2015). Even though many debates are focused on issues related to the role of Christian values in the secular public

---

[11] https://www.acli.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Cattolici-e-politica-analisi-Ipsos-novembre-2017.pdf
[12] https://noi-italia.istat.it/pagina.php?L=0&categoria=4&dove=ITALIA#:~:text=In%20Italia%2C%20al%201%C2%B0,3%20milioni%20e%20370%20mila.
[13] https://www.ismu.org/immigrati-e-religioni-in-italia-comunicato-stampa-4-7-2022/#:~:text=Al%201%C2%B0%20gennaio%202022,%2C5%20milioni%5B1%5D%20di

field, and specifically on bioethics and religious symbols[14]; the majority have converged on how to deal with non-Catholic traditions.

This is not due to a greater vitality of the historical minority religions - whose amounts have remained steady over time - but the result of the spreading of new faiths and cultural traditions closely linked to the recent migratory flows, among which the cases of Christian Orthodoxy and Islam clearly stand out, being the higher representation of resident foreigners[15].

It is especially the presence of many people of the Islamic faith to prompt debates about new religious diversity and immigration. The Pew Research Center estimated that in Italy, the size of Muslim population in 2050 under a (improbable) zero migration scenario will be equal to 4.350.000 (8.3% of the population)[16]. These estimates demonstrate the extent to which the Italian socio-religious geography is destined to change irreversibly. Moreover, immigrants find in their religion not only a bond with their culture of origin, - which sometimes can lead to forms of isolation (Zrinščak 2012) - but also a factor of public claims for gaining acknowledgment, visibility, and affirmation of rights of citizenship.

This unexpected condition poses new challenges to the political system - which is called upon to rethink the pluralistic dynamics and the way the State has traditionally managed the relations with the Catholic Church and with the religious minorities (Zrinščak 2014) - and to the broader society itself.

1.1 Religious Pluralism and the pyramidal articulation of religious denominations in Italy

If religious diversity is a fact in contemporary societies, pluralism implies an active engagement with diversity (Eck 2006) and represents a key concept to understanding the contemporary complex and diversified reality.

---

[14] Stefano Allievi and Jørgen S. Nielsen, *Muslim Networks and Transnational Communities in and Across Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Luca Diotallevi, "Internal Competition in a National Religious Monopoly: The Catholic Effect and the Italian Case", *Sociology of Religion* 63, no. 2 (2002): 137–55; Garelli, Franco. *Religione all'italiana*. (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011); Garelli, Franco. "Religion and Politics: The Italian Case". *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion*, 2 (2011a): 216–244; Lecaldano, *Bioetica*; Mancina, *Laicità*; Pace, Enzo. *Vecchi e Nuovi Dei. La geografia religiosa dell'Italia che cambia*. (Milano: Edizioni Paoline, 2011); Pace, Enzo. "Achilles and the Tortoise. A Society Monopolized by Catholicism Faced with an Unexpected Religious Pluralism". *Social Compass* 60, 3 (2013): 315-331; Gian Enrico Rusconi, *Come se Dio non ci fosse: i laici, i cattolici e la democrazia* (Torino: Einaudi, 2000).
[15] https://www.ismu.org/immigrati-e-religioni-in-italia-i-cristiani-sono-piu-del-doppio-dei-musulmani-comunicato-stampa-22-6-2021/
[16] https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population/

Religious pluralism is an articulated principle, which can not be reduced to the descriptive level of empirical diversity. In this regard, Beckford (2014) argues that - apart from an empirical form of religious diversity - the concept of 'religious pluralism' can refer to other three dimensions: (a) ideological opinions on the positive value of religious diversity; (b) normative practices that welcome, regulate, and facilitate religious diversity; and (c) relational context of interactions between individuals and religious groups.

Against this background, this section considers the dimension of the normative practices that regulate religious diversity, and that also ensure the protection of freedom of religion.

With the progressive change of cities in pluralistic terms, - as suggested by the religious economy models[17] (Iannaccone 1992; Finke 2013) - the religious field tends to be considered as an arena, where the various religious groups compete for the recognition and allocation of resources (Finke *et al.* 2017; Monnot and Stolz 2018). This context can generate a conflict of interest between those groups and potentially hostile inter-group attitudes (Finke 1990, 2013; Iannaccone 1992).

In this perspective, minority religious groups constitute a meso-level phenomenon able to negotiate between individuals and institutions, gathering the requests for recognition of diasporic communities and favoring the processes of acceptance and integration of newcomers (Ricucci 2017; Giorgi 2018).

At the same time, they represent a threat to the dominant religions, which in most cases seek an alliance with the state in order to preserve the preferential treatment they receive from the state or from society as a whole. This type of agreement guarantees legal and economic privileges, which vary according to the entity (Finke *et al.* 2017).

Scientific literature uses the concept of *religious establishment* referring to the «preferential treatment of one or more religious groups, their members or their institutions» (Monnot and Stolz 2018:93);

In this sense, the different degrees of legal recognition attributed to religious groups determine their belonging to different types of *establishment*: the *legal establishment* refers to

---

[17] However, it should be underlined that competition can take different forms, which the economic model is not always capable of explaining.

religious groups with legal recognition by the state while the *non-establishment*[18] concerns those religious groups that don't have it.

Legal recognition by the state marks «a fundamental difference in the distribution of public resources between *de jure* and *de facto* religions»[19] (Bossi 2020:122).

Among the most common reasons that push states not to guarantee the same treatment to all religious groups - with the consequent restrictions on religious freedom in many areas - there are the strong cultural and religious pressures coming from the media and civil society in general (Grim and Finke 2007; Finke 2013; Finke *et al.* 2017; Fox 2016, 2020).

Indeed, minority religious groups are often accused of being a danger to public welfare - as they are blamed for exercising 'mind control' to ensure the loyalty of members (Richardson and Introvigne 2001) - and a threat to national values and identities. In fact, these ones are often intrinsically intertwined with one or more majority religions: in this case, guaranteeing the same levels of religious freedom and the same privileges to all religious groups would be perceived as a challenge to cultural identity as a whole (Finke 2013).

1.1.1 The pyramidal articulation of religious denominations in Italy

In Italy, the constitutional discipline of relations between the state and religions is oriented towards the realization of full and effective religious pluralism, through the implementation of the principles of secularism and religious freedom.

However, this pluralistic perspective still seems not to be sufficiently implemented in the Italian legal framework. In fact, the gap between religious groups that enjoy privileged status - a limited group - and groups that do not enjoy it is particularly evident (Cardia 2009). As a result, the juridical context is still not adequate for satisfying the needs of an increasingly heterogeneous social fabric from a cultural and religious point of view.

In Italy, the relationship between the state and the various religious confessions is expressed in a «confessional pluralism at differentiated degrees, divided into sections of decreasing importance» (Alicino 2013:32). The pyramidal articulation of religious denominations of the

---

[18] Monnot and Stolz also introduce a third category: the *de-facto establishment,* which refers to a condition of privilege that derives from society and mainly dictated by a temporal factor.
[19] My translation from Italian

Italian legal system considers the Catholic Church at the top with the *Concordato* (as required by Article 7 of the Italian Constitution).

At the second level of the pyramid, there are the religious groups that have stipulated the *Intesa* (according to Article 8 of the Italian Constitution). This specific agreement represents an exclusive instrument for the guarantee of specific rights, such as confessional autonomy and assistance, and to benefit from fiscal measures or public economic-financial resources (Folliero 2008; Alicino 2013). Until today, thirteen confessions have stipulated the *Intesa*[20]: nine Christian[21], two Buddhist[22], one Jewish[23] and one Hindu[24].

At the third level of the pyramid, there are those religious groups with the status of *culti ammessi* (according to law n. 1159 of 1929)[25]. This status offers some benefits - far from those assigned to the religious groups with the *Intesa* - such as tax reductions for religious activities (Ferrari and Ferrari 2015), but at the same time it involves forms of control by the state on the activities of religious communities (Giorgi and Annicchino 2017).

Below these three levels, there are those religious groups which have not obtained (or requested) the *Intesa* with the Italian State or the recognition of legal personality ("not recognized"): as a consequence, they have assumed the various forms of associations provided for by the Civil Code (Ferrari 2006). A large part of the minority religious communities in Italy belong to this level, such as the countless Islamic, Sikh, and Christian organizations/associations.

These groups are sometimes characterized by doctrines and practices that are - according to the predominant interpretation - in conflict with public order[26]: in this case, they do not enjoy the benefits\facilities provided for religious groups that have stipulated the *Intesa* or that are part of *culti ammessi* (Ferrari and Ferrari 2015), and often encounter considerable

---

[20] https://presidenza.governo.it/USRI/confessioni/intese_indice.html (accessed on 29 May 2022).

[21] Tavola valdese (Law 449/1984, Law 409/1993, Law 68/2009); Assemblee di Dio in Italia (ADI) (Law 517/1988); Unione delle Chiese Cristiane Avventiste del 7° giorno (Law 516/1988, Law 637/1996, Law 67/2009); Unione Cristiana Evangelica Battista d'Italia (UCEBI) (Law 116/1995, Law 34/12); Chiesa Evangelica Luterana in Italia (CELI) (Law 520/1995); Sacra Arcidiocesi ortodossa d'Italia ed Esarcato per l'Europa Meridionale (Law 126/12); Chiesa di Gesù Cristo dei Santi degli ultimi giorni (Law 127/12); Chiesa Apostolica in Italia (Law 128/12); Associazione Chiesa d'Inghilterra (Law 240\21)

[22] Unione Buddhista italiana (UBI) (Law 245/12); Istituto Buddista Italiano Soka Gakkai (IBISG) (Law 130/16).

[23] Unione Comunità Ebraiche in Italia (UCEI) (Law 101/1989, Law 638/1996).

[24] Unione Induista Italiana (Law 246/12).

[25] http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/enti-culto-diversi-dal-cattolico-dotati-personalita-giu ridica-disciplinati-dalla-legge-11591929 (accessed on 29 May 2022).

[26] This is the case of some controversial religious groups, such as the Church of Scientology.

legal obstacles in the satisfaction of their religious rights, such as the building of places of worship (Dassetto *et.al*. 2007; Ferrari 2006).

At the base of this pyramidal structure, there are the so-called informal religious groups, which have no form of legal representation and constitute the most flexible and informal type of aggregation for religious purposes.

Obtaining an agreement with the Italian State does not only represent access to a set of resources and benefits but also has the symbolic meaning of acquiring public legitimacy (Giorgi and Annicchino 2017).

In this perspective, the discretionary criteria in assigning the different positions within the pyramid (Folliero 2008) lead to authentic inequality and limitations of religious freedom (Ferrari and Ferrari 2015), but they also neglect the function that legal recognition assumes in protecting religious identity and freedom, which represent primary conditions for an easy and non-conflictual integration of newcomers.

This normative perspective is fundamental in order to better contextualize the Italian religious diversity. This overview can highlight some features of Italian religious minorities' legal *status*. Moreover, it can clarify why minorities often do not have a place of worship specifically built with religious purposes and characteristics. Another issue that it can elaborate on is the importance of interreligious activities. It points out that a possible reason for minorities to underperform Catholics in interreligious activities could be the experience of a sense of competition toward other religious groups, or a sense of injustice in reference to the Catholic majority. The majoritarian privileged condition can potentially discourage their participation in interreligious initiatives. These issues will be discussed more thoroughly in the following pages.

2. The Italian sociological analysis of religion

In Italy, the studies of religion and society have a long tradition.[27] An incomplete and non comprehensive spectrum of the topics implied in the analysis of religion in Italy comprise: religion and social classes, primarily addressed by sociologists of religion in the 70s (Guizzardi 1977; Nesti 1975; Prandi 1977); Catholic Church structure, organizations and movements (Abbruzzese 1991; Ceccarini 2008; Colozzi and Martelli 1988; Faggioli 2008;

---

[27] Acquaviva (1961), Burgalassi (1974) and Cipriani (2009)

Garelli 2007, 2003; Giorgi and Polizzi 2013; Guizzardi 1977; Marchisio 2012, 2002); controversial issues, including bioethics, debates around the role of religion in education, or religious symbols in the public sphere (Cambi 2007; Trombetta 2005; Mancini 2008); religious belonging and political behavior (Ballarino *et al.* 2010; Ceccarini and Diamanti 2007; Segatti 2006; Segatti and Vezzoni 2008; Saraceno and Rusconi 1970; Tosi and Vitale 2009); religion and political parties (Bertezzolo 2011; Damilano 2006; Guolo 2011); and political secularism (Boniolo 2006; Pin 2006).

Finally, in recent years, numerous pieces of research have attempted to describe Italian religious heterogeneity. These studies mainly analyzed the evolution of religious diversity concerning specific religious traditions, as the survey on the spread of Christian Orthodox congregations in Italy lead by Giordan and Guglielmi (2018) and the research regarding the presence of Islam and various forms of spirituality in Italy (Allievi 2008, 2009, 2015; Bombardieri 2011; Introvigne and Stark 2005).

Another significant study that attempted to depict the Italian religious heterogeneity is the mapping of the new places of worship by region and by religious confession (respectively Islam, Orthodox Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Neo-Pentecostalism) led by Pace (2013). Italian religious diversity raises many issues questioning the studies of the sociology of religion, the governments and the society itself.

Among these, are the levels of religious freedom of religious minorities; the interreligious dialogue practices; and the conditions and factors affecting ways and forms of public and social acceptance of religious diversity.

In this perspective, this study addresses some of the issues raised by religious diversity - together with the broader purpose of understanding how religious groups deal with human rights issues - through the Congregation Study methodology, for the first time in Italy. Congregational studies are here applied to the study of religious communities of two cities: Bologna and Milan.

3. Bologna and Milan: Socio-religious profiles

Starting from the premise that traditional legal patterns of church-state relations no longer appear to be exclusive instruments for the regulation of religion (Griera and Nagel 2018; Martínez-Ariño 2019), and that the religious phenomenon cannot be fully grasped if

disconnected from a broader perspective on the urban contexts - this paragraph describes some specificities and similarities of the socio-religious contexts of Bologna and Milan which allowed to compare the data of the cities. These two cities have been chosen on the basis of the common background of great religious plurality and their levels of engagement with interfaith and intercultural activities.

Milan is the second largest city in Italy - with 1.386.285 inhabitants[28] - and one of the most productive in Europe in terms of fashion, banking, and commerce (Carlucci *et al.* 2018). Moreover, it is a polycentric (Balducci 2003), and a territorially and administratively complex and multilevel metropolis (Lodigiani 2019) where patterns of diffuse, suburban territorial expansion were fostered by a clientelist and pro-growth logic (De Lucia 2006).

Bologna is a medium-sized city - with 388.000 inhabitants[29] - and one of the most virtuous in Italy in terms of the level and quality of its social services. This is a result of different aspects, such as the commitment of local and regional administrations, the financial resources at disposal and the cultural values related to civics (Dekker 2009) that lies at the *Emilian model*'s roots (Maestripieri 2013; Giovanardi and Silvagni 2021). The latter refers to a peculiar socio-economic fabric (Rinaldi 2005; Zamagni 2016) in which, as affirmed by Giovanardi and Silvagni, «strong cooperativism and capitalist enterprises co-exist» (2021).

Milan and Bologna share relevant economic and social wealth, together with prestigious academic centers. If one the one hand Bologna is renowned for its university "Alma Mater Studiorum" University, presumably the most ancient in the Western world; on the other hand, the academic landscape in Milan is characterized by various relevant Universities: among them the Polytechnic University of Milan; Bocconi University, and the "Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore", the largest Catholic University in Europe.

Another similarity between the two cities regards the important role played by the Catholic Church in the caritative field, with a particular reference to immigrants.

In Bologna and Milan the migratory flows' issues and the growing religious diversity offered opportunities for Catholic religious actors to strengthen their position in the public

---

[28]https://www.comune.milano.it/documents/20126/2313917/cleta_zone_eta_2021.pdf/b31d9159-e926-c882-2359-73 b77d39b480?t=1644565083441

[29]http://inumeridibolognametropolitana.it/notizie/le-tendenze-demografiche-bologna-nel-primo-semestre-2022

arena through offering faith-based assistance - essentially provided by the Diocesan Caritas[30] - and, in the case of Bologna, for engaging in public debates.

The Archbishop of Bologna, Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, in several circumstances took a position on the issue of immigration with public statements, such as in the CEI[31] congress "Free to leave, free to stay" where he affirmed: «*It is our duty to respect the right of every human being to find a place where he can not only satisfy his basic needs and those of his family, but also fulfill himself fully as a person. Our efforts towards arriving migrants can be summarized in four verbs: welcome, protect, promote and integrate. In fact, it is not a question of lowering welfare programs from above, but of making a journey together through these four actions, to build cities and countries which, while preserving their respective cultural and religious identities, are open to differences and know how to enhance them in the sign of human brotherhood*».

If on the one hand, Bologna is located in Emilia Romagna, one of the most secularized regions in Italy (Itçaina 2014), and one of its appellation is "The Red" (*la rossa*) in outlining its reputation of as «the showcase city of the Italian Left» (Però 2005: 832) grounded in its left-wing values, in the historical presence of a communist political subculture, and in the last decades, a social democratic primacy in regional and municipal administrations (Giovanardi and Silvagni 2021); on the other hand, the *milanese* political subculture is less clearly defined, and over the years administrations with different political orientations followed one another.

The main characteristic of political subculture in Milan is its historical interweaving with Catholicism (Giorgi and Polizzi 2015; Ceccarini and Diamanti 2007), identifiable in the high commitment and mobilization of Catholic associations in public and political life (the stronger movement is *Comunione e Liberazione*)[32].

Despite these differences, Bologna and Milan share a common background of great plurality of cultures and religions.

In particular, these two cities are characterized by the coexistence of (a) a historical presence of religious minorities, such as Jewish, Lutheran, Valdesian, Jehovah, etc; (b) other minorities

---

[30] In the case of Bologna, Caritas receives substantial funding from the dividends of the Faac company, a multinational bequeathed to the Diocese in 2012

[31] Italian episcopal conference of 15 October 2020

[32] Founded by Don Luigi Giussani in 1954

linked to the migratory phenomenon such as Muslims, Sikhs, Induists, ethnic Christian congregations, etc; and (c) of groups linked to new forms of spirituality.

Although both cities represent relevant hubs for recent and long-established immigrant communities, Milan has higher levels of religious diversity, with a population of foreign residents which in 2021 constituted 20.1% of the total population (276.776 foreigners)[33]; while in Bologna foreign residents in 2021 constituted 15.9% of the total population (with 62.422 foreigners).[34]

The two cities also differ in the composition of the foreign residents: in Bologna the largest foreign community is that of Romania with 15.6% of all foreigners present in the territory, followed by Bangladesh (8%) and Philippines (8%)[35].

As shown by an analysis of ISMU-Initiatives and Studies on Multi-ethnicity Foundation, almost half of foreigners are Christians, approximately 61.000; among these the most numerous are of the Orthodox faith (almost 38.500) and about 23.000 are Catholics (in eighth place in Italy). Muslims are almost 42,000.

In Milan the largest foreign community is from the Philippines with 14.3% of all foreigners present in the territory, followed by Egypt (14.2%) and China (12.2%)[36].

In Milan the majority of foreigners are Muslims (almost 115.000)[37] and Christian Orthodoxs (88.000)[38].

On a local scale, the challenges connected to this religious and cultural growing diversity are faced by the local administrations and other institutional and non-institutional actors - Dioceses, associations and religious communities - on a concrete and practical level through different strategies, such as interreligious practices.

In this perspective, Bologna and Milan - although with some differences - represent two examples of virtuous religious diversity management.

The commitment of both municipalities and Dioceses in these interfaith and intercultural actions should be read in the historical engagement of these two cities with the cultural-religious issues. In Bologna, this involvement is grounded in the presence of the

---

[33] https://www.tuttitalia.it/lombardia/18-milano/statistiche/cittadini-stranieri-2021/

[34] https://www.tuttitalia.it/emilia-romagna/32-bologna/statistiche/cittadini-stranieri-2021/

[35] https://www.tuttitalia.it/emilia-romagna/32-bologna/statistiche/cittadini-stranieri-2021/

[36] https://www.tuttitalia.it/lombardia/18-milano/statistiche/cittadini-stranieri-2021/

[37]https://www.strategieamministrative.it/dettaglio-news/20167181646-popolazione-che-cambia-in-lombardia-vive -un-musulmano-su-quattro/#:~:text=Si%20stima%20che%20i%20musulmani,oltre%201%2C6%20milioni).

[38] http://www.vita.it/it/article/2018/03/27/in-italia-gli-immigrati-ortodossi-sono-piu-dei-musulmani/146372/

Institute for Religious Studies, a renowned and influential center founded by Giuseppe Dossetti[39] in 1953, which hosted the G20 Interfaith Forum in 2021, and in the strong commitment of the Diocese for a greater inclusion of minorities. Moreover, the administration endorses various informal experiences[40] which also involve members of religious communities and citizenships.

In Milan the strong tradition of Catholic commitment in politics together with the pastoral heritage of Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini (Bishop of Milan, 1979-2002) have set up a system that frames interreligious approach in a series of institutional and formal initiatives mostly managed by the Diocese (Bressan 2004; Zanfini and Bressan 2020), such as The Ambrosian Center for Religious Dialogue (CADR 1990), the Forum of Religions in Milan (2000), the Service for the Ecumenism and the Dialogue (2017).

Another interesting similarity between the two cities is linked to the openness toward homosexuality. In fact, Bologna and Milan are the birthplaces of the first gay movements in Italy, and are frequently represented as two of the most gay friendly Italian cities (Nardi 1998; Corbisiero and Monaco 2017).

Bologna hosts the "Cassero" [41] one of the oldest LGBTQIA+ centers in Italy, and it is the headquarters of "Arcigay", a political association that stands for the acknowledgment of homosexuals rights. Moreover, Bologna was the first city in Italy to create a public symbol of remembrance of the Nazi-fascist persecution of gays, lesbians, and transsexuals; and hosted the celebration of the first civil same sex marriage in Italy.[42]

Milan hosts over twenty LGBTQIA+ associations, five student LGBTQIA+ associations, and eight sport LGBTQIA+ associations, as well as an international LGBTQI+ Film Festival every year.

Moreover, Bologna and Milan host two of the oldest Italian Catholic LGBTQIA+ communities: *Gruppo in Cammino,* founded in Bologna, and *Il Guado*. The latter was founded

---

[39] Giuseppe Dossetti was a presbyter, jurist, theologian and academic; and a leading figure in the post-second world war political arena.

[40] Among the main ones there are: the "Iftar street", a street dinner organized for the end of Ramadan involving not only the Islamic minority but also the citizens; and the "Open mosque", a opening of the center of Islamic culture "An-Nur" to all citizens.

[41] Cassero started to be active in 1982

[42] https://www.liberties.eu/it/stories/prima-unione-civile-registrata-in-italia-sn-13938/32429

in Milan where, over the last two decades, the presence of Catholic LGBTQIA+ groups has proliferated (Progetto Gionata 2022; Giorgi 2019a).[43]

In this perspective, Bologna and Milan constitute two virtuous exceptions in the Italian panorama, where the pastoral experiences dedicated to the LGBTQIA+ community are still scarce (Giorgi 2019a; Arnone 2016).

Together with a common background of great plurality of cultures and religions, economic and social wealth, commitment to the interfaith and intercultural field, openness towards LGBTQIA+ world and the long presence of Catholic homosexual groups, Bologna and Milan are experiencing - even though to a different extent - three similar phenomena resulting from the growth of religious minority groups linked to the migration process.

The first phenomenon - which is the most emphasized in the political and media debate - regards the controversies around the Islamic communities, mainly related to places of worship and cultural issues. This debate has two different intensities in Bologna and Milan. The latter seems to have found a trajectory towards a solution (mainly out of resignation in front of reality), and even though the polemic about the prayer room in Via Cavalcanti[44] is reported periodically in the local newspapers (controversy mainly grounded in the opposition of some residents about the presence of a prayer-room in the garage of a condominium), Muslims carry out their activities without fanfare. Moreover, in Segrate (a surrounding municipality of Milan) there is one of the six *ad-hoc* mosques built in Italy (constructed in 1988 and one of the oldest)[45].

In Bologna, the Islamic community is the most active, visible religious minority in the socio-cultural scene of the city - often promoting integration and cultural initiatives involving many citizens, institutional actors, and religious representatives - but it is also the most contested. The reason mainly regards two public debates which involved Islamic minority: the construction (never happened) of a mosque and the '*tortellini* gate'.

Muslim communities in Bologna have witnessed the possibility of seeing a mosque rise in the city vanish, as a consequence of the numerous controversies following the project for its

---

[43] In Milan, in addition to *Il Guado,* there are other seven Catholic groups: *La Fonte*; *Effatà*; *Cammini di Speranza*; *VARCO-REFO*; *Sorelle e fratelli tutt∂*; Centro di spiritualità LGBT Cascina San Boezio; Gruppo Giovani Cristiani LGBT+ del Guado

[44] https://www.milanotoday.it/cronaca/moschea-abusiva-via-cavalcanti-fila.html;https://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/22_maggio_02/milano-via-cavalcanti-moschea-abusiva-diffidata-comune-ma-preghiera-continua-24f34526-ca3c-11ec-829f-386f144a5eff.shtml

[45] https://www.centroislamico.it/centro/moschea/moschea.htm

construction in 2007-2008. In 2016 the Archbishop Matteo Maria Zuppi declared: *"I think it is the time to have a mosque in our city, I have no fear if it is built, indeed I think we should be afraid of the fact that there is not"*[46]. This position, together with other forms of openness towards the religious diversity of the city were also a source of strong controversy: in 2019 the Diocese decided to prepare, for the patron saint's day, a variant of the filling for *tortellini*[47] - together with the traditional one, made with pork meat - made with chicken meat so that they could also be served to the Muslim and Jewish population. This choice was considered an offense to city traditions by many citizens and political representatives, and has triggered a national debate.

The second and the third phenomena are linked to the new 'super-diverse Christianity' (Ambrosini *et al*. 2021) emerging from the settlement of different migrant groups - Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox - in both cities.

The second phenomenon regards the growth of two religious groups: 'Orthodox Christianity' (whose followers are estimated to be 88.000 in Milan and 38.500 in Bologna) and 'Evangelical Christianity' (whose followers are estimated to be 17.000 in Milan and 9.300 in Bologna).

Orthodoxy has different features in the two cities: in Bologna the growth of these communities is mainly driven by the immigration process from Eastern Europe (Moldova, Ukraine and Romania in particular) of men and women in working age, while in Milan this growth mainly concerns the Copts. The migration fluxes started in the 70s mainly from Egypt due to the religious persecutions, and today the largest Copts community in Italy is in Milan (Nicolini 2020). Orthodox communities in both cities usually gather in *ex*-Catholic Churches - that were poorly attended or often totally abandoned - given in usufruct by the two Dioceses.

In both cities, the most significant presence within the complex Protestant-Evangelical scenario are Pentecostals, most of whom are immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and Asia (China included). While Pentecostal communities are often affiliated to churches in their countries of origin, some also founded their own Churches in Bologna and

---

[46] https://www.ilrestodelcarlino.it/bologna/politica/moschea-1.1948961
[47] *Tortellini* are the typical dish of Bologna and one of the symbols of the city.

Milan. These small, independent churches, tied to a charismatic leader, are multifunctional spaces and important for members as bridges to social integration.

The third phenomenon regards the arrival of a large number of foreign Catholics. Due to immigration, there are about 233.000 "new" Catholics in Milan and 23.000 in Bologna, either gathered around the so-called ethnic chaplaincies or (rarely) included in the everyday religious activities of the parishes of the Dioceses.

In both cities, the majority of these Catholic immigrants are from Poland, Philippines and South America. These Catholic migrant churches have marked ethnic characteristics, and represent places of memory, of conservation and transmission of the language and traditions of the motherland. In these spaces, Catholic migrants transmit to the new generations not only religious values, but also traditions and cultural affiliations perceived as a profound and necessary part of oneself, of one's symbolic and identity heritage (Ambrosini *et al*. 2018). This is also why immigrants usually prefer to find themselves in their own religious communities, organized on a national or linguistic basis.

These 'ethnic churches' are almost never integrated into the every-day-life life of Catholic parishes: Catholic immigrants and Italian parishioners share the same church, but participate in different masses and pastoral activities. The official discourse of bishops argues that communities should merge in order to overcome the separation between natives and immigrants (Ricucci 2017).

However, the responsibility for the separation is generally placed on immigrants: in fact, being able to meet, speak their language, sing their songs, participate in religious services in the style of the motherland, are incentives that lead to keeping communities separate from the majority ones; and their forms of worship are tolerated but not integrated into the pastoral life of indigenous communities (Ambrosini 2019).

Chapter 4

"Research questions, Hypothesis, Methodology and Challenges"

The primary objective of this study is to examine the patterns of religious traditions in their relationship toward human rights at the level of religious congregations and their application of human rights principles and practices. In this regard, this chapter first presents the research questions and hypothesis of this study. Then, it addresses the methodology of the survey, largely drawn on the National Congregation Study approach. In particular, it deepens the mapping phase, describing the religious diversity of Bologna and Milan, and the structure of the questionnaire. Furthermore, it depicts the challenges of the contact phase, and presents the list of religious communities mapped and interviewed in Bologna and Milan.

1. Research questions and Hypothesis

On the most general level, the central question of this research is as follows: *What is the engagement of local religious groups in Bologna and Milan concerning human rights?*
More specifically this research question addresses caritative, social, interreligious activities of religious communities in two cities - Bologna and Milan - and their civic engagement' practices. Moreover, it explores the attitudes of religious communities toward specific human rights issues, such as euthanasia, homosexuality, gender equality, and rights of immigrants.

To answer to this main research question, four tasks are formulated below:

Question 1. What are the main characteristics of congregations - majority and minorities - in Bologna and Milan?

- Subquestion 1: What are the main differences and similarities among congregations of Bologna and Milan - majority and minorities - concerning the tendency in decline\growth, and the social composition?

  Hypothesis 1.1: This study hypothesizes that congregations (majority and minorities), both in Bologna and Milan, have a female majority membership; and that - in contrast to minority congregations - Catholic parishes, in both cities, are facing a decline in membership.
  This hypothesis is based on the literature of sociology of religion, which highlights a female prevalence among the faithful (Giorgi and Palmisano 2020, Voas *et al.* 2013; Pew Research Center 2016) and a decline trend in membership, in line with the phenomenon of secularization reported in many studies on the *status* of Catholicism in Italy (Garelli 2011; Cartocci 2011; Marzano and Urbinati 2013).

  Subquestion 2: What are the main differences and similarities among congregations of Bologna and Milan - majority and minorities - in reference to their places of worship?

Hypothesis 1.2: This study hypothesizes that there are differences in terms of worship places, and that - in contrast to Catholics - most minorities, both in Bologna and Milan, do not meet in buildings constructed specifically for religious purposes.

This hypothesis is based on several researches on the conditions of specific religious minorities in Italy, reporting their tendency to gather in structures inappropriate for worship (Burchardt *et al*. 2017; Giorda 2015; Allievi 2008, 2015a).

- Subquestion 3: What are the main differences and similarities among congregations of Bologna and Milan - majority and minorities - in reference to their size, and levels of participation in rituals\activities?

Hypothesis 1.3: This study hypothesizes that there are differences in terms of levels of participation in rituals and activities, and that minoritarian religious groups, both in Bologna and Milan, have higher levels of religious participation than the Catholic majority.

This hypothesis is based on the ascertained role of religious communities in the transmission of the identity\cultural heritage for foreigners which raises the level of participation of their believers (Allievi 2008, 2015a; Ambrosini *et al*. 2018).

Question 2. *What are the levels of congregational - majority and minorities - civic engagement in Bologna and Milan?*

- *Subquestion 1:* What are the activities in which congregations - majority and minorities - are mostly involved in, in Bologna and Milan?

Hypothesis 2.1: This study hypothesizes that congregations in Bologna and Milan are mainly focused on religious education and spiritual care.

This hypothesis is based on the findings of NCS USA and Switzerland (NCS III and IV Reports; Stolz *et al*. 2011) - which show how American and Swiss congregations mainly focus on religious education and spiritual care for their members.

- *Subquestion 2:* What are the differences among religious communities in Bologna and Milan - majority and minorities - in relation to their commitment to social services activities and the issues that these activities address?

Hypothesis 2.2: This study hypothesizes that there are differences among majority and minorities in both cities, where Catholic parishes have higher levels of commitment in social help than minorities.

This hypothesis is based on the wide literature reporting the high commitment of the Catholic Church in sociocial-assistance activities (Itçaina 2014; Bressan 2003, 2004; Ambrosini 2019; Giorgi 2012; Colozzi and Martelli 1988; Pavolini *et al.* 2021).

- *Subquestion 3:* What are the differences among religious communities in Bologna and Milan - majority and minorities - in reference to their commitment to political and lobbying activities?

Hypothesis 2.3: This study hypothesizes that there are differences among the two cities, and that in Milan, Catholic parishes are more active in political activities than in Bologna.
This hypothesis is based on the socio-religious profiles of Bologna and Milan, illustrating that in Milan there is an historical heritage of Catholic commitment in politics (Giorgi and Polizzi 2015).

- *Subquestion 4:* What are the main differences and similarities between the congregations of Bologna and Milan - majority and minorities - in their commitment towards immigration?

Hypothesis 2.4: This study hypothesizes that there are differences among majority and minorities in both cities, where Catholic parishes are more engaged than minorities in supporting immigrants' rights.
This hypothesis is based on the findings of NCS - USA (Beyerlein and Chaves 2020) - which show how Catholics are more committed than other denominations in supporting immigrants rights.

- *Subquestion 5*: What are the differences and similarities among religious communities in Bologna and Milan - majority and minorities - in reference to their involvement in interreligious activities?

Hypothesis 2.5: This study hypothesizes that there are differences between the two cities, and that in Bologna, Catholics and minorities have higher levels of engagement in interreligious activities than in Milan.

This hypothesis is grounded on the socio-religious profiles of Bologna and Milan, illustrating that in Bologna the interreligious initiatives are more settled on an effective level then Milan (Zanfrini and Bressan 2020). This suggests that in Bologna congregations should be more motivated to participate in interfaith initiatives.

Question 3. *What are the attitudes and the practices of congregations - majority and minorities - of Bologna and Milan, towards gender equality, end-of-life and homosexuality issues?*

- *Subquestion 1*: What are the main differences and similarities among congregations of Bologna and Milan - majority and minorities - in reference to their attitudes towards gender equality?

   Hypothesis 3.1: This study hypothesizes that there are differences among religious communities in Bologna and Milan, and that in both cities, Catholics are less open towards gender equality than minorities.

   This hypothesis is based on the theological-grounded Catholic tradition that allows only male religious leadership (Giorgi and Palmisano 2020; Garelli 2011; Bear 2019); while in other denominations - such as Buddhism or others - there isn't this kind of circumstance.

- *Subquestion 2*: What are the main differences and similarities among congregations of Bologna and Milan - majority and minorities - in reference to their attitudes towards end-of-life?

   Hypothesis 2.3: This study hypothesizes that there are no differences, and that in Bologna and Milan - majority and minorities - exhibit similar attitudes towards end-of-life.

   This hypothesis is grounded on the scientific literature highlighting that Abrahamic religions - along with Buddhism - are against 'active' euthanasia for doctrinal reasons (Madadin et al. 2020; Testoni *et al*. 2019; Sgreccia 2012; Baeke et al. 2011; Keown 2005).

This suggests that most of the religious denominations considered should exhibit similar stances regarding end-of-life.

- *Subquestion 3*: What are the main differences and similarities among congregations of Bologna and Milan - majority and minorities - in reference to their attitudes towards homosexuality?

Hypothesis 3.3: This study hypothesizes that there are differences between the two cities, and that Catholics in Milan exhibit more open attitudes towards homosexuality than in Bologna.

This hypothesis is grounded on the socio-religious profiles of Bologna and Milan, showing that in Milan there is a widespread presence of Catholic homosexual groups (Progetto Gionata 2022; Giorgi 2019a). In this perspective, it seems to be plausible to assume that in Milan there is an ecclesial context that endorses homosexual inclusivity.

2. **Methodology**

This doctoral research adopts the Congregational studies approach as a privileged methodology to further investigate the relationship between religion and human rights (Witte and Green 2012), and assumes religious congregations as the cardinal observation point. This study is largely drawn on the approaches and research methodology of the National Congregation Study (NCS), first conducted in the USA by Chaves (Chaves *et al.* 1999; Chaves 2004, 2018; Chaves and Anderson 2008, 2014) and in Switzerland by Monnot and Stolz (Stolz *et al*. 2011; Stolz and Chaves 2017; Stolz and Monnot 2017, 2019).

This survey conducted the first City Congregation Study (CCS) in Italy, combining the quantitative NCS methodology and as well used mapping studies (O'Gorman and MacIntosh 2015) for the analysis of religious diversity in two Italian cities - Bologna and Milan - detecting the different locally based congregations with their particular organizations following 3 steps: *first*, I adapted and developed the questionnaire previously

employed in the NCS - Switzerland[48], with the further addition of a specific focus for the investigation of congregations and human rights issues. These adjunctive questions have been taken from the NCS - USA and NSRL (National Survey of Religious Leaders) questionnaires. The *second* step of this survey produced a complete list of local religious groups in Bologna and Milan, using different types of sources. During the *third* phase, one key informant - the religious leader - per religious community has been interviewed face to face.

3. **The 727 religious communities in Bologna and Milan**

The mapping of religious congregations identified 727 religious communities, 263 in the metropolitan city of Bologna and 464 in the metropolitan city of Milan (158 and 260 Catholics; 105 and 204 minorities, respectively).[49]

This research considers a congregation as a group of individuals belonging to a common religion – from the spectrum of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Baha'ism, etc – and who regularly assemble in a place in Bologna and Milan to practice this religion.

This understanding is consistent with the Congregational studies definition: «*Congregations (...) are places where ordinary people gather (...). If congregations do nothing else, they provide a way for people to worship*» (Ammerman 2009:564) and the more detailed definition of Mark Chaves previously reported in Chapter 1: «*By "congregation" I mean a social institution in which individuals who are not all religious specialists gather in physical proximity to one another, frequently and at regularly scheduled intervals, for activities and events with explicitly religious content and purpose, and in which there is continuity over time and in the individuals who gather, the location of the gathering, and the nature of the activities and events at each gathering*» (2004: 1–2).

---

[48] The questions of the NCS - SWitzerland instrument have been adapted and summarized from the questionnaire NCS-USA to the European context by Ula Smith and team.

[49] The research has been conducted in the metropolitan area of both cities, considering also the following surrounding municipalities in Bologna: Casalecchio di Reno; San Lazzaro di Savena; Zola Predosa; Castel Maggiore; Pianoro; Castenaso; Sasso Marconi; Calderara di Reno; Anzola dell'Emilia and Granarolo dell'Emilia. In Milan we considered the following surrounding municipalities: Arese; Assago, Baranzate; Bresso; Buccinasco; Cesano Boscone; Cologno Monzese; Cormano; Corsico, Cusago; Novate Milanese; Opera; Pero; Peschiera Borromeo; Rho; Rozzano; San Donato Milanese; Segrate; Sesto San Giovanni; Settimo Milanese; Trezzano sul Naviglio and Vimodrone.

The information about the Catholic parishes comes from the Diocesan Yearbooks of Bologna and Milan, which contains the complete list of parishes. The information on religious minorities comes from a variety of sources: (a) Office for Interreligious Dialogue of the diocese of Bologna and Milan; (b) Web-site of the municipality of the cities of Bologna and Milan; (c) Web-site of "Amitie" project (a survey on the needs and expectations of the religious communities in Bologna); (d) Observatory on religious pluralism (GRIS) of Bologna; (e) Personal contacts of priests who carry out interreligious activities; (f) Snowball technique[50]; (g) General websites research.

The construction of a list of religious communities presented various difficulties which mainly regarded religious minorities. The first concerned the great fluidity of some minorities, in particular the Evangelical ones. In fact many of these communities are born, move, and (sometimes) disintegrate in very short periods of time. As a consequence, mapping these realities has proved rather difficult. The second difficulty regarded the mimetism of many minority' places of worship, so that the buildings in which many of the minority communities gather are hardly recognizable, if not completely unidentifiable.

These conditions resulted in a list of congregations that can not be considered definitively comprehensive, and which results are not reliable in the long term.

---

[50] The mapping was built largely with the "snowball technique", which provided the collection of new information regarding other minorities through the request made to the interviewed leaders to indicate additional potential communities to be included in the survey.

Table 1. *Religious Communities of Bologna and surrounding municipalities*

	Urban Area	Surrounding Municipalities	N	%
Catholic	99	59	158	60%
Lutheran	1	-	1	0.4%
Muslim Sunni	14	5	19	7.2%
Jewish	2	-	2	0.8%
Orthodox	7	3	10	3.8%
Buddhist	5	-	5	1.9%
Hindu	3	-	3	1.1%
Evangelical	35	11	46	17.5%
Anglican\ Episcopalian	1	-	1	0.4%
Sikh	-	1	1	0.4%
Baha'i	1	-	1	0.4%
Jehovah' Witnesses	6	9	15	5.7%
Church of Scientology	1	-	1	0.4%
Total	175	88	263	100%

Table 2. *Religious Communities of Milan and surrounding municipalities*

	Urban Area	Surrounding Municipalities	N	%
Catholic	91	169	260	56%
Lutheran	1	-	1	0.2%
Reformed\Calvinist	1	-	1	0.2%
Muslim Sunni	15	5	20	4.3%
Muslim Shia	1	-	1	0.2%
Jewish	12	-	12	2.6%
Orthodox	15	9	24	5.2%
Buddhist	8	3	11	2.4%
Hindu	-	1	1	0.2%
Evangelical	41	33	74	16%
Anglican\ Episcopalian	1	-	1	0.2%
Baha'i	1	-	1	0.2%
Jehovah' Witnesses	31	22	53	11.5%
Church of Scientology	1	-	1	0.2%
Mormon	3	-	3	0.6%
Total	222	242	464	100%

As displayed in Tab. 1 and 2, both in Bologna and in Milan[51], the Catholic communities are more than half of total (respectively 60% and 56%, and 418 in total).

Milan has higher levels of religious diversity, in fact the minority communities represent 44% (204 out of 464), while in Bologna the minority communities represent 40% (105 out of 263). In both cities the second religious tradition in terms of number of congregations is the Evangelical one (17. 5% in Bologna, 16 % in Milan, and 120 in total).

In Bologna the third represented religious tradition is the Islam Sunni (7.2%), follows the movement of Jehovah' Witnesses (5.7%), Christian Orthodoxy (3.8 %), Buddhism (1.9%), Hinduism (1.1%), Judaism (0,8%), Lutheranism, Anglicanism, Sikhism, Bahà'i' faith and Scientology (0.4%).

In Milan the third religious tradition is the movement of Jehovah' Witnesses (11.5%), follows Christian Orthodoxy (5.2%), Islam Sunni (4.3%), Judaism (2.6%), Buddhism (2.4%), Latter Day Saint movement (0.6%), Lutheranism, Islam Shia, Hinduism, Reformism\Calvinism, Anglicanism, Bahà'i' faith and Scientology (0.2 %).

An interesting difference regards the distribution of the religious communities in the metropolitan areas: in Bologna the majority of congregations are established in the city (175 vs 88), while in Milan the majority can be found in the surrounding municipalities (222 vs 242). This trend mainly applies to the parishes, in fact if we look at the religious minorities, in both cases the majority are established in the urban area: 76 minoritarian congregations in the city of Bologna (29 in the surrounding municipalities) and 131 in the city of Milan (73 in the surrounding municipalities).

Many of the non-historical religious minorities - such as Muslims - are established in the cities mainly because their members or their ancestors have/had an immigrant background. Immigrants frequently settle in urban centers because they have better opportunities on the labor market, are usually more accepted, can count on already existing social networks and also the establishment of places of worship is also often simpler (Baumann and Stolz 2009).

---

[51] When referring to the religious communities in the cities of Bologna and Milan, the surrounding municipalities are also considered.

4. Questionnaire, Contact Phase and Interviews

The second step of the research consisted in the submission of a closed-question questionnaire - translated and adapted to Italian context from the questionnaire previously employed in the NCS - USA and Switzerland, with the further elaboration of a specific focus for the analysis of human rights issues - to religious leaders of minority and majority congregations in Bologna, Milan and their respective surrounding municipalities.

The focus on human rights is the result of the further addition of questions taken from the NCS - USA and NSRL (National Survey of Religious Leaders) questionnaires. These questions enabled to deepen issues concerning homosexuality, gender equality and end-of-life.

4.1 Structure of the questionnaire

The questionnaire is composed of 61 questions divided into nine sections: contacts, basic information, staff and governance, volunteers, worship, groups and activities, social composition, values, and congregations and human rights.

Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 contain questions that mainly concern basic information, social composition, membership and religious rites. In particular, they collect information about the address where the religious community carries out its rites, telephone contacts, the type of religious affiliation, the name of the community, the year of foundation of the community, the eventual affiliation, the type of place of worship, the eventual sharing of spaces with other communities, the social composition and membership (ethnic minority group\ethnic affiliation, number of formal and informal affiliates, participation in the religious life of the community, number of adults, increase or decrease in the number of people belonging to the community, percentage of women, percentage over 60, percentage of adults under 35, percentage of people from western Europe and percentage of people who arrived in Italy in the last 5 years); religious rites (number of participants in weekly rites and the most important celebrations; number of weekly rites and possibly the presence of bilingual rites or in a language other than Italian); leadership (gender of the religious leader, age, place of birth, level of education, any theological training, number of people employed in the

community), volunteers (number of volunteers involved). The sixth section concerns the type of activities carried out by religious groups (the transmission of religious traditions, awareness-raising activities, activities for the elderly, disabled and migrants, activities to support environmental issues, political activities and any support to specific issues, such as immigration and interreligious activities).

Eighth section concerns the orientation - conservative, centrist or progressive - of the community toward the political, theological and ethical dimensions.

Sections from the ninth onwards, include questions that mainly concern human rights' issues. Specifically, rights of migrants, homosexual people, people with HIV, people addicted to drugs or alcohol, people with mental disorders, and divorced people. Moreover, questions regarded eventual lobbying activities in support of \opposition to public\political matters such as abortion, economic inequalities and homosexuality. Another area concerns the attitude towards controversial issues, such as the full participation in community life - which also provides access to positions of responsibility in the community - of people who are openly homosexual, cohabiting and unmarried and consumers of alcoholic beverages; and the willingness to accept a same-sex marriage or not. Further controversial issues contained in the questionnaire concern the opening\closure towards female and homosexual spiritual leadership, and the orientation towards the end-of-life issue. The last two questions concern the Theology of Religions (Astley and Francis 2016) and the autonomy of religious communities from the state - with respect to the activities of ministers of worship, financial and dogmatic issues.

4.1.1 Translation issues

The translation of the questionnaire required the contextualization of the empirical instrument to the Italian religious contexts, which is characterized by a majority Catholic presence.

In particular, the concept of *congregation* required a reflection. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the voluntarily self-organized form of religious communities in the United States, offers a different picture from the one provided by the Catholic parochial model in Italy, which is based on ascribed criteria (on a territorial basis).

However, some social and cultural changes in the Italian (and European) religious field, such as (a) the decline in religious participation, which makes attending worship a voluntary choice, rather than a social convention or family tradition (Garelli 2011; Cartocci 2011; Marzano and Urbinati 2013); (b) the presence of a significant number of immigrants, who tend towards 'congrezionalization' as a form of mutual support and the transmission of cultural and religious traditions (Giordan and Pace 2014, 2012; Ricucci 2017; Pace 2013); and finally (c) the emergence of alternative spiritualities, with collective expressions voluntarily established at the local level (Burchardt *et al.* 2017; Cartocci 2011); have made the term *congregation* also compliant to the Italian context.

Starting from these considerations, the concept of *congregation* has been referred to the 'parish' for the Catholic reality, to Mosques\prayer hall for the Islamic reality, to Synagogues for Jewish, etcetera[52].

Another difficulty in the translation was related to the concept of *leadership*. In fact, in the American context, leadership is also considered - in addition to the spiritual and religious ones - in relation to strictly organizational and managerial roles, while in Italy this distinction is less defined and organizational and spiritual leadership most of the time overlap. In this perspective, the concept of *religious leader* in the Catholic reality coincided with the figure of the priest. The situation was more complex for some minority religions; for example, for Islamic realities, which basically have two leadership figures - the spiritual one which is identifiable with the role of Imam, and the managerial one of the head of the prayer room - it was decided to make the two different roles equivalent for the purposes of interview.

---

[52] In this study, the terms "congregations"; "religious communities" and "religious group" are employed with the same significance.

4.2 Contact phase and interviews

The main difficulties of the contact phase regarded minorities, in particular the lack of information regarding the minorities' leaders[53] and their initial reluctance to be involved in the research, of which they were wary. However, once they were contacted and reassured, most of them were glad to be involved.

Regarding Catholics, the official recommendation of the Dioceses of Bologna and Milan has been essential to obtain the involvement of Catholic priests.

Nonetheless, during the interviews, when facing some hot issues - such as homosexuality and gender - the majority of them were concerned of being considered 'not modern enough'; moreover, some of them claimed that they feel under 'a magnifying glass' and possibly judged. As for the leaders of minorities, it has been necessary to reassure them that the research did not aim at giving a false image of the clergy, and in presenting priests as those who discriminate against certain categories of people.

The great majority of interviews has been conducted face to face, and in the Italian language, from November 2019 to September 2021. Exceptions have been made during the Covid pandemic when some interviews have been conducted by telephone and video call (5 video calls and 13 phone calls).

---

[53] Often during the mapping phase, the location of a place of worship was obtained, but not the leader's direct contact.

Table 3. *Religious Communities mapped and interviewed in Bologna and surrounding municipalities (N)*

	Mapped	Interviewed
Catholic	158	122
Lutheran	1	-
Muslim Sunni	19	10
Jewish	2	1
Orthodox	10	5
Buddhist	5	2
Hindu	3	3
Evangelical	46	18
Anglican\ Episcopalian	1	-
Sikh	1	-
Baha'i	1	1
Jehovah' Witnesses	15	11
Church of Scientology	1	1
Total	263	174

Table 4. *Religious Communities mapped and interviewed in Milan and surrounding municipalities (N)*

	Mapped	Interviewed
Catholic	260	195
Lutheran	1	-
Reformed\Calvinist	1	1
Muslim Sunni	20	13
Muslim Shia	1	-
Jewish	12	6
Orthodox	24	16
Buddhist	11	7
Hindu	1	1
Evangelical	74	40
Anglican\ Episcopalian	1	1
Baha'i	1	1
Jehovah' Witnesses	53	17
Church of Scientology	1	1
Mormon	3	3
Total	464	302

In Bologna, 174 religious leaders have been interviewed (122 Catholics and 52 minorities) out of 263 mapped congregations (66% of response rate), while in Milan 302 interviews have been conducted (195 Catholics and 107 minorities) out of 464 mapped congregations (65% of response rate). In Bologna, Catholics represent 70.1%, and minorities 29.9%, while in Milan, Catholics represent 64.6% and minorities 35.4%.

Chapter 5

"Congregations in Bologna and Milan: Results"

The first part of this Chapter deals with the main characteristics of congregations - majority and minorities - in Bologna and Milan, concerning: membership tendency, participations in rituals and activities, social composition, political and theological orientations, leadership characteristics, affiliation and places of worship.

The second deepens the civic engagement of congregations - majority and minorities - in Milan and Bologna: social, caritative and political activities; and interreligious commitment.

The third explores the attitudes and the practices of religious congregations - majority and minorities - in Milan and Bologna, toward particular issues: gender equality, end-of-life and homosexuality issues.

1. Introduction

The data from the survey on the City congregation studies in Bologna and Milan collected between 2019 and 2021 are used to verify the research hypotheses. Due to the small number of interviews conducted among minorities (52 in Bologna and 107 in Milan), it was not possible to make percentages for each denomination. Thus, data are presented according to two categories: *Catholics* and *Minorities* (findings of minorities have been merged). Specifications are made when there are significant peculiarities among particular denominations. Data analysis has been conducted with SPSS statistical software (and have been performed 'one-way ANOVA', 'chi-square' and 'Cramér's V' statistical tests).

2. Local religious communities in Bologna and Milan: membership; size; levels of participation and worship places

In order to answer the first research question *"What are the main characteristics of congregations - majority and minority - in Bologna and Milan?"* - this study now examines the membership trends in growth\decline; membership composition (gender, age, political and theological orientations); congregational sizes and levels of participation; and the places of worship' landscape in Bologna and Milan.

2. 1 Membership trends in growth\decline

This section deals with the trend - documented by a variety of surveys (Cartocci 2011; Garelli 2011; Marzano 2012; Giorgi 2018) - of increasing decline in membership in the historical religious tradition of Western world - such as Catholicism and Judaism - and the increasing presence of Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and other religious groups belonging to 'alternative spiritualities' (Burchardt *et al.* 2017; Pace 2014; Garelli 2020).

To delineate the trend in membership, this study asked religious leaders:

- *Compared to 10 years ago, has the number of regularly participating adults in your congregation increased, decreased or remained the same?*

Table 5. *Membership trends in* growth\decline\remained the same, *among congregations in Bologna and Milan*

		Increased	**Remained the same**	**Decreased**
BOLOGNA	Catholics	26.2%***	11.5%***	62.3%***
	Minorities	59.6%***	34.6%***	5.8%***
	Total	36.2%	18.4%	45.4%
MILAN	Catholics	22.7%***	34.1%***	43.2%***
	Minorities	75.9%***	12.6%***	11.5%***
	Total	40.3%	27%	32.7%

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Table 5 displays an opposite tendency among congregations in the two cities: in Bologna the prevailing trend is "decline", with 45.4% of congregations reporting a decreased membership in the last 10 years; while in Milan the predominant tendency is the "growth", with 40.3% of congregations reporting an increased membership in the last 10 years.

Catholic parishes - both in Bologna and in Milan - show a prevailing declining trend in membership, even though in Bologna this trend is stronger (62.3% in Bologna and 43.2% in Milan).

Both cities display a growth tendency in membership among minorities, but in Milan this trend is stronger (75.9% *versus* 59.6% in Bologna).

In both cities, the denominations with the strongest increasing trend are those who belong to non-historical religious minorities and whose members have an immigrant background, such as Muslims, Orthodoxes and Evangelicals (See Appendix A and B).

However, it is necessary to underline that these data are based on leaders' perceptions, and that sometimes, leaders had only recently assumed their role in their community. Thus, their responses were grounded in a period of time less than 10 years.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between religious tradition (Catholic and minorities) and the tendency in growth\remained the same\decline in Bologna and in Milan. In both cities the relation between the variables is highly

significant. In both cities, Catholics are more likely to have a tendency in decline, and minorities a growth trend in membership. A further Cramer's V test showed that the relation between the variables is slightly stronger in Bologna (*V*= 0.52) than Milan (*V*= 0.51).

2.2 Membership composition concerning: gender, age, political and theological orientations

To depict the social composition of congregations, this study asked religious leaders:

- *Of the regular adult participants, what percent would you say are female?*
- *Of the regular adult participants, what percentage would you say are over 60 years old?*
- *What percentage of the regular adult participants would you say are under 35 years old?*
- *Politically speaking, would your congregation be considered more on the conservative side, more on the liberal side, or right in the middle?*
- *Theologically speaking, would your congregation be considered more on the conservative side, more on the liberal side, or right in the middle?*

2.2.1 Age and Gender composition

Table 6. *Age and gender composition among congregations in Bologna and Milan (Mean %)*

		Women	**Over 60**	**Under 35**
BOLOGNA	Catholics	63.1 %***	57.8 %***	16 %***
	Minorities	49.5 %***	26.9 %***	34.4 %***
	Total	59.1 %	48.7 %	21.5 %
MILAN	Catholics	62.8 %***	56.9 %***	11.7 %***
	Minorities	53.1 %***	24.6 %***	34.8 %***
	Total	59.8 %	46.9 %	18.6 %

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Tab. 6 shows that in Bologna and Milan there is a prevalence of female membership both in Catholic and minorities, even though the presence of women is higher among Catholic parishes (63.1% *versus* 49.5% of minorities in Bologna; and 62.8% *versus* 53.1% of minorities in Milan).

In both cities, the lower female percentages are found in Muslim congregations (Mean=10.5% in Bologna and Mean = 20% in Milan, see Appendix C and D).

Tab. 6 displays the higher percentages of over 60 among Catholics, both in Bologna and Milan (57.8% *versus* 26.9% of minorities in Bologna; and 56.9 % *versus* 24.6 % of minorities in Milan).

Muslims, Evangelicals, Hindus, Churches of Scientology and Buddhists have the lower levels of over 60, in both cities (See Appendix C and D). An interesting difference - later discussed - in over 60 memberships between the two cities is exhibited in Orthodox congregations (Mean=6% in Bologna and Mean=26% in Milan).

The lower rates of under 35 are exhibited - in both cities - among Catholic parishes (16 % *versus* 34.4 % of minorities in Bologna; and 11.7 % *versus* 34.8 % in Milan).

The highest percentages of young members - in both cities - are displayed in Orthodox, Muslim, and Evangelical communities; and in Bologna in the Church of Scientology (See Appendix C and D). The age and gender composition analysis haven't found any significant difference between Bologna and Milan.

In both cities, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) suggested that there is a significant statistical difference between Catholics and Minorities in their % of women, % of Over 60 and % of under 35. Catholics are more likely to have higher levels of female and over 60 membership; and minorities are more likely to have higher levels of under 35 membership.

The effect of religious tradition on % of over 60 (η2=0.29 in Bologna; η2=0.37 in Milan) and % of under 35 is higher in Milan (η2=0.18 in Bologna; η2=0.36 in Milan); while its effect on % of women is similar in both cities (η2=0.17 in Bologna; η2=0.13 in Milan).

2.2.2 Political and Theological Orientations

Religious traditions are characterized by *liberal* and *conservative* tendencies or orientations over specific fields (Chaves 2004, Storm 2008).

The issue is frequently reduced to positions which are more close to the broader society and to the secular state - willing to adapt and change (liberal, modernist, moderate) - or to orientations that sometimes can appear as anachronistic (conservative, fundamentalist, strict) and that aspire to preserve specific traditions and beliefs (Marsden 1991; Bruce 1990; Iannaccone 1992).

However, the significance ascribed to the terms liberal/conservative (or the other distinctions mentioned) varies greatly according to the religious traditions and to the historical-cultural contexts. What is certain is that this is a very ideologically charged topic. Conservative congregations are often seen as dangerous in society, especially due to the fundamentalism drift. Conversely, liberal religion is sometimes accused of renouncing their own religious convictions to obtain a greater consensus. The objective of this section is to analyze which religious communities describe themselves more as liberal, conservative or in the middle.

This analysis considers two dimensions of the wide spectrum of the "liberal /conservative" orientations:

• a theological one: whether the community is theologically conservative, center, or liberal.

• a political one: whether the community is politically conservative, center, or liberal.

- Political Orientation

Table 7. *Political orientation of Catholics and minorities in Bologna and Milan*

		Conservative	In the middle	Liberal	Missing data
BOLOGNA	Catholics	29.8%	13.8%	31.3%	25.1%
	Minorities	13.8%	8.2%	19.7%	58.3%
	Total	26.2%	11.5%	28.1%	34.2%
MILAN	Catholics	24.1%	18.4%	21.2%	36.3%
	Minorities	15.8%	3.2%	9.3%	71.7%
	Total	21.6%	12.1%	16.8%	49.5%

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Tab. 7 highlights that in Bologna, the majority of Catholic priests describe their congregations as politically liberal (31.3%). The same can be said for minorities: 19.7% of religious leaders describe their congregations as politically liberal; even though the great majority of them weren't able to interpret their congregation's political orientation (58.3%).

In Milan there are more politically conservative self-described Catholics (24.1%) than liberal (21.2%) and politically in the middle (18.4%); but the majority of Catholic priests weren't able to interpret their congregation's political orientation (36.3%).

The vast majority of religious leaders of minorities weren't able to interpret their congregation' political orientation (71.7%); but among those who responded, self-described politically conservative (15.8%) minorities prevailed.

Tab. 7 shows that in Bologna there is a slight prevalence of liberal political orientations among the congregation (28.1% *versus* 26.2% of congregations with conservative orientation and 11.5% of congregations politically in the middle); while in Milan it is the opposite: most of the religious leaders describe their congregation as politically conservative (21.6% *versus* 16.8% of liberal political orientation and 12.1% congregations politically in the middle).

However, in both cities, the higher percentages are seen in missing data: in the vast majority of cases, religious leaders stated that they don't talk about political issues with the members of their community, and preferred not to answer.

- **Theological Orientation**

Table 8. *Theological orientation of Catholics and minorities in Bologna and Milan*

		Conservative	In the middle	Liberal	Missing data
BOLOGNA	Catholics	29.8%***	18.2%***	28.7%***	23.3%***
	Minorities	81.8%***	6.5%***	5.3%***	6.4%***
	Total	45.6%	14.2%	22.1%	18.1%
MILAN	Catholics	27.3%***	16.9%***	24.3%***	31.5%***
	Minorities	69.4%***	4.8%***	8.1%***	17.7%***
	Total	41.8%	12.2%	19.3%	26.7%

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

As illustrated in Tab. 8, in Bologna and Milan congregations are more theologically conservative than liberal and in the middle.

Catholics are almost equally divided in theologically conservative and liberal in both cities (29.8% *versus* 28.7% in Bologna, and 27.3% *versus* 24.3% in Milan); with a slight prevalence of conservative orientations.

Minorities, in both cities, are much more theologically conservative than liberal and in the middle (81.8% theologically conservative in Bologna; and 69.4% theologically conservative in Milan). In both cities, Muslims, Evangelicals and Jehovah's Witnesses display the highest levels of conservative theological orientation (See Appendix E and F).

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between religious tradition (Catholic and minorities) and theological and political orientation in Bologna and in Milan. In both cities, the relation between the variables was significant only regarding the teleological orientation. In Bologna and Milan, minorities are more likely to have a

theological conservative orientation, while Catholics are more likely to exhibit liberal or in the middle orientations, and to have difficulties in interpreting the theological orientations of their communities. A further Cramer's V test showed that the relation between the variables is slightly stronger in Bologna (*V*= 0.46) than Milan (*V*= 0.43).

2.3 Congregational size and Levels of participation

The questionnaire contains five indicators of congregational size:

- *formally registered members;*
- *number of people involved in the congregation's religious life;*
- *number of participants to the most attended event of the congregation throughout a typical year;*
- *number of weekly participants in services or other activities in the congregation;*
- *number of attendees to the weekend rituals* (Friday included).

The analysis has excluded the formally registered members. The reasons are mainly two: in the case of Catholics, the formally registered members referred to the overall number of residents of the parishes' area of competence assigned by the Dioceses. Since this number comprehends religious nones, atheists, and people with other religions affiliation, it cannot be considered as reliable. Secondly, a formal affiliation assumes a form of registration. In the case of minorities, in most cases they do not keep a formal register of members. Thus, Table 9 shows the median congregational size for the four different measures: the median number of people involved in the congregation's religious life; the median number of weekly participants in rituals or other activities; the median number of participants to the most attended event; and the median number of attendees to the weekend rituals.

Table 9. *Congregational Size of religious communities in Bologna and Milan (N, Mean)*

		People Involved	People involved in the most attended event	Weekly participants	Weekend participants
BOLOGNA	Catholics	661.5***	464***	394.8***	333.7***
	Minorities	171.5***	165.5***	106***	103.5***
	Total	512.8	370.7	307.1	264.2
MILAN	Catholics	1209.4***	477.5	936.2***	729.8***
	Minorities	495***	377.5	269.8***	253.7***
	Total	964	444.8	703	563.2

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

First, Tab. 9 illustrates that in Bologna the average number of members involved in activities and rituals of congregations is significantly lower than in Milan, both in Catholic and minority congregations. Thus, congregations in Milan not only are more numerous, as shown in the mapping (See Tab. 3 and 4), but are also bigger.

Second, it highlights that in Bologna and Milan the highest average number of members involved in activities and rituals is among Catholic parishes.

In both cities, the denomination with the higher average n. of people involved in activities and rituals are Orthodox communities, Muslims, Jehovah' Witnesses and Evangelicals.

In both cities, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) suggested that there is a significant statistical difference between Catholics and minorities in the number of people involved, people involved in the most attended event, weekly participants and weekend participants, except for the people involved in the most attended event in Milan. In both cities, Catholics are more likely to have more people involved, and higher numbers of weekly and weekend participants, than minorities. In Bologna, Catholics are also more likely to have more people involved in the most attended event than minorities.

- Participation in rituals and activities

To deepen the levels of religious participation, this analysis compares the median number of people involved in the congregation's religious life with the median number of weekly participants in rituals or other activities.

The analysis excluded the median number of attendees to the weekend rituals (since it is included in the number of weekly participants) and the median numbers of participants to the most attended event, since it is sporadic.

Even though the attendees to the most attended event can not be considered as an essential indicator of the levels of participation, it can reveal interesting features of congregations.

In many cases - such as Orthodox in Bologna; and Muslims and Evangelicals, in Milan - it overcomes the number of people involved in the congregation's religious life (See Appendix G and H). In other cases - such as Muslims and Jehovah' Witnesses in Bologna and Jehovah' Witnesses in Milan (See Appendix G and H) - the average number of participants to the most attended event overlaps with the number of people involved in the congregation's religious life.   The reason mainly lies in what these occasions represent, especially for minorities. The most attended events of a minoritarian congregation - like the celebrations for the end of Ramadan, or Jewish Easter (Passover) - are usually chances of aggregation and opportunities to transmit and share traditions and cultural affiliations, symbolic and identity heritage, regardless of religious congregational involvement.

Table 10. *Levels of congregational participation in weekly rituals\activities in Bologna and Milan*

	Weekly participation in activities and rituals in Bologna	Weekly participation in activities and rituals in Milan
Catholics	59.6%	77.4%
Minorities	61.8%	54.5%
Total	59.9%	72.9%

Tab. 10 displays the levels of congregational participation in both cities: Milan has higher levels of congregational involvement than Bologna (72.9 % *versus* 59.9 %).

In Bologna, Catholics and minorities show similar levels of participation, while in Milan, Catholics are more involved than minorities.

Catholics in Milan have higher levels of participation than Bologna (77.4 % *versus* 59.6 %); while it is the opposite for minorities: in Bologna the involvement is 61.8 % and 54.5% in Milan.

This analysis shows that religious communities of Milan are not only more numerous (as shown in Tab. 1 and 2), but also larger and more involved in rituals and activities than the ones of Bologna.

2.4 Places of worship in Bologna and Milan

Italy's constitution states that citizens can exercise their religion in public or private (Article 19), and the right to practice one's religion in a specifically designated building has been upheld by the Italian Constitutional Court[54]; in compliance with European Court of Human Rights' (ECHR) legal precedents[55].

However, Italy lacks national laws enforcing the specificity of these requirements, which leaves the determination of which places of worship can be built *de jure* and which ones can not, to the different legal *status* experienced by minoritarian denominations (as explained in paragraphs 1.1 and 1.1.1 of Chapter 3).

In this perspective, denominations without an official agreement with the Italian state - like many Muslim and Evangelical minorities - suffer the consequences of political discretion regarding the construction of religious buildings (Allievi 2008, 2015a, 2015b; Macrì 2015).

This condition results in permissiveness varying from one municipality to another. In fact, «*cities are increasingly called upon to take political action aimed at regulating fundamental aspects of a person's life, integrating or innovating the legislative body, opposing or filling gaps in national politics[56]*» (Bossi 2020:120).

---

[54] Ruling no. 59/1958 and no. 195/1993
[55] Manoussakis et al. vs Greece, 16/9/1996
[56] My translation from Italian

Against this background, this study, in order to depict the places of worship' landscape in Bologna and Milan, asked to religious leaders:

- *Does your congregation meet in a building constructed specifically for religious purposes, or in some other kind of building?*
- *Is your building used by any other congregation for its worship services?*
- If yes - *is that congregation composed primarily of minority ethnic or national groups that have come to this country approximately in the last 20 years?*

Regarding the first question, it is necessary to specify that many of the places of worship specifically built for religious purposes, do not externally display specific architectural elements that can be associated with a specific religious tradition, but very often, as in the case of Buddhists or Evangelicals, these structures might seems houses\apartments or offices, with plaques on the exterior to indicate the character of the buildings.

The description of Table 11 is combined with some specificities regarding the places of worship that have been observed during the mapping phase and the interview process.

Table 11. *Places of worship' portrait of Religious Communities in Milan and Bologna (yes %)*

		Place of worship specifically built for religious purposes	Sharing of the place of worship with other congregations	Place of worship shared with congregations composed by ethnic minorities
BOLOGNA	Catholics	100%***	19.7%	90.9%
	Minorities	26.9%***	25%	76.9%
	Total	78.2%	21.3%	85.7%
MILAN	Catholics	100%***	8.2%	80%
	Minorities	48.5%***	15.2%	93.3%
	Total	83.6%	10.7%	88%

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Tab. 11 shows that in Milan there are more congregations that carry out rituals and activities in buildings constructed with religious objectives than in Bologna (83.6% *versus* 78.2%); while in Bologna there are higher numbers of congregations that share their worship spaces with other communities (21.3% *versus* 10.7% of Milan). In both cities, the vast majority of congregations that share their worship spaces do so with religious communities composed by ethnic minorities (85.7% in Bologna and 88% in Milan).

The totality of Catholic parishes interviewed of Bologna and Milan - as expected and almost taken for granted - meet in buildings constructed specifically for religious purposes.

Bologna has a higher percentage of parishes that share their Churches\spaces with other congregations than Milan (19.7% *versus* 8.2%). Both in Bologna and Milan, in the majority of cases parishes share their Churches with Orthodoxs, migrant Catholic groups, and - rarely - with Evangelicals.

The results of this analysis suggest that the minoritarian religious communities interviewed in Milan experience higher levels of religious rights in reference to the places of worship: 48.5% of congregations interviewed conduct rituals and activities in buildings constructed with religious objectives; while in Bologna the percentage is considerably lower: 26.9%.

In the case of Muslims communities in Bologna and Milan, no group meets in a building constructed specifically for religious purposes, there is just one exception in Milan (See Appendix I and J). As stated in paragraph 3 (Chapter 3), in Segrate (a surrounding municipality of Milan) there is the only one Mosque specifically built for religious purposes in Milan (that display specific architectural Islam elements, for instance minartes, and dome with crescent on it). The great majority of Orthodox groups interviewed in Bologna and Milan gather in ex Catholic Churches granted by the Dioceses, because no longer employed; otherwise share the Church with Catholic communities.

In both cities, the vast majority of historical minorities usually gather in buildings built for religious purposes that also display recognizable religious architectural elements.

Less than half of Evangelical congregations interviewed - in Bologna and Milan - meet in structures built for religious purposes (See Appendix I and J); while the vast majority of Buddhists in both cities gather in buildings built for religious purposes, but none of these structures display recognizable religious architectural elements.

A Chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between religious tradition (Catholic and minorities) and the condition of worship places in Bologna and in Milan. In both cities, the relation between the variables is significant only regarding the places of worship specifically built for religious purposes.

A further Cramer's V test showed that the relation between the variables is stronger in Bologna (V= 0.8) than Milan (V= 0.5). In both cities, all Catholics gather in Churches specifically built, while minorities - especially in Bologna - are more likely to gather in other kinds of buildings.

2.5 Discussion - First Research question

The aim of the first research question is to explore the main characteristics of congregations - majority and minorities - in Bologna and Milan.

In this perspective, this section considered the main differences and similarities among congregations of Bologna and Milan - majority and minorities - concerning: (a) tendency in decline\growth, (b) social composition, (c) theological and political orientations, (d) size and levels of participation in rituals and activities; and (e) places of worship.

The first hypothesis (1.1) - which suggested that congregations, both in Bologna and Milan, may have a female majority membership; and that Catholic parishes, in both cities, may be facing a decline in membership - is fully supported by results.

Catholic parishes - both in Bologna and in Milan - show a prevailing declining trend in membership, and a female majority in membership. These results are consistent with several studies on the Italian religious field underlying a female prevalence among believers (Giorgi and Palmisano 2020, Voas *et al.* 2013; Pew Research Center 2016) and a decline trend in membership among Catholic parishes (Garelli 2011; Cartocci 2011; Marzano and Urbinati, 2013). Findings indicate that Islamic communities have the lowest percentage of women, in both cities. This circumstance is probably grounded in two main reasons: the first concerns the prayer rules in Islam, which requires male members (in health) to pray in the Mosque\prayer room, while for women there is no such obligation. The second is linked to the first, and regards the places of worship. As explained in paragraph 2.4 (Chapter 5), muslim minorities, both in Bologna and Milan (with only one exception in Milan), conduct

rites and prayers in spaces that are not suitable for religious practice and which - most of the time - lack of sufficient space to guarantee areas reserved for women, leading to discriminatory repercussions.

Data analysis also considered the membership' socio-composition of congregations concerning the over-60 and under 35 participants; highlighting that congregations in Milan and Bologna have similar levels of young and senior members. Moreover, the analysis showed that Catholics - in both cities - have lower rates of under 35 and higher levels of over 60 than minorities; while it is the opposite for minorities (highest rates of under 35 and lowest rate of over 60 than Catholics).

Interesting differences among the two cities have been found in the percentages of over 60 in Orthodox minorities (M=6% in Bologna, and M=26% in Milan). The variation in the presence of over 60 in the two city is strictly linked to the different social characterization of the groups: in Bologna, as reported in paragraph 3 (Chapter 3), there are above all men and women of working age (often involved in domestic care jobs and elderly carers); while in Milan there is a strong component of Coptic[57] families arrived in Milan in the 70s.

The analysis also examined the political and theological orientations of the religious communities. The results show that religious leaders in Bologna have the prevalent tendency to describe their congregations as politically liberal. By contrast, in Milan most of the leaders described their congregation as politically conservative.

Regarding the theological orientation, the analysis found that religious leaders of both cities have the prevalent tendency to describe their congregations as theologically conservative; even though this tendency is much stronger in leaders of minorities.

However, in Bologna and Milan, a considerable number of religious leaders faced difficulties in interpreting the political and theological orientations of their communities, and preferred not to respond to the questions. This difficulty was more pronounced in the interpretation of the political orientation. Leaders often justified this difficulty, affirming their decision to exclude the political discourse and stating that they rarely speak about theological issues with the members of the communities.

---

[57] These groups belong to the so-called migrant Christian Churches, also named Diasporic Churches, and arrived in Milan after the "Coptic diaspora", caused by the persecution at the hands of Muslims.

The second hypothesis (1.2), which suggested that the vast majority of minority congregations - in contrast to Catholics - both in Bologna and Milan, may not meet in buildings constructed specifically for religious purposes, is supported by the data.

In fact, results show that in both cities all Catholic parishes gather in buildings specifically built for religious purposes, while the majority of minoritarian religious communities don't.

In Bologna only 26.9% of minoritarian religious groups gather in buildings constructed with religious objectives, while in Milan, this percentage is higher (48.5%).

These findings show that in Bologna there are significantly lower levels of religious rights than in Milan; however it should be emphasized that most of the buildings constructed with religious objectives in Milan are not recognizable as religious structures, even though the religious purpose of their construction indicates a probable greater adequacy of the spaces for worship.

This suggests that in Bologna, the discretionary policies regarding the construction of places of worship of minoritarian religious groups have stronger discriminatory repercussions than in Milan. The reason could be grounded in two aspects: the first concerns the stronger presence of historical religious communities (such as Jews and Protestants) that have stipulated the *Intesa* with the State (See paragraph 1.1.1, Chapter 3) and have historical places of worship in Milan; and the second regards the dimensions of congregations: bigger congregations (as those of Milan, see paragraph 2.3, Chapter 5) have the possibility to raise more funds for the construction of structures for the worship, while smaller congregations have less members that donate money and tend to just rent spaces.

However, the analysis showed that these discriminations have a greater impact on two specific religious groups: Jehovah' Witnesses and Muslims. These two denominations suffer the strongest limitations of religious rights concerning the places of worship, in both cities. Sometimes, this circumstance depends on the availability of funds for the construction of worship places, and other times on the disponibility of the local administration to allow the building of a worship place. What is certain is that their (material and symbolic) space has become the subject of controversy and contestation, especially looking at the Islamic minority (see paragraph 3, Chapter 3).

The conditions of Bologna and Milan' places of worship are in line with several studies reporting that specific religious minorities have the tendency of gathering in structures

inappropriate for worship (Burchardt *et al.* 2017; Giorda 2015; Allievi 2010, 2015). Minorities' places of worship in Italian cities are among the signs of the growing diversification of religious belongings, and often represent the response - together with religious groups themselves - to the instances of aggregation and social relations of newcomers (Bossi 2020). The material - and not only symbolic - space of minorities can be assumed as a crucial ground of contention over the reconfiguration of contemporary citizenship and the recognition of minority identities and their needs (Habermas 1994; Honneth 2007). In this perspective, the lack of buildings constructed with religious objectives in Bologna and Milan (but especially in Bologna) represent an obstacle to the full inclusion of *newcomers* that are often forced to make adaptations to practice worship, and to exercise sociality. In the cases of these two cities, the different legal status experienced by religious minorities (Dassetto *et al.* 2007; Ferrari 2006), result in concrete obstacles in the satisfaction of their religious rights.

The third hypothesis (1.3) suggested that minoritarian religious groups, both in Bologna and Milan, may have higher levels of religious participation than the Catholic majority. This hypothesis is supported in the case of Milan but not in the case of Bologna. Indeed, the analysis shows that Catholics in Milan have higher levels of participation in activities and rituals than minorities; while in Bologna the participation of minorities is slightly higher than in Catholic parishes.

However, the result exhibits higher levels of congregational participation in Milan (72.9 % versus 59.9 % of Bologna). But can it be said that Bologna is less religious than Milan? A possible reflection on this aspect can be made considering the highly secularized context of Bologna (see paragraph 3, Chapter 3).

Though there are many variants of the secularization theory, the basic common aspect is the decline in the social significance of religion as, e.g., formulated by Berger (1969). However, despite the observable decline, studies and research on the European context confirm the persistence of the religious phenomena. Sociologists of religion are almost unanimous in affirming that it is not possible to talk of a definitive abandonment of religious practice, but rather of a religiosity seeking new modes of expression (Diotallevi and Allievi 2004; Martinelli 2020; Berger 1999; Berzano 2017). In this perspective, some scholars talked about the 'disenchantment' of the world (Weber 1993; Gauchet 1997), where individuals are no

longer satisfied with being a passive spectator in the religious experiences but demand the possibility of participating actively. Others refer to the 'privatization and individualization of religion' (Berger 1969; Sundermeier 1999; Bruce 1996; Luckmann 1967), where the latter is no longer a public matter, but a personal issue. In this sense, people can selectively decide what elements of religion are desirable and functional, creating a 'religious bricolage' (Dobbelaere 2011; Bruce 1996). Taylor (2007) refers to 'minimal religion' practiced by the individual within one's own social circle, thus outside the confessional structures. In fact, some scholars argue that contemporary religions cannot be reduced to traditional forms of worship alone, and underline that a spiritual dimension has been gaining strength in the last few decades (Hervieu-Léger 1999; Dobbelaere 1999; Wuthnow 1998; Davie 1994; Garelli *et al.* 2003). Indeed, even though there is a considerable increase in non-regular churchgoers, there is an increasingly growing spiritual dimension. In the literature, these phenomena are known as forms of 'non-traditional faith' (Hervieu-Léger 1999). This category includes those who judge religion important in everyday life and uphold religious values and involvement (Giorgi 2012), but at the same time do not perceive the church and clergy as the only intermediaries with the sacred, and promote a more individualized relation with religion.

Against this background, it is possible to affirm that the lower congregational participation in the highly secularized context of Bologna, can be seen, not merely as a lower religiosity, but rather consistent with many researches on Italian secularization and transformation of belief (Garelli 2010, 2013; Garelli *et al.* 2012; Giordan 2011). These studies showed that in Italy - in spite of declining attendance at religious ceremonies - the religious feeling is still widespread; although people tend to be no longer interested in the model of religiosity proposed by the institutionalized religiosity, and prefer to choose more spiritual pathways.

In this sense, there could be many possible explanations for the difference between Milan and Bologna in participation in activities and rituals: the higher involvement of Catholicism in the public sphere? the different political subculture? Further analysis would be needed to investigate this issue.

3. Civic Congregational Engagement of Religious congregations in Bologna and Milan

Understanding the extent to which religious communities are committed to addressing social needs through caritative\social activities, are engaged in efforts to promote or prevent social and cultural change by raising awareness and mobilizing members for participation in social movements and policy advocacy, and are involved in interfaith activities capable of generate mutual understanding between different communities, improvement of social coexistence; is crucial in determining the role of congregations in promoting and supporting human rights.

In this perspective, this study attempts to answer the question *"What are the levels of congregational - majority and minorities - civic engagement in Bologna and Milan?"* - examining the activities (spiritual and caritative) of religious congregations; their commitment towards political\lobbying activities and immigrants\immigration issues; and their interreligious engagement.

3.1 Activities of congregations in Bologna and Milan

Congregations play a substantial role in addressing social needs and - besides collective worship - engage in a wide range of activities, including religious education, spiritual activities, social and caritative activities intended to help people outside and inside the congregation (Ammerman 2005; Chaves 2004; Warner 1994; Wuthnow 1991).

In order to explore the activity focus of congregations in Bologna and Milan, this study asked religious leaders:

- *Within the past 12 months, have there been any regularly meeting groups or activities specifically focused on the following purpose of activities?*

  (a) *nurture the spiritual life of adults*; (b) *transmit the religious tradition to young people*; (c) *support the elderly*; (d) *support disabled people*; (e) *support environmental issues*; (f) *helping people who are unemployed find or train for jobs*; (g) *support people struggling with drug or alcohol abuse*; (h) *support recently divorced people*; (i) *support people with mental illness*;

and (m) *engage in any human service projects, outreach ministries or missions, social services, or other activities intended to help people whether they are members or not.*

3.1.1 Spiritual and Social assistance activities

Graph 1. *Overall commitment in spiritual and social activities in congregations of Bologna and Milan (yes %)*
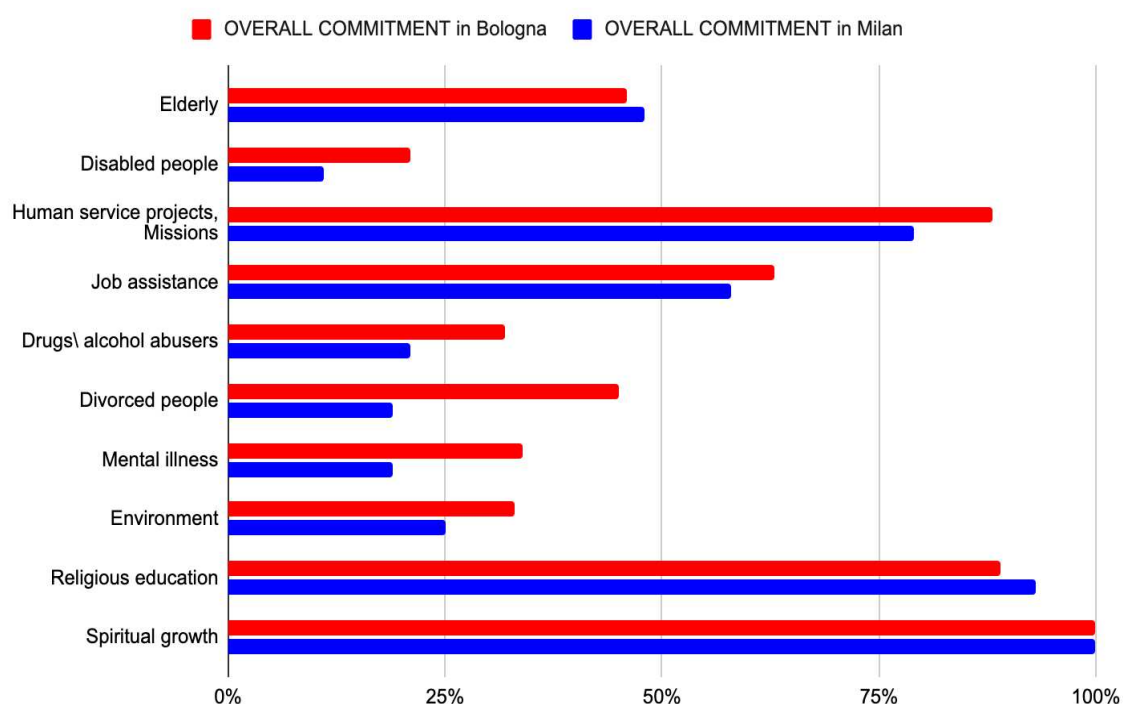
In Bologna and Milan, as displayed in Graph 1, congregations mainly focus on spiritual activities, such as religious education and nurturing the spiritual life of members (e.g. study of scripture, prayer, meditation).

Congregations also engage in numerous caritative and social assistance activities: in both cities, the vast majority of religious groups mention human service projects (including outreach ministries or missions) among their activities (87.9% in Bologna and 79.4% in Milan). Engaging in job assistance (62.6% in Bologna and 57.8% in Milan), and elderly support (46.2% in Bologna and 47.7% in Milan) are also among the more commonly mentioned activities. Less frequently congregations state to engage in activities to support

environmental issues (32.9% in Bologna and 25.3% in Milan), divorced people (45% in Bologna and 19.5% in Milan), drugs\alcohol abusers (32.5% in Bologna and 20.7% in Milan), disabled people (20.9% in Bologna and 11.4% in Milan), and people affected by mental illness (34.3% in Bologna and 19% in Milan).

In general, Graph 1 shows that in Bologna there is a higher congregational commitment in the social assistance sphere than Milan (the only exception regards the activities for elderly, but there is a slight difference); while in Milan there is a slightly higher commitment in religious education.

Table 12. *Engagement in spiritual and social activities in congregations in Bologna and Milan (yes %)*

	Bologna		**Milan**	
Elderly	Catholic	62%***	Catholic	70.1%***
	Minorities	9.6%***	Minorities	5.8%***
Disabled people	Catholic	25.8%*	Catholic	14.9%**
	Minorities	9.6%*	Minorities	4.8%**
Human service projects, Missions	Catholic	96.7%***	Catholic	85%**
	Minorities	67.3%***	Minorities	68.9%**
Job assistance	Catholic	68.9%**	Catholic	76.2%***
	Minorities	48.1%**	Minorities	22.8%***
Drugs\ alcohol abusers	Catholic	38.5%*	Catholic	28% ***
	Minorities	19.2%*	Minorities	6.9% ***
Divorced people	Catholic	51.3%*	Catholic	25.9%***
	Minorities	30.8%*	Minorities	7%***
Mental illness	Catholic	43.6%***	Catholic	28%***
	Minorities	13.5%***	Minorities	2%***
Environment	Catholic	38.8%*	Catholic	32.1%***
	Minorities	19.2%*	Minorities	12.6%***

Religious education	Catholic	91.8%	Catholic	94.4%
	Minorities	82.7%	Minorities	91.4%
Spiritual growth	Catholic	100%	Catholic	100%
	Minorities	100%	Minorities	100%

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Tab. 12 displays that minorities in both cities - beside spiritual growth - are particularly engaged in religious education (82.7% in Bologna and 91.4% in Milan), human rights service projects\mission (67.3% in Bologna and 68.9% in Milan), and job assistance (48.1% in Bologna and 22.8% in Milan).

Interesting differences among minority groups in the two cities emerge looking at the caritative help: in Bologna the commitment of minorities is higher than Milan in all activities (the only exception regard the human service projects\missions), and this is particularly evident in the support for finding a job (48.1% *versus* 22.8%), drugs\alcohol abusers (19.2% *versus* 6.9%), divorced people (30.8% *versus* 7%) and for people affected by mental illness (13.5% versus 2%).

In Bologna and Milan, Catholics - beside spiritual growth - are mainly involved in religious education (91.8% in Bologna and 94.4% in Milan), human rights service projects\mission (96.7% in Bologna and 85% in Milan), elderly support (62% in Bologna and 70.1% in Milan) and job assistance (69% in Bologna and 76% in Milan).

Differences among parishes of Bologna and Milan are seen in the commitment in social services assistance: in Bologna there are higher levels in almost all activities, exceptions are found in elderly support and job assistance. The higher engagement of Catholics in Bologna is more pronounced in the support for divorced people (51.3% *versus* 25.9% of Milan) and for people affected by mental illness (43.6% *versus* 28% of Milan).

In general, congregations' activity focus of Catholics and minorities in Bologna and Milan is primarily directed to spiritual growth and religious education; but in both cities, Catholics are much more committed in caritative activities than minorities.

The great majority of social assistance services carried out by the parishes refer to the central Diocesan Caritas of Bologna and Milan. In both cities, Diocesan Caritas also run canteens, dormitories, food aid and basic aid distribution centers.

The activities intended to help drugs\ alcohol abusers, divorced people and individuals affected by mental illness are often run by the several counseling centers (*Centri di Ascolto -* CdA) based in the parishes, that are managed by many volunteers. In the case of minorities, social assistance services are often provided by informal initiatives of the members, and do not have a continuative nature. In Bologna, Catholics and minorities communities are more committed to caritative help than in Milan, and this aspect is more pronounced looking at minorities.

A Chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between religious tradition (Catholic and minorities) and the commitment in social assistance in Bologna and in Milan. In both cities, the relation between the variables is significant for all the activities. Catholics are more likely to be committed to social aid than minorities.

A further Cramer's V test showed that this significance in Milan is more intense looking at elderly support ($V = 0.4$ in Bologna and $V = 0.6$ in Milan), job assistance ($V = 0.2$ in Bologna and $V = 0.5$ in Milan), support for divorced people ($V = 0.1$ in Bologna and $V = 0.2$ in Milan), support for people affected by mental illness ($V = 0.2$ in Bologna and $V = 0.3$ in Milan), support for environmental issues ($V = 0.1$ in Bologna and $V = 0.2$ in Milan), aid for drugs\alcohol ($V = 0.1$ in Bologna and $V = 0.2$ in Milan); while in Bologna is stronger in the engagement in human rights service projects\mission ($V = 0.4$ in Bologna and $V = 0.1$ in Milan) and in help for disabled people ($V = 0.2$ in Bologna and $V = 0.1$ in Milan).

3.1.2 Political and Lobbying activities

Even though the phenomenon of religion' privatization is prominent in many Western societies, in many countries - such as Italy - it does not seem sufficient to inhibit religions from playing and claiming a significant role in the public sphere, demonstrating a new public vitality and civic engagement; although often this circumstance generate conflicting emotions and opinions (Garelli 2011).

Religious communities - along with the caritative assistance, and social services provisions for the needy - are civically committed through political and civic activism and lobbying (Chaves 2004, 2020); and often engage in several contemporary salient issues, such as economic and environmental inequalities, abortion, same sex couples adoptions, expressing

their opinions on ethical, political and controversial matters (Casanova 2000; Giorgi and Polizzi 2014).

In order to deepen the congregational public commitment, this contribution explores the political and lobbying activities of religious groups, in Bologna and Milan.

-   Political activities

This study, with the purpose of deepening congregational engagement in political activities, asked leaders:

-   *Within the past 12 months, have there been any organized meetings to prepare or participate in political activities?*

Table 13. *Political commitment of congregations in Bologna and Milan (yes %)*

	Bologna	**Milan**
Catholics	22.1%**	14.7%*
Minorities	3.8%**	5.7%*
Total	16.7%	11.5%

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Tab. 13 displays low levels of political activities in congregations of both cities, even though in Bologna the political engagement is higher than Milan (16.7% and 11.5%, respectively).

In both cities, Catholics are more engaged in political activities than minorities (22.1% *versus* 3.8% in Bologna and 14.7% *versus* 5.7% in Milan).

In Bologna Catholics are more engaged in political activities than in Milan (22.1% *versus* 14.7%); while minorities in Milan display a slightly higher percentage than in Bologna (5.7% *versus* 3.8%).

A Chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between religious tradition (Catholic and minorities) and the commitment in political activities in Bologna and in Milan. In both cities, the relation between the variables is statistically significant.

A further Cramer's V test showed that in Bologna ($V = 0.2$) the relation between the variables is stronger than Milan ($V = 0.1$). In both cities Catholic parishes - especially in Bologna - are more likely to be committed to political activities than minorities.

- **Lobbying activities**

In order to explore the congregational engagement in lobbying activities, this study asked leaders:

- *Within the past 12 months, have there been any organized meetings to prepare or participate in a demonstration or march either in support of or opposition to some public issue or policy?*

- If yes - *Were any of these lobbying or marching activities related to…*

  (a) *abortion* (Pro life\Pro choice); (b) *gay, lesbian or transgender people* (support\contrast); c) *poverty or economic inequality*; and (d) *other issues or policy* (specify what issue).

Table 14. Lobbying commitment *of congregations in Bologna and Milan (yes %)*

	Bologna	**Milan**
Catholics	21.1%*	2.6%*
Minorities	7.7%*	7.6%*
Total	17.8%	4.4%

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Tab. 14 shows that Bologna and Milan have low levels of congregational participation in lobbying\march activities; even though Bologna is much more committed than Milan: 17.8% of congregations (*versus* 4.4% in Milan) organized or participated in a demonstration to support or contrast some public issue or policy. This is particularly evident when looking at

Catholics (21.1% in Bologna and 2.6% in Milan), while minorities display almost the same levels of engagement in both cities (7.7% in Bologna and 7.6% in Milan).

A Chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between religious tradition (Catholic and minorities) and the commitment in lobbying activities in Bologna and in Milan. In both cities, the relation between the variables is statistically significant.

In Bologna, Catholic parishes are more likely to be committed to lobbying activities than minorities; while in Milan minorities it is the opposite. A further Cramer's V test showed that in Bologna (V = 0.17) the relation between the variables is slightly stronger than Milan (V = 0.11).

Graph 2. *Participation in lobbying\marching activities of Catholics and minorities in Bologna and Milan, by topics addressed (N)*
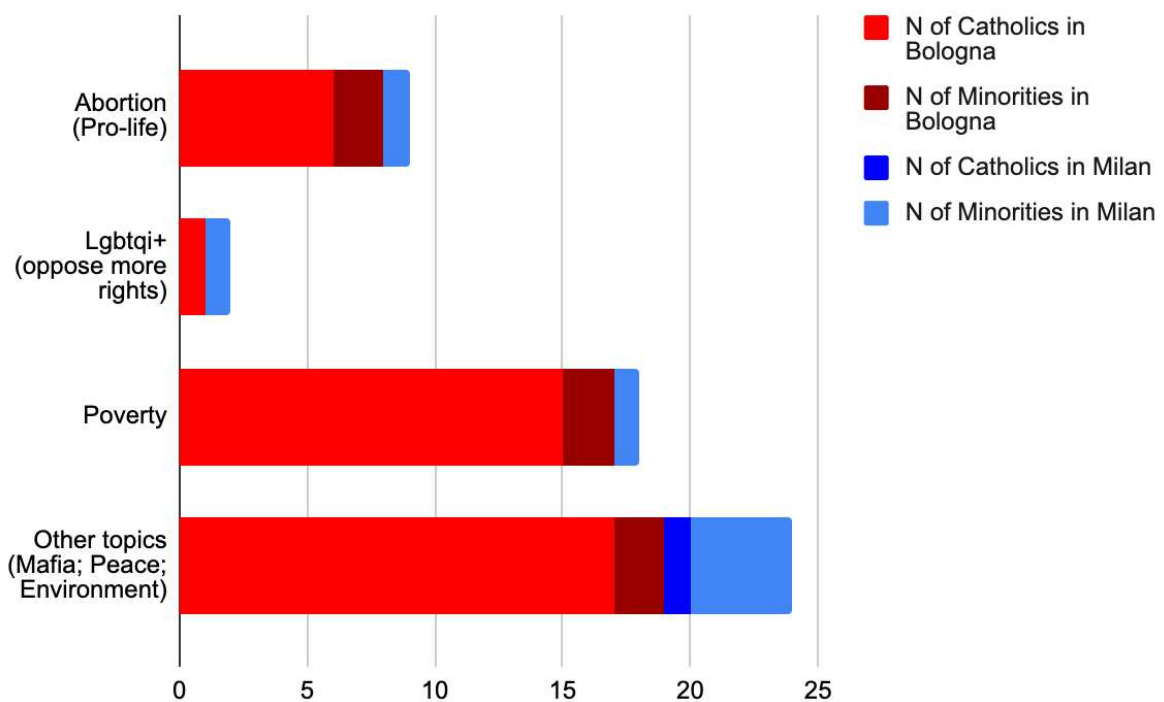
As displayed by Graph 2, Catholics in Bologna are mainly focused on "other topics" (mafia, peace and environment) and on poverty (this issue comprises demonstrations to support the right to have a home, a job, etc). Less prominent is the commitment in marches against abortion (pro-life side) and against more rights to Lgbtqi+ people. Minorities in Bologna are equally focused on abortion (pro-life side); poverty issues and "other topics". Looking at the specific denominations, the only traditions that participated in lobbying\marches activities are Orthodox - that lobbied\marched against abortion and for poverty issues - and Evangelicals - that lobbied\marched for abortion (pro-life), poverty issues and "other topics" - (see Appendix K and L). In Milan, Catholics are only focused on "other topics" (mafia, peace and environment); while minorities are equally committed against abortion (pro-life side), more rights for gay, lesbian and transgender people, with a prevalence in the commitment in "other topics". Minorities are mainly focused on "other topics", but marched also against abortion (pro-life side); against more rights for gay, lesbian and transgender people; and for poverty issues. Considering the specific denominations, the three faith traditions that participated in lobbying\marches activities are Orthodox - that lobbied\marched for "other topics" - Jehovah' Witnesses - that lobbied\marched against abortion (pro-life) and against more rights to Lgbtqi+ people - Anglicans, Buddhists and Jews, that lobbied\marched for poverty issues and "other topics" (see Appendix K and L).

3.1.3 Immigration Issue

In Italy, the migratory phenomenon - with the consequent pluralization of the society and the changing of the Italian socio-religious geography - and the migration flows regulation became crucial and controversial topics in the public debate, mainly due to the concerns that these issues encompass (Pace 2013, 2014; Giorgi 2018). In this context, the human rights frame can represent «*an opportunity for religions to gain a new visibility and relevance in the public sphere by activating different interaction processes with the state and other social actors*» (Zrinščak and Giordan 2018:64). In fact, the challenges arising from the refugee crisis, the humanitarian tragedies in the Mediterranean Sea and from the broader migratory phenomenon, offer occasions for religious institutions - in particular for the Catholic Church

- to enhance their position in the public sphere mainly through the engagement in public debates and faith-based assistance provision (Pavolini *et al.* 2021).

Starting from these consideration, this study - in order to delineate the levels of congregational engagement with the immigration issue - asked religious leaders:

- *Some congregations have declared themselves to be sanctuaries for undocumented immigrants. Has your congregation done that?*
- *Within the past 12 months, have there been any organized meetings to prepare or participate in political activities related to migration?*
- If yes - *Was that to support immigrants and immigration or to encourage stricter immigration enforcement?*
- *Within the past 12 months, have there been any groups or meetings or classes or activities specifically focused on offering services for immigrants, such as legal assistance, translation, English language, or job placement?*

Since all the political activities related to migration carried out by congregations in Bologna and Milan were intended to support immigrants and immigration, this analysis reports the political activities pro immigration.

Table 15. *Commitment towards immigration\immigrants of congregations in Bologna and Milan (yes %)*

		Sanctuary for undocumented immigrants	Political activities regarding immigration	Services for immigrants
BOLOGNA	Catholics	29.2%	17.1%	72%**
	Minorities	17.3%	2.7%	48.1%**
	Total	25.6%	13.2%	64.7%
MILAN	Catholics	22.1%***	9.4%	77.1%***
	Minorities	5.8%***	1.8%	27.5%***
	Total	16.4%	6.2%	59.9%

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Tab. 15 shows that congregations in Bologna and Milan, are committed towards immigration mainly through offering services for immigrants, such as legal assistance, translation, English language, or job placement.

Bologna displays higher levels of commitment toward the issue of immigration in all the three determinants: higher percentage in services for immigrants (64.7% *versus* 59.9% in Milan); in congregations that declared themselves sanctuaries for undocumented immigrants (25.6% *versus* 16.4% in Milan); and in the participation to political activities to support immigrants\immigration (13.2% *versus* 6.2% in Milan).

Regarding Catholics, Milan displays a slightly higher percentage in services provisions for immigrants than Bologna (77.1% *versus* 72% in Bologna); while in all the other indicators, parishes of Bologna have higher percentages than Milan (29.2% *versus* 22.1% in declaring themselves sanctuaries for undocumented immigrants; and 17.1% *versus* 9.4% in political activities to support immigrants\immigration).

In the case of Catholic services provision for immigrants - as in the case of the other social assistance services carried out by the parishes (as previously highlighted) - the great majority of these aid refer to the central Diocesan Caritas of Bologna and Milan; while in the case of minoritarian religious groups, the concrete assistance of immigrants is based on a more informal and underground level, and it is mainly declined in family aid networks.

Looking at minorities, Bologna displays higher percentages than Milan in all the three indicators (48.1% *versus* 27.5% in services provisions for immigrants; 17.3% *versus* 5.8.7% in declaring themselves sanctuaries for undocumented immigrants; and 2% *versus* 1.8% in political activities to support immigrants\immigration).

In both cities, Catholics are more committed than minorities in all the three indicators.

Considering the specific denominations, the highly committed groups in services provision for immigrants are Muslims, Orthodoxes and Evangelicals. These three groups are also the only ones that declared themselves sanctuaries for undocumented immigrants; while only Evangelicals affirmed their participation in political activities to support immigrants\immigration. These considerations are common to both cities (See Appendix M and N).

A Chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between religious tradition (Catholic and minorities) and the commitment towards immigrants\immigration in Bologna and in Milan. In both cities, the relation between the engagement in services for immigrants and the religious tradition is significant.

A further Cramer's V test showed that this relation is stronger in Milan (*V* =0.4) than in Bologna (*V* =0.2). In both cities, Catholics - especially in Milan - are more likely to offer services for immigrants than minorities.

The relation between the religious tradition and being sanctuaries for undocumented immigrants is statistically significant only in Milan, where Catholics are more likely to declare themselves sanctuaries for undocumented immigrants than minorities.

In both cities, the relation between the religious tradition and the participation in political activities concerning immigrants isn't statistically significant.

3.1.4 Interreligious Commitment

For religious communities, interreligious relations are a way to be civically engaged and a form of response to religious diversity (Körs 2018a). However, the role of interreligious dialogue in the promotion of human rights requires some specifications.

In fact, according to some authors, it is extremely difficult - if not almost impossible - to expect representatives of different faith traditions to engage in productive interreligious dialogue, capable of encouraging a greater social cohesion and a possible prevention of radicalization, through the guidance of the members of their respective faith communities to dialogue and coexistence with others. This is mainly due to two primary conditions for dialogue: the first regards the necessity to engage in the dialogue with intellectual humility, and the second underlines that the embracement of intellectual humility necessitates an essential rethink of their claims of epistemological certainty (Church and Samuelson 2017; Cornille 2013; Swidler 2013; Akah and Ajah 2022).

For others, the engagement in meaningful interreligious dialogue activities is not so arduous, but still challenging (Campdepadrós *et al*. 2021) and, as stated by Körs: «*do not automatically result from religious diversity. Rather, they need to be developed*» (2018a:23).

However, the potential of interreligious dialogue activities is extremely important for the advocacy of human rights principles.

Evidence shows that interreligious dialogue is one of the paths to build bridges among diverse cultural and religious communities that otherwise would be in conflict, and enables human agency (Azdajic 2019; Campdepadrós *et al.* 2021).

At the core of the challenges of the increasingly religious pluralization - part of a broader process of socio-cultural diversification - there is the development of a common consensus of values, a process in which all the various souls of democratic societies need to collaborate and find dialogical solutions capable of facing and overcoming the differences.

In this perspective interreligious dialogue can contribute to the construction of a positively valued form of cohabitation of differences and is highly significant for the reduction of prejudices and the promotion of tolerance (Körs 2018a).

In this perspective, this analysis focuses on the interreligious commitment, aware that congregations engaged in interreligious activities could play a significant role in promoting human rights principles.

This section describes interreligious commitment of religious congregations in Bologna and Milan assessing the responses of religious leaders to the following two questions:

- *Is your congregation formally affiliated with or engaged in any interreligious activities?*
- *Within the past 12 months, has your congregation participated in a joint worship service with any other congregation?*

Table 16. *Interreligious commitment of congregations in Bologna and Milan (yes %)*

		Interreligious activities	Joint celebrations
BOLOGNA	Catholics	43.4%	40.5%
	Minorities	57.7%	44.2%
	Total	47.7%	41.6%
MILAN	Catholics	9.4% ***	35.1%
	Minorities	33.7% ***	27.2%
	Total	18%	32.3%

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Tab. 16 highlights that religious communities in Bologna (47.7% involved in interreligious activities and 41.6% participated in joint celebrations) have significantly higher levels of interreligious commitment than in Milan (18% involved in interreligious activities and 32.3 % participated in joint celebrations).

In Bologna there is a higher engagement in interreligious activities than interreligious celebrations, while in Milan it is the opposite, with a prevalent percentage of congregations which took part in joint celebrations.

Catholic interreligious commitment is much higher in Bologna than Milan, especially looking at interreligious activities: (43.4% of parishes in Bologna *versus* 9.4% in Milan; and 57.7% of minorities in Bologna *versus* 33.7 % in Milan).

Similarly, the interreligious commitment of religious minorities is higher in Bologna than Milan: 57.7% of minorities in Bologna are involved in interreligious activities *versus* 33.7% of Milan; and 44.2% of minorities in Bologna participated in joint celebration *versus* 27.2% of Milan. Regarding minorities' denomination, in both cities, the highest interreligious commitment is seen among Islamic and Orthodox communities, and among Evangelicals in Bologna (See Appendix O and P).

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between religious tradition (Catholic and minorities) and the interreligious commitment in Bologna and in Milan. In both cities, the relation between religious tradition and joint celebration isn't

statistically significant. The relation between religious tradition and interreligious activities is statistically significant only in Milan, where minorities are more likely to participate in interreligious activities than Catholics.

3.2 Discussion - Second research question

The objective of the second research question is to explore the levels of congregational - majority and minorities - civic engagement in Bologna and Milan.
In this perspective, this section examined the main differences and similarities among congregations of Bologna and Milan - majority and minorities - concerning: (a) their activities (spiritual and social); (b) their engagement in political and lobbying activities; (c) their commitment towards immigrants and immigration issues; and (c) their involvement in interreligious activities.

The first hypothesis (2.1), which suggested that congregations, both in Bologna and Milan, may be mainly focused on religious education and spiritual care, is supported by results. In fact, in both cities, Catholic parishes and minoritarian groups mainly focus on spiritual activities, such as religious education and nurturing the spiritual life of members. This result is consistent with previous evidence in NCS USA and Switzerland (NCS III and IV Reports; Stolz *et al.*, 2011), underlying that American and Swiss congregations are mainly focused on religious education and spiritual care for their members.

The second hypothesis (2.2), which suggested that in both cities, Catholic parishes may have higher levels of commitment in social help than minorities, is confirmed by results. Findings show that congregations in Bologna are more committed than in Milan, and that Catholics - in both cities - are much more engaged in social assistance activities than minorities.
This outcome underlines that Bologna and Milan are in line with the extensive literature on the traditional charity-oriented activity and the highly-significant role of the Catholic third sector in social services and welfare provision in Italy (Garelli 2007; Itçaina, 2014; Scotto 2013; Scrinzi 2008; Tosi and Vitale 2009; Lynch 2009; Cartocci 2007; Pavolini *et al.* 2021).

Starting from the 1970s, the role of third sector organizations in social services provision had been enhanced by regional devolution (Itçaina 2014). Municipalities progressively turned to the third sector, and especially to non-profit organizations, such as cooperatives, whose institution was often encouraged by local authorities (Fargion 2009). The Italian political context reinforced the involvement of the Catholic third sector, when the collapse of the Christian Democratic party in the 1990s deprived the Church of its historical political endorsement (Garelli 2007; Tosi and Vitale 2009) . This unprecedented condition was to be partly compensated by the reinforcement of volunteer activities and engagement in the social economy, which imparted a novel legitimacy to the public presence of the Church (Garelli 2011; Donovan 2003).

Today, all the national territories present a varied picture of Catholic organizations working on territorial welfare, with a whole range of institutional affiliations (Itçaina 2014; Gori 2005). In particular, *Caritas Italiana* represents an important partner for the local authority not only as regards structural poverty but also exceptional situations, such as Covid 19 pandemic (Caritas Europa 2021).

The third hypothesis (2.3), which suggested that Catholic parishes in Milan might be more active in political activities than in Bologna, isn't supported by the findings.

In fact, data analysis shows that the participation of Catholics in political activities in Milan is lower than in Bologna (14.7% and 22.1%, respectively).

I didn't expect this result, due to the *milanese* historical heritage of Catholic-based political activism (Giorgi and Polizzi 2015; Giorgi 2012; Borcio 2001; Bressan 2003; Ceccarini 2007). Probably this outcome can be grounded in the fact that the Catholic political commitment in Milan is mainly connected to Catholic associationism and movements (Giorgi 2012) - such as *Comunione e Liberazione* - which is not always directly linked to the parishes.

This can also be linked to the general low Catholic political activism of both cities, which seems to be in contrast with the prominent role of Catholicism in Italian politics reported by the literature (Giorgi 2012; Garelli 2011; Pavolini *et al.* 2021).

Many scholars - looking especially at the last two decades - often point that the majority of Catholic political mobilization comes from the statements and the official pronouncement of the heads of the Catholic Church and from the Vatican (Casanova 2000; Marzano and

Urbinati 2013; Ozzano 2016; Ozzano and Giorgi 2015; Giorgi 2019; Garelli 2011; Cartocci 2011; Pavolini *et al.* 2021).

This action rarely starts from the bottom, and therefore from the parishes. Thus, it is plausible that many parishioners took part in political initiatives, but as an individual choice. Moreover, the low levels of political commitment in Bologna and Milan can be interpreted in the light of leaders' interpretation of 'political activities': the vast vast majority of them perceived the engagement in political activities as something closely related to parties. However, in both cities, leaders who stated to have organized meetings to prepare\participate in political activities, often specified that these activities mainly regarded the hosting of political candidates, and that the meetings were always "balanced" between left and right wing parties.

Furthermore, the analysis of the civic engagement in Bologna and Milan explored the lobbying activities of congregations. Findings showed that Bologna is much more committed than Milan in participation in demonstrations to support or contrast some public issue or policy. This result can be interpreted in the light of the literature, which underlines the cultural values related to civics (Dekker 2009), and the existence of an active *bolognese* civil society (Mudu 2004) that frequently manifest participatory claims (Bianchi 2018).

The fourth hypothesis (2.5), which suggested that in both cities Catholic parishes may be more engaged than minorities in supporting immigrants' rights is fully sustained by results.

In fact, in Bologna and Milan parishes are significantly more committed than minorities in declaring themselves sanctuary for undocumented immigrants, in being engaged in political activities supporting immigrants\immigration, and in offering services for immigrants.

The findings are consistent with several studies reporting that Catholic parishes and institutions such as *"Caritas"*, are at the forefront of intervention in the field of social assistance to asylum seekers, refugees and regular\undocumented migrants (Pavolini *et al.* 2021; Itçaina 2014; Beyerlein and Chaves 2020); and with the wide literature emphasizing the active public commitment of the Catholic Church in defending the rights of immigrants (Zrinščak and Giordan 2018; Bassi 2014; Barberis and Boccagni 2014).

Over the last decade, the Catholic Church has become one of the few core actors in Italian society advocating explicitly for the recognition of migrants' rights to be assisted and

allowed in the country, in opposition to the sense of insecurity and suspicion triggered by some conservative parties. The Catholic Church has publicly declared its dissociation from discourses of right-wing parties such as "Lega Nord" or "Fratelli d'Italia" which often portray the issue of immigration as a threat to Italian culture and identity, by the articulation of a specific rhetoric on migration (Pavolini *et al.* 2021; Zrinščak and Giordan 2018).

In general, the Catholic Church frequently affirmed the intention to pursue its 'guiding role' and 'social duty' by proposing and encouraging an alternative strategy to the populist and nationalist- xenophobic one on migration policies.

The *ex*-president of the CEI, Cardinal Bassetti stated: 'Regrettably, there is a growing rejection of migrants arriving in our country. The economic crisis stimulated such refusal and demagoguery expanded it. The migrant-criminal equation, also provided by the media, is not only a falsehood but also a prejudice grounded in selfishness. It is necessary to overcome indifference and put a generous hospitality attitude before fears. The Italian Church does not mind receiving criticism for its ideals' [58](Avvenire 2017).

Similarly, the CEI permanent council recently affirmed: 'The Church feels the necessity to actively collaborate to a culture of integration, as well as overcoming indifference in front of the tragedy of those who perish in the Mediterranean Sea'[59] (Avvenire 2019).

However, the analysis underlines that congregations in Bologna are more committed than in Milan in supporting immigrants\immigration (congregations of Bologna exhibit higher percentages in declaring themselves sanctuary for undocumented immigrants, in being engaged in political activities supporting immigrants\immigration, and in offering services for immigrants).

This can be interpreted in the light of the public support of the Archbishop of Bologna towards immigrant\immigration, that frequently indulge in declarations in favor of an increase of religious rights for minorities, such as the construction of a mosque for the Muslim minority (see paragraph 3, Chapter 3), and in the light of the *bolognese* political left left-wing values. These two circumstances suggest that in Bologna there is a socio-political and religious context that is particularly favorable to the support of the immigrant\immigration issue, which is also articulated in concrete congregational efforts.

---

[58] My translation from italian
[59] My translation from italian

The fifth hypothesis (2.5), which suggested that congregations in Bologna - Catholics and minorities - may have higher levels of engagement in interreligious activities than in Milan, is fully supported by results. In fact, the analysis shows that religious communities in Bologna are significantly more committed to interreligious actions than in Milan.

This output can be read in the light of the socio - religious profiles of the cities illustrating that in Bologna the interreligious initiatives are more settled on an effective level than in Milan (Zanfrini and Bressan 2020). Actually, the Diocese of Bologna often organizes and participates in several joint celebrations, interreligious prayers and public conferences\events which involve religious leaders of different traditions as speakers.

Recent examples are the interreligious event "In the sign of Abraham" (*Nel segno di Abramo*)[60] for for the remembrance of refugees and migrants; the ecumenical vigil at the "Franciscan Festival"[61], the "March of Peace and Hospitality"[62] and the "Festival of Religions"[63].

Furthermore, interfaith initiatives - developed both on formal and informal levels - are also supported by the institutions. The municipality endorses many events that seek to promote mutual understanding between different religious groups, and fosters many innovative projects, such as the "House of encounter and dialogue between Religions and Cultures" [64], a place of exchange and collaboration between religious communities, civil society and cultural agencies.

These formal and informal initiatives and the strategies promoted by institutional and non-institutional actors, probably assume a fundamental role in fostering and encouraging the interreligious involvement of congregations in Bologna.

This high level of engagement in interreligious relations could be also rooted in the cultural reality of the city, which hosts the renowned and influential Institute for Religious Studies (see paragraph 3, Chapter 3). The presence of this Institute and its several public initiatives,

---

[60]https://www.agensir.it/quotidiano/2021/6/4/migranti-apg23-domenica-a-bologna-una-preghiera-interreligiosa-con-card-zuppi-e-yassine-lafram/

[61] https://ecumenismo.chiesadibologna.it/veglia-ecumenica-al-festival-francescano-2022/

[62]https://corrieredibologna.corriere.it/bologna/cronaca/22_dicembre_30/bologna-marcia-pace-zuppi-landini-lafram-de-paz-a3965ca2-884a-11ed-9c67-ff436d699a28.shtml

[63]https://www.bolognametropolitana.it/Home_Page/Notizie_dai_Comuni/001/Persiceto_le_religioni_si_incontrano_al_Festival_delle_religioni

[64]A Bologna nasce un "casa del Dialogo tra religioni e culture". Available online: https://gazzettadibologna.it/cultura/a-bologna-nasce-un-casa-del-dialogo-tra-religioni-e-culture/ (accessed on 29 May 2022).

probably generates an open socio-cultural environment towards religious diversity, and creates occasions for interreligious exchanges.

Both in Bologna and Milan, the highest interreligious commitment among minorities is seen in Islamic and Orthodox communities. Concerning Orthodoxes, this high involvement can be grounded in the similar theological background with the Catholic majority that helps the shared participation in religious ceremonies, and in their condition regarding the places of worship. The sharing of Churches with Catholic groups possibly triggers more social contacts, and thus could promote more interfaith initiatives. This would be in line with the intergroup contact theory, stating that intergroup contacts reduce negative attitudes and hostility, (Allport 1954; Pettigrew 1998; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006) and so create the right conditions to generate interreligious initiatives.

Moreover, McLaren argued that negative attitudes towards outgroups will be reduced, if «*a contact situation provides an opportunity to see that beliefs are actually similar*» (2003: 913). This would be the case of Orthodox and Catholics, since their similar theological basis.

Regarding Muslims, the bridging function of interreligious relations suggests that they probably consider these kinds of initiatives as instruments to gain visibility, space and social legitimization, in two cities where their symbolic and material presence is still contested.

4. Hot issues: gender equality, end-of-life and homosexuality issues

Understanding the extent to which congregations foster or restrain gender equality, homosexuals inclusiveness, and self-determination in end-of-life issues, is crucial in determining how religious congregations deal with human rights.

Beyond the official discourses of the different religious traditions, religious leaders embody everyday religious authority: leaders' decisions and attitudes can indeed result in concrete exclusion\inclusion practices, and influence self-determination and gender equality within their congregations\denominations.

In this perspective, this study attempts to answer the question "*What are the attitudes and the practices of congregations - majority and minorities - of Bologna and Milan, towards gender equality, end-of-life and homosexuality issues?*" - examining the stances of religious leaders towards female spiritual leadership and euthanasia; and the attitudes and practices of religious

leaders concerning the homosexual full-fledged membership, lay leadership, spiritual leadership and toward same-sex weddings.

The perspective is to go beyond the value frameworks and paradigms of the various religious traditions, and detect how specific issues related to human rights are declined in practice.

4.1 Gender equality and female spiritual leadership

Gender equality is addressed through women's access to positions of religious leadership. This issue is controversial and debated inside different religious traditions and in the societal discussions of religion.

Such discussions concern, for instance, the question whether the Catholic Church should allow women to be ordained, and whether there should be female rabbis in Judaism and female imams in Islam. Different religious traditions establish specific rules and principles on women's access to positions of religious leadership. Hence, female religious leadership depends in important ways on religious traditions and sub-traditions.

Evangelicals have a heterogeneous approach toward women's spiritual leadership. Evangelical conservative groups do not allow female pastors, while charismatic and traditional Evangelicals may do so. The same heterogeneous approach can be seen among Jews (Bear 2019). The most conservative groups, such as Haredi and Orthodox, do not admit female rabbis, but progressive groups, such as the communities belonging to the WUPJ (World Union for Progressive Judaism) or to the European Union for Progressive Judaism (EUPJ) are in some cases led by women rabbis. Catholics do not allow women to be ordained, but, in cases where there is no priest available, non-ordained female pastoral assistants may lead the parish. In many mainline Protestant denominations, the ordination of female pastors is a concrete possibility (Stolz and Monnot 2019). In Islam, the overwhelming majority of Muslim groups agree in considering the role of imam suitable only for men (rare exceptions occur in Sufis). In Buddhism, both women and men can provide teachings and guide the meditations, although different schools and traditions look at gender and leadership in distinct ways.

However, even though female leadership heavily relies upon religious traditions or sub-traditions, the theological legitimacy of specific rules and principles on female leadership settled in the different religious denominations are not always permanent, thus may evolve over time (Stolz and Monnot 2019).

- The Catholic women's activism

The contemporary debate around female spiritual leadership is also and above all, the result of important pressures exerted for example by the women's movements (Chaves 1997).

Religious-based feminist movements have arisen across the history of feminist movement since the 1980s in many different countries and faith traditions (Rochefort 2007; Woodhead 2001), and «*undermined the implicit nexus between religion and women's subordination*» (Giorgi 2021). Feminist movements have a long tradition also in Italy. In this history, the emancipation from the Catholic tradition and the conflict with its conventions and its institutions played a relevant role (Giorgi 2021; Bracke 2014).

Giorgi and Palmisano (2020) identified different typologies of Catholic women's activism, and one of the most significant focuses on theology. Feminist theology' key issues are the re-reading of the holy scriptures from a feminist perspective, reconsidering gender normativity and practices (Barlas 2002; Borresen 2009 Kamitsuka 2007).

Another relevant typology - linked to feminist theology - is expressed by the movements that aim at redefining the organizational structure of the Catholic Church, particularly with regard to women's role, and that mainly demands the inclusion of women in ordained ministry (Kötter 2020). These groups openly manifest criticism against the clerical power, which is primarily expressed in the exclusion of women from the clergy, from the decision-making processes and from institutional key roles. The criticism toward the Catholic Church is mainly grounded in a form of governance that does not represent the majority of the faithful, and it is framed in terms of a lack of equality and fairness: female faith and capacities are equal to those of men. Therefore, women should be included as men are. In Italy - and in contemporary Western societies more broadly - the Catholic women's activism and the feminist movements more broadly create a favorable structure for women's requests of increasing their role in the Catholic Church - Islam and other highly

ethnically connotated denomination are excluded from this discourse, since the values and the rules are still very embedded in the heritage and traditions of the countries of origin - and in other denominations.

Thus - although the possibility of female spiritual leadership is often determined at the denominational level instead of the congregational - the potential for this opportunity to become concrete, heavily relies on the availability of the actual religious and spiritual leaders to favor this change within the institutional structures of their own traditions.

- Attitudes towards female religious leadership

Beyond the rules and the theological perspectives of the single denomination, this contribution focuses on the personal opinions of single religious leaders toward the possibility for women to be a spiritual leader.

In this perspective, this study considers the extent of agreement or disagreement toward the following statement:

- *All religious leadership positions should be open to women*

The response continuum was a linear scale indicating the extent respondents agree or disagree with the assertion: Completely disagree; Moderately disagree; Slightly disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Slightly agree; Moderately agree; Completely agree.

Table 17. Agreement or Disagreement with the statement *"All religious leadership positions should be open to women"* [Completely disagree (=1); Moderately disagree (=2); Slightly disagree (=3); Neither agree nor disagree (=4); Slightly agree (=5); Moderately agree (=6); Completely agree (=7)] (Mean)

	Bologna	**Milan**
Catholics	2.86	2.73
Minorities	2.59	2.36
Total	2.78	2.63

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Tab. 17 shows that in Milan and Bologna, religious leaders exhibit a medium disagreement with the statement *"All religious leadership positions should be open to women"*.

In both cities, Catholic priests have slightly lower levels of disagreement than religious leaders of minorities. However, Bologna displays a slight lower disagreement (M= 2.78) than Milan (M= 2.63).

Looking at the minorities' denominations, both in Bologna and Milan (See Appendix Q and R) Muslim, Orthodox and Jews (with only one exception in Milan) communities are in strong disagreement. Evangelicals in Bologna are almost equally distributed in the response continuum, with a weak prevalence of disagreement; while in Milan are more in disagreement than in Bologna.

Buddhist, Hindu and Baha'i communities and Church of Scientology - in both cities - and Reformed and Anglican Churches in Milan, are in agreement with the female religious leadership. Jeovah' Witnesses in Bologna are all in disagreement; while in Milan all leaders chose not to respond[65].

In both cities, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) suggested that there is no significant statistical difference between Catholics and Minorities in their responses toward the statement*"All religious leadership positions should be open to women"*.

4.2 End-of-life

Religion is considered an important factor in determining attitudes towards end-of-life. Abrahamic religions - Catholic, Orthodox and other Christian denominations, along with Judaism and Islam - share similar doctrinal stances toward euthanasia.

The official position of these religious traditions considers 'active' euthanasia to be forbidden. However, if the patient has an imminently fatal illness, withholding or withdrawing a futile medical treatment is considered permissible (Madadin *et al.* 2020; Testoni *et al*. 2019; Sgreccia 2012; Baeke *et al.* 2011). Also Buddhism generally oppose assisted suicide and euthanasia, considering morally wrong to end human life, including one's own,

---

[65] This high number of missing data among Jehovah' Witnesses is not new in Milan: the general responsible whom I approached to get the contacts of the communities, gave as a general indication to avoid answering uncomfortable questions when possible.

even if the intention is to end suffering (Keown 2005); while there is no formal Hindu teaching on euthanasia (Nimbalkar 2007).

- **Italian debate around end-of-life**

Over the past decades, Italian society has been characterized by controversial debates regarding bioethics (Testoni *et al*. 2019). These disputes have been primarily shaped by the conflictual position of Catholics and seculars, and revolved around many topics, such as end-of-life. The religious and secular reflection on euthanasia involve different interpretation of human nature, the meaning of life, of suffering and of death (Frunză 2013).

This contrast in Italy became visible and heated especially due to three cases that have gained media attention: Eluana Englaro, Piergiorgio Welby and Fabiano Antoniani (known as "DJ Fabo"). In the first case, the parents engaged in a legal battle to interrupt the artificial feeding and hydration considered as a 'therapeutic obstinacy'. The litigation was won in 2008, when the Civil Court of Appeal of Milan accepted Englaro's request to detach the nasogastric tube that kept Eluana attached to the machinery. Piergiorgio Welby suffered from progressive muscular dystrophy, and sent to the President of the Republic a letter in which he asked for euthanasia. In 2006 the Court of Rome rejected the request of Welby's lawyers to put an end to the 'aggressive treatment' declaring it 'inadmissible' due to the legislative vacuum on the matter. In the same year, Dr. Mario Riccio, after the administration of sedatives unplugged the ventilator that kept Piergiorgio Welby alive. The doctor has been definitively acquitted in 2007 by the Judge for Preliminary Investigations of Rome by ordering the non-proceedings because the fact does not constitute a crime.

Fabiano Antoniani, remained quadriplegic after a car accident, and chose to die with assisted suicide in a Swiss clinic in 2017 with the help of Marco Cappato[66]. The Milan prosecutor's office was 'forced' to accuse Cappato of aiding suicide, and the trial ended with his acquittal.

These three cases raised societal awareness and triggered a national debate toward end-of-life issues involving political institutions, movements, religious actors and the civil society itself. However, the main controversies were among the official positions of specific religious denominations - claiming the supremacy of life even when it becomes unbearable

---

[66] Italian political figure and human rights activist

(Sgreccia 2012) - and the secular world, claiming the primacy of freedom and self-determination. Despite the opposition of several religious actors, along with the mobilization of public personalities close to the Catholic world, in 2017 Italian Parliament approved Law n. 219: "Norms concerning informative consent and Advanced Treatment Directives". This Law establishes that: "*every adult person in full possession of his/her own faculties, in anticipation of any possible and future inability and after acquiring adequate medical information, can express his/her personal will concerning medical treatments, therapeutic choices and diagnostic tests*" (Testoni *at al.* 2019:30).

This law has been considered an important step forward not merely by many laics, but also by many believers that embrace pluralistic value principles that promote patient's autonomy, quality of life, and sufferance refusal (Lima and Cicovacki 2014; Lemke 2001).

The discussions around the end-of-life issues have been progressive, especially regarding palliative care, due to the need to promote thought processes on existential themes and exploration of contemporary concerns about death and religious beliefs (Fonseca and Testoni 2012).

- Attitudes towards end-of-life

Despite the official stances and doctrines of religious denominations concerning euthanasia, the analysis of this issue needs to be conducted also at the individual level of religious leaders, with the awareness that their stances may shape the debate within their specific denomination, and influence the behavior of the people belonging to their community.

In this perspective, the understanding of the positions of religious leaders constitutes a step forward in the reflection about end-of-life and religious beliefs, but also regarding the role of religions in supporting the human right of self-determination.

The attitudes of religious leaders upon end-of-life in congregations of Bologna and Milan are assessed through the extent of agreement or disagreement toward the following two statements:

- *In some circumstances a patient should be allowed to die by withholding possible treatments*
- *In some circumstances a patient should be allowed to end his or her own life by taking a physician-supplied overdose of drugs*

The response continuum for the statement was a linear scale indicating the extent respondents agree or disagree with each assertion: Completely disagree; Moderately disagree; Slightly disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Slightly agree; Moderately agree; Completely agree.

Tab 18. Agreement\Disagreement with the statements *"In some circumstances a patient should be allowed to die by withholding possible treatments"* and *"In some circumstances a patient should be allowed to end his or her own life by taking a physician-supplied overdose of drugs"* [Completely disagree (=1); Moderately disagree (=2); Slightly disagree (=3); Neither agree nor disagree (=4); Slightly agree (=5); Moderately agree (=6); Completely agree (=7)] (Mean)

		…withholding possible treatments	….taking a physician-supplied overdose of drugs
BOLOGNA	Catholics	5.26	1.41*
	Minorities	5.44	1.87*
	Total	5.32	1.55
MILAN	Catholics	6.36 ***	1.27
	Minorities	5.12 ***	1.29
	Total	6.02	1.28

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Tab. 18 shows that in Milan and Bologna, religious leaders have the tendency to be in agreement with the statement *"In some circumstances a patient should be allowed to die by withholding possible treatments";* even though in Milan leaders are more in agreement than Bologna (Milan, M= 6.02; Bologna, M= 5.32).

In Milan, Catholic priests are more in agreement than leaders of minorities; while in Bologna there aren't marked differences.

In both cities, religious leaders reported a strong disagreement with the statement *"In some circumstances a patient should be allowed to end his or her own life by taking a physician-supplied overdose of drugs"*. However, Bologna displays slightly lower levels of disagreement

(Bologna, M= 1.55; Milan, M= 1.28). The findings highlight that Catholics and minorities, in both cities, exhibit similar stances toward this statement.

Looking at the minorities' denominations, there aren't considerable differences among cities. All denominations have the same tendency to be in disagreement with the statement *"In some circumstances a patient should be allowed to end his or her own life by taking a physician-supplied overdose of drugs"*; the only exceptions are seen among Buddhists - almost equally divided among the agreement and disagreement in both cities - and Hindus and Church of Scientology in Bologna (See Appendix U and V) .

Nonetheless, all minorities' denominations have the same tendency to be in agreement with the statement *"In some circumstances a patient should be allowed to die by withholding possible treatments"*. Only Evangelicals in Milan reported a tendency almost equally divided among agreement and disagreement (See Appendix S and T).

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) suggested that there is a significant statistical difference between Catholics and minorities, in their opinions toward the the statements*"In some circumstances a patient should be allowed to die by withholding possible treatments"* only in Milan, where Catholics are likely to be in more agreement towards the death *by withholding possible treatments* than minorities.

Nonetheless, Anova test suggested that there is a significant statistical difference between Catholics and minorities in their opinions towards the statement *"In some circumstances a patient should be allowed to end his or her own life by taking a physician-supplied overdose of drugs"* only in Bologna, where Catholics are likely to be more in disagreement towards the death *by taking a physician-supplied overdose of drugs* than minorities.

4.3 Homosexuality

The idea of homosexuals[67] rights as human rights has been the focus of a large part of the recent international discussion (Ozzano 2015); and the issues related to gays and lesbians' rights are among the focal points of the discussions regarding religions in Italy. Organized religion plays a prominent role in shaping broader societal debates about homosexuality,

---

[67] The choice to use the term "homosexuality" and not LGBTQI+ is related to the terminology of the questionnaire: all the questions refer to "homosexuality".

thus the understanding of the nuances inherent in religious contributions to this discourse is fundamental (Cadge *et al.* 2012).

Traditional doctrinal religious beliefs express different stances toward homosexuality, and the coexistence of homosexual orientation and a 'peaceful' religious belonging depend on important ways on religious traditions and sub-traditions.

Some evidence from Western countries suggest that harmonization between religion and homosexual identities has become more achievable for specific Christian denominations as a result of the reinterpretation of specific sections of the Holy scriptures concerning the condemnation of homosexuality (Bosman 2008; Rodriguez 2010; Valentine *et al.* 2013). Waldensian and Methodist Churches for example, have blessed same-sex couples, and hold liberal positions concerning ethical issues. However, there have been attempts in other Christian denominations to convert homosexual identities to heterosexual (Walker 2013).

Muslim gays and lesbians appear to experience greater difficulty negotiating between their religious and homosexuals identities, and not rarely they consider being a homosexual and a Muslim as mutually exclusive identities (Hammoud-Beckett 2022; Pallotta-Chiarolli *et al.* 2021; Jaspal and Cinnirella 2010; Zaharin 2022).

Buddhist teachings and attitudes reflect an inclusive and accepting attitude toward homosexual world[68] (Cheng 2018); while in the Jewish world there is a controversy among the more orthodox communities and the progressive regarding the rejection or the inclusion of homosexual individuals (Safran 2012; Ariel 2007).

- **The Italian debate around homosexuality**

In Italy, homosexuality issues started to be at the core of the Italian public sphere in 2000 with the Rome World Pride event raised animated discussions and strong opposition from the several religious actors, after a long period of silence on the topic (Rossi Barilli 1999; Pini 2010; Scappucci 2001; Moscati 2010; Ozzano 2016).

From the first 2000s, the increasing instances of equality of gays and lesbians triggered a political reflection around the regulation of same-sex marriage, and draft bills aimed at

---

[68]See also: https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/religious-tradition/buddhist/views-about-homosexuality/

legally recognizing same-sex couples began to be discussed in the Italian parliament (Ozzano and Giorgi 2015).

The perspective of a law on same-sex civil unions sparked intense debates, and many religious actors took public stances on this topic. In particular, Church's representatives engaged in lobbying activity through appeals to public opinion and meetings with the prominent center-left Catholic politicians, in order to prevent the approval of the bill.

However, the clergy influences public opinion mainly through the official pronouncements they make (Djupe and Gilbert 2009). In 2003, Joseph Ratzinger released the document "Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions between Homosexual Persons" (Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith 2003). The document described same-sex unions as "*totally lacking in the biological and anthropological elements of marriage and family*". In this document, the Church aimed at defending the social order grounded in the idea of a 'natural family', and therefore at preventing the legitimation of a disorder that could impact society at large. In fact, according to the mainstream Catholic stances, the legalization of same - sex unions would generate a harmful environment for the institution of marriage, considered as the foundations of society, and for the correct raising of children. However, the Catholic discourse appeared inconsistent in its public claims, and among many center-left Catholics[69], but even among relevant Catholic representatives many dissenting voices emerged[70].

In the last fifteen years, together with the choice of Italian homosexual world to adopt the international language of human rights to frame the movement's claims (Bellè *et al.* 2016, 2018), and to affirm the principle that all families are natural families, many civil society associations defending traditional conservative values and the 'natural family' have been particularly active and outspoken in their claims (Giorgi 2020). That is the case of the Forum of Family Associations, which in 2007, 2015 and 2016 organized in Rome the "Family Day". The associations gathered many religious groups particularly committed to safeguarding the 'heterosexuals family' model. Among them, two of the most prominent Muslim

---

[69] Romano Prodi, a prominent Catholic political figure - center-left - supported the bills on the same-sex civil unions, supporting the idea that legislators have to provide rights to all citizens, irrespective of religious beliefs (*Kollman, 2007*).

[70] For instance, Cardinal Urso stated that "*when two people choose to live together, it is important that the state recognizes this fact*" (*Corriere della Sera*, January 13, 2012); and Cardinal Martini affirmed that "*it is not evil that two people, even homosexuals, enjoy a stable situation and that the state favors them*" (Marino and Martini, 2012).

organizations in Italy - the COREIS (*Comunità Religiosa Islamica*, - Islamic Religious Community), and the UCOII (*Unione delle Comunità Islamiche d'Italia* -Union of Islamic Communities of Italy) - along with Catholic and Evangelical movements and associations. More recently, in order to eradicate hate crimes against gays and lesbians, the Italian deputy Alessandro Zan proposed the bill "Measures to prevent and combat discrimination and violence on grounds of sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability" (known as "Zan Bill"). The bill has been rejected in 2021 by the Italian Senate, after public debates and critiques of several religious actors.

- **Homosexual Christian groups**

A significant form of intertwining between religion and homosexuality is expressed by homosexual religious groups. Although less visible in the mainstream public sphere, these groups contribute to the discourse on the relationships between sexual\moral norms and religion (Ozzano 2015, 2016; Giorgi 2020). Between the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the transition from a prevailing conception of homosexuality as a voluntary act - and therefore attributable to individual responsibility - to an inclination inherent in the person - who discovers himself homosexual at a certain point in his biographical journey - becomes the premise on which in Italy the first groups of homosexual people were born. These groups contested the Christian world's tradition of exclusion, and asked to be welcomed and fully accepted in the religious Italian panorama (Turina 2013). However, the first responses to these protesting requests took the form of pastoral initiatives - especially Catholic and Evangelical - which often had 'healing' as their purpose (especially the Evangelical), thus proposing reparative therapies; or, alternatively, were paths that led to celibacy and sexual abstinence (Turina 2013). Only from the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, in Italy - thanks to the free initiative of some priests - homosexual Christian groups began to emerge (Arnone 2016). These first groups have reinterpreted the traditional exegesis of sacred scriptures, and proposed paths dedicated to homosexuals without the aim of orienting toward celibacy and abstinence. In Italy, religious homosexual groups generally occur in the periphery of their religious communities, and usually they belong to the Christian world (Giorgi 2019). Not infrequently - especially in the case of

Catholic homosexuals - these groups are active in some parishes or religious organizations, but their presence is not always officially recognized by the Catholic Church or by their umbrella organization\denomination. Despite Pope Francis' invitation to guide homosexual people so that "*they may have the necessary aid to fully understand and realize God's will in their lives*" (Amoris Laetitia 250), in Italy the pastoral experiences dedicated to the homosexual community still remain scarce, and often occur in a condition of semi-clandestinity.

4.3.1 Attitudes and Practices towards homosexual full-fledged membership, lay and spiritual leadership, and same-sex weddings

The topic related to homosexuality are not only connected to civil rights: questions regarding the blessing of same-sex unions, or whether gays and lesbians should be allowed to fully participate in collective religious life, and serve in positions of religious and lay-leadership, constantly emerge.

In this perspective, this section describes the attitudes of religious leaders toward homosexuality in Bologna and Milan, assessing:

- whether an openly gay or lesbian couple in a committed relationship would be allowed to be full-fledged members of the congregation;
- whether an openly gay or lesbian couple in a committed relationship would be allowed to hold all of the volunteer lay - leadership positions open to other members;
- Opinions toward the statement: *"All religious leadership positions should be open to people regardless of their sexual orientation"*;
- Opinions toward the statement: *"Would you perform the wedding of a same-sex couple if your religious group allowed it?"*

- **Full-fledged membership**

Even though most religious traditions have specific beliefs on homosexuality, single congregations are not always clear in their policies about allowing homosexual people to worship service and rituals (Cadge *et al*. 2012). There are often ambiguous policies towards

this matter, especially regarding the access to sacraments in Catholic and Orthodox Churches. In this perspective, full-fledged membership within these two denominations has to be considered in terms of access to the Eucharist and Reconciliation. The latter is necessary to receive the Eucharist, and homosexuality is a sin to be confessed. Does the priest give the absolution after confession? Can an 'active' homosexual receive the Communion even though he is not contrite\does not consider this as a sin?

In this sense, priests' decisions and attitudes result in the inclusion or exclusion from God's grace and from the community\parish.

The attitudes of religious leaders toward homosexual full-fledged membership is assessed through the question:

- *Would an openly gay or lesbian couple in a committed relationship be permitted to be full-fledged members of your congregation?*

Table 19. Religious leaders' answers to the question *Would an openly gay or lesbian couple in a committed relationship be permitted to be full-fledged members of your congregation?*

		YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
BOLOGNA	Catholics	35.5%***	22.3%***	42.1%***
	Minorities	28.8%***	63.5%***	7.7%***
	Total	33.5%	34.7%	31.8%
MILAN	Catholics	31%***	37.5%***	31.5%***
	Minorities	41.2%***	54.6%***	4.1%***
	Total	34.5%	43.4%	22.1%

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

As shown in Tab 19, in Milan and in Bologna, the majority of leaders are opposed to a full-fledged membership of homosexuals; even though in Milan this orientation is stronger than Bologna, where religious leaders are almost equally divided among the three responses. The majority of Catholic priests in Bologna display uncertainties regarding the homosexuals membership (42.1%); while in Milan the prevalent response is the disagreement (37.5%), even though priests are distributed among the three answers.

The position of minorities is sharper than the Catholics' one. In both cities most of minoritarian religious leaders are against homosexuals' full-fledged membership; even though in Bologna this contrariety is stronger than in Milan (63.5% in Bologna and 54.6% in Milan). Looking at minorities' denominations, in Bologna and Milan, all Jehovah' Witnesses and the great majority of Orthodoxes have the tendency to be against the full-fledged membership of gays and lesbians, while Evangelicals are divided among agreement and disagreement. Interestingly, Muslim leaders in Milan are prevalent in agreement with the homosexuals' full-fledged membership, while in Bologna show the opposite stance.

Leaders belonging to the other denominations are predominantly in agreement with the full-fledged membership of gays and lesbians (See Appendix W and X).

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between religious tradition (Catholic and minorities) and the attitudes towards the full-fledged membership of homosexuals in Bologna and in Milan. In both cities, there is a highly statistical association between the variables. In both cities, Catholics are more likely to be uncertain than minorities, while minorities are more likely to be in disagreement than Catholics. A further Cramer's V test showed that in Bologna the relation between the variables is stronger than Milan (V = 0.2 in Bologna and V = 0.1 in Milan).

- **Lay Leadership**

The attitudes of religious leaders toward homosexual full-fledged membership is assessed through the question:

- *Regarding leadership, if they were otherwise qualified, would an openly gay or lesbian couple in a committed relationship be permitted to hold all of the volunteer lay leadership positions open to other members?*

Table 20. Religious leaders' answers to the question *Regarding leadership, if they were otherwise qualified, would an openly gay or lesbian couple in a committed relationship be permitted to hold all of the volunteer lay leadership positions open to other members?*

			YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
BOLOGNA		Catholics	32.2%***	38.8%***	28.9%***
		Minorities	15.4%***	75%***	9.6%***
		Total	27.2%	49.7%	23.1%
MILAN		Catholics	84.2%***	12.5%***	3.3%***
		Minorities	14.4%***	84.5%***	1%***
		Total	60.1%	37.4%	2.5%

$* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001$

Tab. 20 displays different positions towards the homosexual lay leadership in the two cities: in Bologna the majority of religious leaders are contrary (49.7%); while in Milan most of the leaders are in favor (60.1%). Catholic priests in Bologna are divided among the three responses, but the majority is in disagreement (38.8%); while in Milan the great majority of priests support the homosexual lay-leadership (84.2%).

Minorities' religious leaders of both cities are resolutely opposed to homosexual lay-leadership, but in Milan this disapproval is stronger (75% in Bologna and 84.5% in Milan). Looking at minorities' denominations, in Bologna and Milan, Buddhists and the Churches of Scientology are in favor of homosexuals' lay leadership.

In Bologna, Orthodoxes are divided among agreement and disagreement, and Hindus among agreement and uncertainty. In Milan, leaders of Hindu community, Anglican and Reformed Churches unanimously agree. Leaders belonging to the other denominations express the tendency to be against the lay leadership of gays and lesbians (See Appendix W and X).

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between religious tradition (Catholic and minorities) and the positions towards the lay leadership of homosexuals in Bologna and in Milan. In both cities, there is a highly statistical association between the variables. A further Cramer's V test showed that in Milan the relation between the variables is stronger than Bologna (V = 0.3 in Bologna and V = 0.7 in Milan).

In Bologna and Milan - but especially in Milan - minorities are more likely to be in disagreement than Catholics.

- **Religious Leadership**

The attitudes of religious leaders upon homosexual religious leadership are assessed through the extent of agreement or disagreement toward the following statement:

- *All religious leadership positions should be open to people regardless of their sexual orientation*

The response continuum for the statement was a linear scale indicating the extent respondents agree or disagree with each assertion: Completely disagree; Moderately disagree; Slightly disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Slightly agree; Moderately agree; Completely agree.

Table 21. Agreement\Disagreement with the statement *"All religious leadership positions should be open to people regardless of their sexual orientation"* [Completely disagree (=1); Moderately disagree (=2); Slightly disagree (=3); Neither agree nor disagree (=4); Slightly agree (=5); Moderately agree (=6); Completely agree (=7)] (Mean)

	Bologna	**Milan**
Catholics	3.56 **	4.50***
Minorities	2.60 **	2.08***
Total	3.27	3.69

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Table 21 shows that in Milan and Bologna, religious leaders exhibit a slight disagreement with the statement *"All religious leadership positions should be open to people regardless of their sexual orientation"*.

In Bologna, Catholic priests have lower levels of disagreement than religious leaders of minorities and their opinion is close to 'Neither agree nor disagree' (M=3.56); while in Milan they exhibit a stance that is between 'Neither agree nor disagree' and 'Slightly agree' (M=4.50). Leaders of minorities of both cities disagree with the possibility of opening the religious leadership positions to homosexual people, even though this opposition is stronger in Milan (M=2.08 *versus* M= 2.60 in Bologna).

Looking at the minorities' denominations, both in Bologna and Milan, Muslims, Evangelicals, Orthodoxes, Jehovah'Witnesses and Jews are mainly in strong disagreement. Leaders belonging to the other denominations agree with the possibility of opening religious leadership positions to homosexual people (See Appendix Y and Z).

In both cities, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) suggested that there is a significant statistical difference between Catholics and Minorities in their opinions towards the statement*"All religious leadership positions should be open to people regardless of their sexual orientation"*. In Bologna, Catholics are more likely to be less in disagreement than minorities, while in Milan minorities are more likely than Catholics to be in disagreement.

- **Same-sex marriage**

The availability of religious leaders in performing a same-sex marriage is assessed through the extent of availability or unavailability toward the following question:

- *Would you perform the wedding of a same-sex couple if your religious group allowed it?*

The response continuum for the statement was a linear scale indicating the extent of availability or unavailability with the assertion: Definitely not; Probably not; Not sure; Probably yes; Definitely yes.

Table 22. Availability\unavailability toward the question *"Would you perform the wedding of a same-sex couple if your religious group allowed it?"* [Definitely not (=1); Probably not (=2); Not sure (=3); Probably yes (=4); Definitely yes (=5)] (Mean)

	Bologna	Milan
Catholics	1.70 ***	1.98*
Minorities	2.63 ***	1.60*
Total	1.99	1.85

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 22 displays that in Milan and Bologna, religious leaders probably would not perform the wedding of a same-sex couple, even if allowed by their religious group.

Catholics in Milan and Bologna have the same tendency in stating their unavailability to perform a same-sex wedding, even though in Bologna this unavailability is slightly stronger (M= 1.70 *versus* M= 1.98 of Milan).

Minorities in Milan are much more unavailable than Bologna, where religious leaders are close to uncertainty (M= 2.63).

Looking at the minorities' denominations, both in Bologna and Milan, Buddhists unanimously declare themselves willing to celebrate a same-sex marriage. In Milan, the pastor of the Reformed Church and the leader of the Hindu community would also do so. The great majority of leaders belonging to all the other denominations, would not perform the wedding of a same-sex couple (See Appendix A1 and A2)

In both cities, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) suggested that there is a significant statistical difference between Catholics and Minorities in their responses toward the question*"Would you perform the wedding of a same-sex couple if your religious group allowed it?"*. In Bologna, minorities are more likely to be less unavailable than Catholics. In Milan it is the opposite, Catholics are more likely to be less unavailable than minorities.

4.4 Discussion - Third research question

The objective of the third research question is to explore the attitudes and the practices of congregations of Bologna and Milan towards homosexuality, end-of-life and gender equality issues.

In this perspective, this section examined the main differences and similarities among congregations of Bologna and Milan - majority and minorities - concerning (a) the stances of religious leaders towards female spiritual leadership and (b) euthanasia; and (c) the attitudes\practices of religious leaders concerning the homosexual full-fledged membership, lay leadership, spiritual leadership and towards same-sex weddings.

The first hypothesis (3.1), which suggested that in Bologna and Milan Catholics may be less open towards gender equality than minorities, isn't supported by the results.

In both cities, congregations exhibit similar levels of disagreement towards female religious leadership, and Catholic priests show - even if the gap is barely visible - lower levels of disagreement than religious leaders of minorities.

The hypothesis was grounded in the absence of a theological-grounded tradition that allows only male religious leadership, in many minoritarian denominations (Giorgi and Palmisano 2020; Garelli 2011; Bear 2019).

Nonetheless, the denominations that exhibit the highest levels of approval toward female spiritual leadership - namely the milieu of alternative spirituality and non-historical minorities: Buddhist, Hindu and Baha'i communities and Church of Scientology - represent only a small percentage in the category of "minorities" (13.4% in Bologna and 9.3% in Milan), thus their impact on the overall tendency of minorities isn't considerable.

However, the general disagreement with the female spiritual leadership among congregations is consistent with the academic literature regarding the relationship between gender and religion. Studies on gender inequalities within religious congregations frequently points out that women are systematically excluded from power and leadership (Adams 2007; Chaves 1997; Perry 2020; Bartkowski and Shah 2014; Baker and Whitehead 2016) and that this circumstance is often justified by gendered interpretations of sacred texts "*rooted in notions of complementarianism*" (Homan and Burdette 2021:237).

Complementarianism is grounded on the idea that men and women are fundamentally different from one another, and therefore suited to different social roles (Perry 2019). In this perspective, men are particularly suited for leadership, whereas women are designed to hold helping and nursing roles (Bartkowski and Shah 2014; Ellison and Bartkowski 2002). However, the general dissent around the female spiritual leadership requires some specifications that emerged during the interview phase.

Frequently, religious leaders justified their disagreement, and the spectrum of rationale was articulated around two main reasons: the first regarded impediments of theological nature (Abrahamic religions); and the second the unripe time. The latter mainly regarded Catholic priests that frequently stated that "*the Church is not ready*" for such change, and that there would be the risk of a schism, especially in those areas of the world where patriarchal culture is still deeply rooted. These justifications - even though are not based on a devaluation of women, and gender stereotypes - however, end up perpetuating the cycle of male 'clerical power', that exclude women from the clergy and thus from institutional key roles that would enable them to participate in decision-making processes and to freely choose their path in life.

The second hypothesis (3.2), which suggested that Bologna and Milan - majority and minorities - may exhibit similar attitudes towards end-of-life issues, is fully supported by results. Findings shows that - even though with slight differences - in both cities, Catholics and minorities have the same tendency to be in agreement with death *by withholding possible treatments* and in strong disagreement regarding the possibility of death *by taking a physician-supplied overdose of drugs.* Considering the two broad points of view that depict the religious debate concerning end-of-life issues - namely those who endorse autonomy in deciding between life and death, and those who favor the absolute dominion of God in matters of life and death (Burdette *et al.* 2005) - this analysis points out that the cases of Bologna and Milan fell close to the latter perspective. In fact, the strong disagreement with the possibility of death *by taking a physician-supplied overdose of drugs* suppose a perspective that considers the physician-assisted suicide as a kind of usurpation of God's authority on the transition from life to death.

The hypothesis was grounded on the scientific studies reporting that Abrahamic religions - along with Buddhism - are against 'active' euthanasia for doctrinal reasons (Madadin et al. 2020; Testoni *et al.* 2019; Sgreccia 2012; Baeke *et al.* 2011; Keown 2005), and the result are consistent with the the literature. Catholic priests were widely in accordance with the official position of the Catholic Church that has voiced firm opposition to physician-assisted suicide. According to the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, «God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim from himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being[71]» (Donum Vitae 1987:9).

Evangelicals and other Christian denominations, along with Jews and Muslims exhibit the same tendency of Catholics to be in disagreement with the assisted suicide.

Only some Buddhist communities - almost equally divided among the agreement and disagreement in both cities - Hindus and the Church of Scientology in Bologna express a sort of support of full autonomy in matters of life and death.

Among the 'hot issues' addressed in the third research question, end-of-life aroused the least doubt or hesitation in the answers; and leaders didn't feel the need to justify their answers.

The third hypothesis (3.3), which suggested that in Milan, Catholics may exhibit more open attitudes towards homosexuality than in Bologna, is partially supported by results.

In general, Catholic priests of Milan exhibit more inclusive attitudes towards homosexuality than priests of Bologna, in most of the issues addressed: stances towards homosexual religious and lay leadership, and the availability\unavailability in performing a same-sex wedding. Although, Milan' priests exhibit a non marked prevalence of disagreement towards homosexual full-fledged membership, while in Bologna the majority of them express uncertainties. However, it shouldn't be ignored that in Milan, priests are almost equally distributed among the three responses (31% of agreement; 37.5% of disagreement; 31.5% of uncertainty). On the one hand, this circumstance is coherent with several studies highlighting that - beyond the mainstream discourses on homosexuality - in Italy there is a plurality of positions within the Catholic Church regarding homosexuality (Ozzano 2016).

On the other hand, the prevalent uncertain stances among Catholic priests of Bologna are consistent with other studies highlighting that ambiguity of clergy's perspectives on

---

[71] My translation from italian

homosexuality are increasingly gaining space. Several researches underlines that priests' opinions on homosexuality are quite wide-ranging and many Catholic leaders are uncertain about how they ought to approach it in their spiritual role (Djupe and Neiheisel 2008; Ozzano 2016. Giorgi 2019a; Cadge *et al.* 2012).

The position of minorities is sharper than the Catholics' one, and in both cities, most of the minoritarian religious leaders declare an opposition towards homosexuals' full-fledged membership. Surprisingly, Muslim leaders in Milan are prevalent in agreement with the homosexuals' full-fledged membership, while in Bologna they show the opposite stance. This is an unexpected result, given the several studies reporting the homophobic tendencies in Muslim religious groups (Hammoud-Beckett 2022; Pallotta-Chiarolli *et al.* 2021; Zaharin and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2020; Jaspal and Cinnirella 2010; Zaharin 2022). Further analyzes - exploring for example the characteristics of the leaders, such as age, places of birth, and level of education - would be needed to analyze the case of Muslim in Milan.

However, the general trend in Milan and in Bologna among religious leaders is to be in disagreement with the full-fledged membership of homosexuals. This prevalent attitude has discriminatory repercussions on homosexual people, that sometimes result in exclusion from the possibility of receiving the sacraments, and in other cases lead to concealing their sexual identity or renouncing the practiced religion.

Regarding the lay leadership, the findings exhibit different attitudes in the two cities: in Bologna the majority of religious leaders are contrary; while in Milan most of the leaders are in favor. Minorities of both cities are resolutely opposed to homosexual lay-leadership, but Catholics express different stances in the two cities.

Catholic priests in Bologna are distributed among the three responses, but the majority is contrary, while in Milan the great majority of priests support the homosexual lay leadership. This is consistent with the hypothesis, which supposed that Catholics in Milan may exhibit more open attitudes towards homosexuality than in Bologna, on the basis of the wider presence of Catholic homosexual groups (Progetto Gionata 2022; Giorgi 2019a).

However, this circumstance seems in contrast with the prevalent disagreement of Catholic priests in Milan towards the homosexual full-fledged membership. Probably this can be interpreted in the light of the access to the sacraments, which was the discriminating factor

in determining the possibility of a full-fledged membership. Findings suggest that in Milan the majority of priests have no problems in entrusting positions of responsibility to homosexual people, as long as they do not claim the will to access the sacraments.

Nevertheless, the general agreement towards the homosexual lay leadership of Catholic priests in Milan, requires some specifications that emerged during the interview phase. Religious leaders frequently specified that the access to lay leadership positions had two requirements: the first concerned the non educational\spiritual nature of the role. The second regarded the 'non-manifested' nature of the *committed relationship.*

Regarding the homosexual religious leadership, the tendency among leaders of Bologna and Milan is to be slightly in disagreement. Minorities of both cities disagree with the possibility of opening the religious leadership positions to homosexual people. Catholic priests in Milan exhibit a stance that is between 'Neither agree nor disagree' and 'Slightly agree', while in Bologna they are in slight disagreement towards the homosexual religious leadership. Even though the question whether gays and lesbians can hold religious leadership is often determined at the denominational level instead of the congregational, the stances of religious leaders may shape the debate within their specific denomination. In this perspective, the strong disagreement of minorities, and the lukewarm stances of Catholics do not bode well. Looking at the same-sex marriage, Catholics and minorities of both cities exhibit a clear unavailability to perform a same-sex wedding, that is in line with the literature reporting that marriage is highly valued in all Abrahamic religions, and that it is viewed as a sacrament in most strands of Christianity (Yarhouse and Nowacki 2007).

5. Summary and conclusions

The central question of this study is: *What is the engagement of local religious groups in Bologna and Milan in relation to human rights?*

In this perspective, this analysis addressed: (a) the caritative, social, and interreligious activities of religious communities in Bologna and Milan - and (b) their civic engagement practices. Moreover, it explored the attitudes\practices of religious leaders towards end-of-life, gender equality and homosexuality issues (c).

Methodologically, this question has been addressed following 3 steps. First, I adapted and developed the questionnaire previously employed in the NCS - Switzerland, with the further addition of a specific focus for the investigation of congregations and human rights issues. The second step of this survey produced a complete list of local religious groups in Bologna and Milan. The mapping of religious congregations identified 727 religious communities, 263 in the metropolitan city of Bologna and 464 in the metropolitan city of Milan. The third and the last step consisted in the submission of the questionnaire to one key informant - the religious leader - per religious community. This survey collected a total number of 476 questionnaires: 174 in Bologna (122 Catholics and 52 minorities) and 302 in Milan. Data analysis has been conducted with SPSS statistical software.

- **Results**

In order to answer the *first* research question - *What are the main characteristics of congregations - majority and minority - in Bologna and Milan? -* this study considered the main differences and similarities among congregations of Bologna and Milan concerning: (a) tendency in decline\growth, (b) social composition, (c) theological and political orientations, (d) size and levels of participation in rituals and activities; and (e) places of worship.

Findings showed that Bologna and Milan display a growth tendency in membership among minorities, and a prevailing declining trend among Catholic parishes. The results exhibited a prevalence of female membership both in Catholic and minorities, even though the presence of women is higher among Catholic parishes. Data analysis also considered the membership' socio-composition of congregations concerning the over 60 and under 35 participants; highlighting that congregations in Milan and Bologna have similar levels of young and senior members. Catholics - in both cities - have lower rates of under 35 and higher levels of over 60 than minorities; while it is the opposite for minorities (highest rates of under 35 and lowest rate of over 60 than Catholics).

Regarding the political orientations, results showed that religious leaders in Bologna have the prevalent tendency to describe their congregations as politically liberal. By contrast, in Milan most of the leaders described their congregation as politically conservative. Concerning the theological orientation, the analysis found that religious leaders of both cities have the prevalent tendency to describe their congregations as theologically

conservative; even though this tendency is much stronger in leaders of minorities. However, in Bologna and Milan, a considerable number of religious leaders faced difficulties in interpreting the political and theological orientations of their communities, and preferred not to respond to the questions. Additionally, data analysis showed that in Bologna and Milan the highest average number of members involved in activities and rituals is among Catholic parishes, and that religious communities of Milan are not only more numerous (as shown in Tab. 1 and 2), but also larger and more involved in rituals and activities than the ones of Bologna.

Finally, results highlighted that in Bologna only 26.9% of minoritarian religious groups gather in buildings constructed with religious objectives, while in Milan, this percentage is higher (48.5%), underlying that minorities in Bologna experience lower levels of religious rights than in Milan.

In order to answer the *second* research question - *What are the levels of congregational - majority and minorities - civic engagement in Bologna and Milan?* - this study examined the main differences and similarities among congregations of Bologna and Milan concerning: (a) their activities (spiritual and social); (b) their engagement in political and lobbying activities; (c) their commitment towards immigrants and immigration issues; and (c) their involvement in interreligious activities.

Findings in both cities showed that congregations mainly focus on spiritual activities, such as religious education and nurturing the spiritual life of members, but also engage in numerous caritative and social assistance activities. Results highlighted that congregations in Bologna are more committed to social aid than in Milan, and that Catholics - in both cities - are much more engaged in social assistance activities than minorities.

Data analysis displayed low levels of participation in political and lobbying activities among congregations of both cities, even though Bologna is more committed than Milan.

Catholics resulted to be significantly more committed than minorities in declaring themselves sanctuary for undocumented immigrants, in being engaged in political activities supporting immigrants\immigration, and in offering services for immigrants, in both cities.

However, the analysis underlined that congregations in Bologna are more committed than in Milan in supporting immigrants\immigration. Regarding the interreligious commitment,

the findings showed that congregations in Bologna (47.7% involved in interreligious activities and 41.6% participated in joint celebrations) are more committed to interreligious actions than in Milan (18% involved in interreligious activities and 32.3 % participated in joint celebrations).

In order to answer the *third* research question - *What are the attitudes and the practices of congregations - majority and minorities - of Bologna and Milan, towards gender equality, end-of-life and homosexuality issues?* - this study examined the main differences and similarities among congregations of Bologna and Milan concerning: (a) the stances of religious leaders towards female spiritual leadership and (b) euthanasia; and (c) the attitudes\practices of religious leaders concerning the homosexual full-fledged membership, lay leadership, spiritual leadership and towards same-sex weddings.

Data analysis showed that in both cities congregations exhibit similar levels of disagreement towards female religious leadership, and that Catholics have lower levels of disagreement than religious leaders of minorities.

Findings documented that - even though with slight differences - in both cities, Catholics and minorities have the same tendency to be in agreement with death *by withholding possible treatments* and in strong disagreement regarding the possibility of death *by taking a physician-supplied overdose of drugs.*

Regarding the issue of homosexuality, results highlighted that the general trend in Milan and in Bologna among religious leaders is to be in disagreement with the full-fledged membership of homosexuals, with homosexual religious leadership, and to exhibit a clear unavailability to perform a same-sex wedding. The analysis found differences between congregations of Bologna and Milan concerning the homosexual lay leadership. In Bologna the tendency is to be in disagreement, while in Milan is to be in favor.

Catholic priests of Milan exhibit more inclusive attitudes towards homosexuality than priests of Bologna, in most of the issues addressed; while minorities display the tendency to be less open than Catholics in most of the addressed issues.

Overall, in the light of the findings of this study, it can be concluded that religious congregations of Bologna and Milan support human rights mainly through social assistance

activities. In fact, religious communities of both cities rarely engage in efforts to promote or prevent social and cultural change by raising awareness and mobilizing members for participation in social movements and policy advocacy.

Furthermore, the general dissent around the female spiritual leadership suggests that congregations do not foster gender equality. Even though this circumstance is mainly grounded on a theological perspective, their stances towards the female spiritual leadership perpetuate the long tradition of female exclusion from institutional key roles that would enable them to participate in decision-making processes and to freely choose their path in life. Similarly, their strong disagreement with the possibility of death *by taking a physician-supplied overdose of drugs,* indicates that they do not support the human right of self-determination in matters of life and death.

Regarding homosexuality, the results of this research highlight the gap between human rights principles and congregational practices towards gays and lesbian. In particular, the general disagreement with the full-fledged membership of homosexuals, indicates that religious leaders do not foster homosexuals inclusiveness, rather they restrain it.

6. Bibliography

Abbruzzese, S. (1991), Comunione e liberazione: identità religiosa e disincanto laico, Roma-Bari: Laterza.

Acquaviva, S. (1961) L'eclissi del sacro nella società industriale, Milano, Edizioni di Comunità.

Acquaviva, S. and Guizzardi, G. (1973) La secolarizzazione, Bologna, Il Mulino.

Akah, J.N. and Ajah, A.C. (2022) Interreligious dialogue as a myth, HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies 78(1).

Alicino, F. (2013) La legislazione sulla base di Intese; Carocci, Roma.

Allievi, S. (2008) Islam italiano e società nazionale, in A. Ferrari (ed.), *Islam in Europa/Islam in Italia tra diritto e società*, Bologna, Il Mulino.

Allievi, S. (2015a) La presenza dell'islam nello spazio pubblico italiano: a che punto siamo? «L'Ancora nell'Unità di Salute», 5, 441-448.

Allievi, S. (2015b) Moschee in Europa. Conflitti e polemiche, tra fiction e realtà, «Quaderni di diritto e politica ecclesiastica», 1, 149-160.

Allport, G. W. (1954/1979) The Nature of Prejudice. Boston: Beacon Press.

Ambrosini, M., Bonizzoni, P., and Molli, S. D. (2021). How religion shapes immigrants' integration: The case of Christian migrant churches in Italy. «*Current Sociology*» *69*(6), 823–842

Ambrosini, M. (2019) La chiesa cattolica e gli immigrati in Italia, «MONDI MIGRANTI», 1, 9-27.

Ambrosini M., Naso P. and Paravati C. (2018). Il Dio dei migranti. Pluralismo, conflitto, integrazione. Bologna: Il Mulino

Ammerman, N. (1997) Congregation and Community, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Ammerman, N. (2005) Pillars of faith. American congregations and their partners. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ammerman, N. (2009) Congregations. Local, social, and religious, in Clarke P.B. (ed.) *The Oxford handbook of the sociology of religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 562-580.

Ammerman, N. (2017) American Congregations: How Different Are We?, in Latzel T., Wegner G (eds.) *Congregational Studies Worldwide: The Future of the Parish and the Free Congregation.* Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 43-52.

Ammerman, N. (2018) Foreword: From the USA to Europe and Back, in Monnot, C. and Stolz, J (eds.) *Congregations in Europe*. Cham: Springer, v-xiv.
Ammerman, N., Carroll, J., Dudley C. and McKinney, W. (1998) Studying Congregations: A New Handbook. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Anleu, S.R. (1999) 'Sociologists confront human rights: the problem of universalism' Journal of Sociology 35 (2), 198-212.

Appleby, R. S. (2000) The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Ariel, Y. (2007) Gay, Orthodox, and trembling: the rise of Jewish Orthodox gay consciousness «J Homosex» 52(3-4):91-109.

Arnone, G. (2016) Rapporto 2016 sui cristiani LGBT in Italia. Progetto Gionata. Available online: https://www.gionata.org/rapporto-2016-sui-cristiani-lgbt-in-italia-2/ (accessed on 1 August 2022).

Asai, A., Ohnishi, M., Nagata, SK., Tanida, N., and Yamazaki, Y. (2011) Doctors' and nurses' attitudes towards and experiences of voluntary euthanasia: survey of members of the Japanese Association of Palliative Medicine. J Med Ethics; 27, 324–30.

Asteley, J. and Francis, L. (2016) Introducing the Astley-Francis Theology of Religions Index (AFTRI): Construct validity among 13- to 15-year-old students. Journal of Beliefs and Values, 37, 29-39

Avvenire (2017) 'Cei. Bassetti: una Chiesa che impari dai poveri', 5 June.

Avvenire (2019) 'Astalli. Bassetti: «Soccorrere i migranti, istituzioni prendano loro responsabilità»', 4 April.

Azdajic, D. (2019) Dialogue Beyond Belief: The Role of Participation in Religious Practices as the Meeting Point for Muslim Christian Encounter «Transformation» 36: 196–209.

Bader, V. (2007) 'Secularism or Democracy?: Associational Governance of Religious Diversity, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Baeke, G., Wils, JP., Broeckaert, B. (2011) There is a time to be born and a time to die' (Ecclesiastes 3:2a): Jewish perspectives on euthanasia. «J Relig Health» 50(4):778-95.

Baker, J., and Whitehead, A. (2016) Gendering (Non)Religion: Politics, Education, and Gender Gaps in Secularity in the United States, «Social Forces» 94(4).

Ballarino G., M. Maraffi, H.M.A. Schadee, and C. Vezzoni (2010), "Le fratture sociali: classe, religione, territorio", in Votare in Italia: 1968-2008. Dall'appartenenza alla scelta, eds. P. Bellucci and P. Segatti, Bologna: Il Mulino. pp.149-186.

Banchoff, T. and Wuthnow, R. (2011) Religion and the global politics of human rights. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bankston, C. L., III, and Zhou, M. (2000) De Facto congregationalism and socioeconomic mobility in Laotian and Vietnamese immigrant communities: A study of religious institutions and economic change, «Review of Religious Research» 41 (4), 453–470.

Barberis, E. and Boccagni, P. (2014) Blurred rights, local practices: social work and immigration in Italy',«The British Journal of Social Work», 44, 70–87.

Barlas, A. (2002), *'Believing Women' in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'ān*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bartkowski, J. P., and Shah, S. (2014) Religion and Gender Inequality. In *Religion and Inequality in America: Research and Theory on Religion's Role in Stratification*, edited by L. Keister and D. E. Sherkat. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bassi, M. (2014) 'The Christian support networks for immigrants in Palermo, «Partecipazione e Conflitto» 7, 1, 58–82.

Baumann, M., and Stolz, J. (2009) La nouvelle Suisse religieuse. Risques et chances pour sa diversité. Genève: Labor et Fides

Bear, R. (2019) Women's Leadership in Judaism: Amy Eilberg's Ordination, «Tulane», 4(2)

Beckford, J. A. (2003) Social theory and religion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Beckford, J. A. (2014) Re-Thinking Religious Pluralism. In *Religious Pluralism: Framing Religious Diversity in the Contemporary World*; Giordan, G., Pace, E., Eds.; Springer: New York, USA, 15-30.

Bellè, E., Peroni, C. and Rapetti, E. (2018) One step up and two steps back? The Italian debate on secularization, heteronormativity and LGBTQ citizenship «Social Compass» 65(5) 591–607

Berger, P.L. (1969). A rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural . Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday.

Berger, P.L. (1999). The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics. Grand Rapids: Ethics and Public Policy Center and Ww. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Bertezzolo, P. (2011), Padroni a chiesa nostra. Vent'anni di strategia religiosa della Lega Nord, Bologna: EMI.

Berzano, L. (2017). Spiritualità. Moltiplicazione delle forme nella società secolare. Milano: Editrice Bibliografica.

Beyerlein, K. and Chaves, M. (2020) The Political Mobilization of America's Congregations, «Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion» 59(4).

Bianchi, I. (2018). The post-political meaning of the concept of commons: The regulation of the urban commons in Bologna. «Space and Polity» 22(3), 287-306.

Bobbio, N. (1996) The age of rights, United Kingdom: Polity Press.

Bochinger, C. (2012) Religionen, Staat und Gesellschaft: "Die Schweiz zwischen Säkularisierung und religiöser Vielfalt", Neue Zürcher Zeitung.

Bombardieri, M (2011) *Moschee d'Italia. Il diritto al luogo di culto, il dibattito sociale e politico*, Bologna, EMI

Boniolo G. (2006 ed.), Laicità. Una geografia delle nostre radici, Torino: Einaudi.

Borresen, K. E. (2009), "Modelli di genere nella tradizione cristiana", *in* Giovanni Filoramo (ed.), *Le religioni e il mondo moderno, vol. IV*. Torino: Einaudi, 319-340.

Bosman, J. (2008). Re-interpreting the spiritual experience of gay men in the pentecostal/charismatic tradition, «Practical Theology in South Africa» 23(1), 1-18.

Bossi, L. (2020) Le minoranze e la città. Regimi urbani e dinamiche spaziali d'insediamento delle religioni a Torino. Mondi Migranti, 1, 117-133.

Breskaya, O., Richardson, J.T. and Giordan, G. (2018) Human Rights and Religion: A Sociological Perspective, «Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion» 57(3), 419–431.

Bressan, L. (2004) La parrocchia oggi: Identità, trasformazioni, sfide. Bologna: EDB.

Bressan, L. (2003) La "rivincita" della parrocchia' in: Sfide per la Chiesa del nuovo secolo. in *Indagine sul clero in Italia*. Garelli, F. (ed.), Il Mulino, Bologna.

Bruce, S. (1992) Religion and modernization: Sociologists and historians debate the secularization thesis, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Bruce, S. (1996) Religion in the modern world: From cathedrals to cults, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Burchardt, M., Becci, I. & Giorda, M. (2017) Religious Super-Diversity and Urban Visibility in Barcelona and Turin

Burdette, A. M., Hill, T. D., & Moulton, B. E. (2005). Religion and attitudes toward physician-assisted suicide and terminal palliative care. «Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion» 44(1), 79-93.

Burgalassi S. (1974), La sociologia della religione in Italia dal 1968 ad oggi, «Studi di Sociologia» 12(3/4), 392-418.

Cadge, W., Girouard, J., Olson, L.R, and Lylerohr, M. (2012) Uncertainty in Clergy's Perspectives on Homosexuality: A Research Note. *Rev Relig Res* 54, 371–387.

Cambi F. (2007, ed.), Laicità, religioni e formazione: una sfida epocale, Roma: Carocci. Capelle-Pagacean A., P. Michel and E. Pace (2008, eds.), Religions(s) et identité(s) en Europe. L'épreuve du pluriel, Paris: Presses de SciencesPo.

Campdepadros, R., Marauri, J. & Pulido-Rodríguez, M.A. (2021) Interreligious Dialogue Groups Enabling Human Agency «Religions» *12(3)*

Caritas Europa, (2021) Italy, INCLUSIVE LABOUR MARKETS: ENSURING NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND, Available at: https://www.caritas.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/ Italy_CountryReport_digital_single.pdf

Carroll, J., Dudley C. and McKinney W. (1986) The Handbook for Congregational Studies. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Cartocci R. (2007), Mappe del tesoro. Atlante del capitale sociale in Italia, Bologna, il Mulin

Cartocci, R. (2011) Geografia dell'Italia cattolica, Il Mulino, Bologna.

Casanova J. (1994) Public Religions in the Modern World. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Casanova, J. (2000) Oltre la secolarizzazione. Le religioni alla riconquista della sfera pubblica

Ceccarini L. (2008), "The Church in Opposition. Religious Actors, Lobbying and Catholic Voters in Italy", in Religion and Politics in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, edited by Jeffrey Haynes, New York: Routledge, pp. 177–201.

Ceccarini, L., and Diamanti, I. (2007) Catholics and Politics after the Christian Democrats: the influential minority, «Journal of Modern Italian Studies» 12 (1).

Chaves, M. (1997). Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Chaves, M. (2004) Congregations in America. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Chaves, M. (2018) Congregations in Europe and the United States: Surprising Similarities and Common Priorities for Future Research, in Monnot, C., and Stolz, J. (eds.) *Congregations in Europe*. Cham: Springer, 209-219.

Chaves, M. (2020) National congregations study. Cumulative Codebook for waves I-IV. Durham: Duke University, Department of Sociology.

Chaves, M., Anderson, S. and Eagle, A. (2014) National congregations study. Cumulative Codebook for waves I, II, and III. Durham: Duke University, Department of Sociology.

Chaves, M., and Beyerlein, K. (2003) The Political Activities of Religious Congregation in the United States, «Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion» 42(2) 229-246.

Chaves, M., Konieczny, M.E., Beyerlein, K. and Barman, E. (1999) 'The National Congregations Study: Background, Methods, and Selected Results', «Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion», 38 (4) 458-476.

Chaves, M. and Anderson S.L. (2008) Continuity and change in American congregations: Introducing the second wave of the National Congregations Study, «Sociology of Religion» 69(4), 415-440.

Chaves, M. and Anderson S.L. (2014) Changing American Congregations: Findings from the third wave of the National Congregations Study', «Journal for the scientific study of religion» 53 (4), 676-686.

Chaves, M. & Eagle A. (2015) Religious Congregations in 21st Century America. Durham: Duke University, Department of Sociology.

Chaves, M. & Eagle A. (2016) Congregations and Social Services: An Update from the Third Wave of the National Congregations Study Religions 7(5), 1-9.

Chaves, M. & Higgins, M.L. (1992) 'Comparing the community involvement of black and white congregations', «Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion» 31(4)425-40.

Chaves, M. & Tsitsos W. (2001) Congregations and Social Services: What They Do, How They Do It, and With Whom, «Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly» 30(4), 660-683.

Cheng, Y. (2018) Being Different with Dignity: Buddhist Inclusiveness of Homosexuality, «Social Sciences» 7(4), 51.

Church, I.M. and Samuelson, P.L., (2017) Intellectual humility – An introduction to philosophy and science, Bloomsbury, London.

Cipriani R. (2009), Nuovo manuale di sociologia della religione, Roma: Borla.

Cnaan, R.A. and Bodie, S.C. (2001) Philadelphia Census of Congregations and Their Involvement in Social Service Delivery, «Social Service Review» 75(4), December 2001, 559-580.

Colozzi I. and Martelli S. (1988), L'arcipelago cattolico. Analisi sociologica dell'associazionismo ecclesiale a Bologna, Bologna: CIC, IPSSER.

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Persona Humana. 1975. Available at: https://www.vatican.
va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19751229_persona-hum ana_en.html (accessed on 15 October 2022).

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1987) Donum Vitae - Instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation. Available at: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19 870222_respect-for%20human-life_it.html (accessed on 20 November 2022)

Corbisiero, F. and Monaco, S. (2017) Città arcobaleno. Una mappa della vita omosessuale nell'Italia di oggi.

Cornille, C. (2013) 'Conditions for inter-religious dialogue' in C. Cornille (ed.), The Wiley-Blackwell companion to inter-religious dialogue, pp. 20–33, John Wiley & Sons, West Sussex.

Damilano M. (2006), Il partito di Dio. La nuova galassia dei cattolici italiani, Torino: Einaudi.

Dassetto, F. Ferrari, S. & Marechal B. (2007), L'Islam nell'Unione Europea: che cosa ci riserva il futuro?, Report for the European Parliament, Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/it/document/IPOL-CULT_ET(2007)369031 (Accesses on 15 May 2022)

Davie, G. (1994) Religion in Britain since 1945: believing without belonging. Blackwell, Oxford.

Davie, G. (2000) Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Davie, G. (2015) Religion in Britain: A Persistent Paradox, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Deflem, M. and Chicoine, S. (2011) The Sociological Discourse on Human Rights: Lessons from the Sociology of Law, «Development and Society», 40 (1), 101-115.

De Jong D. (2007) Freedom of Religion and Belief in the Light of Recent Challenges: Needs, Clashes and Solutions' in Ghanea, N. ,Stephens, A. and Walden R. (eds.) *'Does god believe in human rights'*. Brill: Boston.

Demerath, N. J., and Farnsley, A. E. (2007) Congregations resurgent, in Beckford J.A. and Demerath N.J. (Eds.) *The SAGE handbook of the sociology of religion*. London: Sage, 193–204.

Dekker, P. (2009) Civicness: From Civil Society to Civic Services?. Voluntas, 20, 220–238.

Eck, D. L. (2006) Prospects for Pluralism: Voice and Vision in the Study of Religion

Diotallevi, L. (2002) "Internal Competition in a National Religious Monopoly: The Catholic Effect and the Italian Case", «Sociology of Religion» 63(2).

Diotallevi, L. , and Allievi, S. (2004). Le religioni degli italiani. In G. Amendola (Ed.). *Anni in salita. Speranze e paure degli italiani*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, pp. 202–226.

Djupe, P. A., and Gilbert, C. (2009) The political influence of churches. New York: Cambridge University Press

Dobbelaere, K., (2011) 'The meaning and scope of secularization', in P.B. Clarke (ed.), The Oxford handbook of the sociology of religion, pp. 599–615, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Dobbelaere, K. (1999).'Towards an Integrated Perspective of the Processes Relat- ed to the Descriptive Concept of Secularization'. «Sociology of Religion» Oxford, vol. 60, no. 3,

Donnelly, J. (1999) 'The social construction of human rights' in Dunne, T. and Wheeler, N. (eds.) Human rights in global politics. New York: Cambridge, 71–102.

Donovan M. (2003) The Italian state : no longer Catholic, no longer Christian «West European Politics» 26(1): 95-116.

Douglass, H. P., and deS. Brunner, E. (1935) The Protestant Church as a social institution. New York:Harper and Brothers.

Durham, C. (2012) Patterns of Religion State Relations in Witte, J.Jr. and Green, C. M. (eds.) *Religion and Human Rights: An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellison, C. G., and John P. Bartkowski, J.P. (2002) Conservative Protestantism and the Division of Household Labor among Married Couples. «Journal of Family Issues» 23(8):950–85.

Fargion V. (2009), "From the southern to the northern question. Territorial and social policies in Italy", in N. McEwen, L. Moreno (eds.), The territorial politics of welfare, Abingdon, Routledge: 127-147.

Ferrari, S. (2003) "Conclusion–Church and State in Post-Communist Europe," in Law and Religion in Post-Communist Europe, eds. Silvio Ferrari, W. Cole Durham, Jr., and, Elizabeth A. Sewell (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 411–427

Ferrari, S. (2006) Islam: l'identità inquieta dell'Europa. Available at: https://www.cipmo.it/wp-content/uploads /2018/10/cartellastampa.pdf

Ferrari, S. and Ferrari A. (2015) Religion and the Secular State: The Italian Case «*Religion and the Secular State*» 445-465.

Finke R (1990) Religious deregulation: Origins and consequences. Journal of Church and State 32(3): 609–626.

Finke R (2013) Origins and consequences of religious freedom: A global overview. Sociology of Religion 74(3): 297–313.

Finke R, Martin R and Fox J (2017) Explaining religious discrimination against religious minorities. «Politics & Religion» 10(2): 389–416.

Finke R and Stark R (1992) The churching of America, 1776–1990: Winners and losers in our religious economy. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Fokas, E. and Richardson J.T. (2017) The European Court of Human Rights and minority religions: Messages generated and messages received. «Religion, State & Society» 45(3/4):166–73.

Fonseca, L. M., & Testoni, I. (2012). The Emergence of Thanatology and Current Practice in Death Education. OMEGA - «Journal of Death and Dying» 64(2), 157-169

Faggioli M. (2008), Breve storia dei movimenti cattolici, Roma: Carocci.

Folliero, M.C. (2008) Libertà religiosa e società multiculturali: la risposta italiana. Stato, Chiese e pluralismo confessionale 2008, 1, 1-14.

Fox, J. (2015) Political secularism, religion, and the state: A Time series analysis of worldwide data. New york: Cambridge University Press.

Fox, J. (2016) The unfree exercise of religion: A world survey of religious discrimination against religious minorities. New york: Cambridge University Press.

Fox, J. (2019) The correlates of religion and state: An introduction. «Religion, State and Society» 47(1): 2–9.

Frunză, S. (2013) Secular bioethics and euthanasia in a democratic public space «European Journal of Science and Theology», August 2013, Vol.9, No.4, 1-9

Fulton, B.R. (2016) Trends in Addressing Social Needs: A Longitudinal Study of Congregation-Based Service Provision and Political Participation, «Religion», 7 (5), 51-67.

Fox, J. (2020) Thou shalt have no other Gods before me: Why governments discriminate against religious minorities. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Garelli F. (1986), La religione dello scenario. La persistenza della religione tra i lavoratori, Bologna: Il Mulino.

Garelli F. (2003), Sfide per la chiesa del nuovo secolo. Indagine sul clero in Italia, Bologna: Il Mulino.

Garelli, F. (2007) The public relevance of the church and Catholicism in Italy «Journal of Modern. Italian Studies» (12) 8,36.

Garelli F. (2010), Catholicism in Italy in the age of pluralism, Lanham, Lexington books.

Garelli, F. (2011) Religione all'italiana. L'anima del paese messa a nudo, Bologna.

Garelli, F. (2012) Flexible Catholicism, Religion and the Church: The Italian Case

Garelli, F. (2020) Gente di poca fede. Il sentimento religioso nell'Italia incerta di Dio. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Garelli, F. Guizzardi, G., and Pace, E. (2003) Un singolare pluralismo. Indagine sul pluralismo morale e religioso degli italiani. Il Mulino, Bologna.

Garelli, F. Pace, E., and Frisina, A. (2012). Portrait du catholicisme en Italie. In *Portraits du catholicisme. Une comparaison européenne*, edited by Alfonso Pérez-Agote. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 159–205.

Gauchet, M., (1997) The disenchantment of the world: A political history of religion, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Giorda, M. (2015) I luoghi religiosi a Torino. Le religioni nei contesti urbani contemporanei." Quaderni di Diritto e Politica Ecclesiastica, 2, 337–356

Giordan, G. (2011) Toward a Sociology of Prayer, in Giordan, Giuseppe, and William H. J. Swatos, eds. *Religion, Spirituality and Everyday Practice*. Dordrect: Springer.

Giordan, G., and Guglielmi, M. (2018) Be Fruitful and Multiply... Fast! The Spread of Orthodox Churches in Italy, in Monnot, C. and Stolz, J. (eds.) *Congregations in Europe*. Cham: Springer, 53-70.

Giordan, G., and Zrinščak S. (2018) One pope, two churches: Refugees, human rights and religion in Croatia and Italy, «Social Compass» 65(1), 62-78.

Giordan, G. and Pace, E. (2012) Mapping Religion and Spirituality in a Postsecular World. Leiden Boston: Brill.

Giordan, G. and Pace, E. (2014) Religious Pluralism: Framing Religious Diversity in the Contemporary World. Cham: Springer.

Giorgi A. (2012), "Religious associations in Lombardy: values and political choices", «Politics and religion», 6(2): 333-357

Giorgi, A., (2018) Religioni di minoranza tra Europa e laicità locale; Mimesis: Milano-Udine, Italy.

Giorgi, A. (2019a) Mediatized Catholicism—Minority Voices and Religious Authority in the Digital Sphere

Giorgi, A. (2019b) Religion and political parties: the case of Italy «Religion state & society»

Giorgi (2020) Debating Homosexuality in Italy: Plural Religious Voices in the Public Sphere

Giorgi, A. and Annicchino, P. (2017) 'Genuine' religions and their arena of legitimation in Italy «Religion state & society»

Giorgi, A. and Palmisano, R. (2020) Women and Gender in Contemporary European Catholic Discourse «Voices of Faith»

Giorgi, A. and Polizzi, E. (2014) Paths of research in religion and politics «Partecipazione e Conflitto» 7 (1)

Giorgi, A. and Polizzi (2015) Communion and Liberation: a Catholic movement in a multilevel governance perspective, «Religion, State and Society» 43(2)

Giovanardi, M.; Silvagni, M.G. (2021) Profiling "Red Bologna": Between neoliberalisation tendencies and municipal socialist legacy.

Gori, C. (2005). Politiche sociali di centro-destra: la riforma del welfare lombardo. Carocci, Roma. 2005.

Griera, M., Nagel A.K., (2018) Interreligious Relations and Governance of Religion in Europe. Social Compass, 65.

Grim, B. and Finke, R. (2006) International religious indexes: Governmental regulation, government favoritism, and social regulation of religion. «Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion» 2.

Grim, B. and Finke, R. (2007) Religious persecution in cross-national context: Clashing civilizations or regulated religious economies? «American Sociological Review» 72(4): 633–658.

Guizzardi G. (1977). "Sécularisation et idéologie ecclesiale: Hypothese de travail", Social Com- pass, 24(4), 383-405, doi:10.1177/003776867702400405

Guolo, R. (2011), Chi impugna la croce. Lega e Chiesa, Roma-Bari: Laterza.

Habermas J. (1994). Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State. In: Taylor C. et al., *Multiculturalism. Examining the Politics of Recognition*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hammoud-Beckett, S. (2022) Intersectional Narrative Practice with Queer Muslim Clients. «Journal of Intercultural Studies» 43: 120–47.

Harhoff, F. (2007) 'Theoretical and Institutional Framework: The Soft Spot where Human Rights End and God Begins' in Ghanea, N. ,Stephens, A. and Walden R. (eds.) *Does god believe in human rights*. Brill:Boston

Harris, M. (1995) The organization of religious congregations: Tackling the issues, «Nonprofit Management and Leadership» 5 (3), 261–274.

Harris, M. (1996) Religious congregations as nonprofit organizations. Four English case studies, in Demerath III N.J., Dobkin Hall, P., Schmitt, T., and Williams, R. (eds.) *Sacred companies. Organizational aspects of religion and religious aspects of organizations.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Henriques, F. (2012), *Mulheres que ousaram ficar. Contributos para a teologia feminista*. Porto: Letras & Coisas.

Hervieu-Léger, D. (1999). Le Pèlerin et le converti: la religion en mouvement. Flammarion, Paris.

Homan, P. and Burdette, A. (2021) When Religion Hurts: Structural Sexism and Health in Religious Congregations «American Sociological Review» 86(2), 234-255.

Honneth A. (2007). Recognition as Ideology. In: Van den Brink B., Owen D., a cura di, Recognition and Power: Axel Honneth and the Tradition of Critical Social Theory. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hynes, P., Lamb, M., Short, D. and Waites, M. (2010) 'Sociology and Human Rights: Confrontations, Evasions and New Engagements' 14(6) «International Journal of Human Rights» 810.

Iannaccone, L. R. (1992) Religious Markets and the Economics of Religion. Social Compass, 39, 123–131.

Introvigne, M., and R. Stark (2005), "Religious Competition and Revival in Italy: Exploring European Exceptionalism", Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion, 1(1), 1-20.

Ipsos (2017) I cattolici tra presenza nel sociale e nuove domande alla politica

Itçaina, X (2014) Catholicism, Social Economy and Local Welfare in times of crisis: Comparing Spanish and Italian territories EUI SPS (02).

Jaspal, R., & Cinnirella, M. (2010). Coping with potentially incompatible identities: Accounts of religious, ethnic, and sexual identities from British Pakistani men who identify as Muslim and gay. «British Journal of Social Psychology», 49 (4), 849-870.

Joas, H. (2013) The sacredness of the person: A new genealogy of human rights. Washington: Georgetown University Press.

Kamitsuka, M. (2007), *Feminist Theology and the Challenge of Difference*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Keown, D. (2005) End of Life: The Buddhist View «The Lancet» 366, 952-955.

Knitter, P. F.. (2013) Inter-Religious Dialogue and Social Action. In The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue. Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.

Kollman, K. (2007) Same-Sex Unions: The Globalization of an Idea «International Studies Quarterly», 51(2) 329-357.

Körs, A (2018a) How Religious Communities Respond to Religious Diversity: From Interreligious Dialogue to Interreligious Relations, Contacts, and Networks, «Religion and Dialogue in the City», 23-54.

Körs, A. (2018b) Congregations in Germany: Mapping of Organizations, Beliefs, Activities, and Relations: The Case Study of Hamburg, in Monnot, C. and Stolz, J. (eds.) *Congregations in Europe*. Cham: Springer, 117-138.

Körs, A., Weisse, W., and Willaime, JP. (2020) Religious Diversity and Interreligious Dialogue. Cham: Springer.

Kötter, L. (2020) Maria 2.0.—Wie alles anfing, und wie es dann weiterging. *Lebendige Seelsorge* 3: 209–13.

Latzel T., Wegner G. (2017) Congregational Studies Worldwide: The Future of the Parish and the Free Congregation. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt.

Leith, J.B. (2007) A More Constructive Encounter: A Bahá'í View of Religion and Human Rights' in Ghanea, N. ,Stephens, A. and Walden R. (eds.) *Does god believe in human rights*. Brill: Boston.

Lemke, T. (2001). 'The birth of bio-politics': Michel Foucault's lecture at the Collège de France on neo-liberal govern mentality «Economy and society», 30(2), 190-207

Lima, N.S., and Cicovacki P. (2014). Bio-Ethics: past, present, and future «JAHR – European Journal of Bioethics» 5/2(10), 263-275.

Luckmann, T. (1967). The Invisible Religion. The Problem of Religion in Modern Society . New York: Macmillan.

Lynch J. (2009), Italy: a Catholic or Clientelist Welfare State?, in K. Kersbergen and P. Manow (eds.), *Religion, class coalition and welfare states*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 91-119.

Marzano, M. and Urbinati, N. (2013) Missione impossibile. La riconquista cattolica della sfera pubblica, Bologna.

Macrì, G. (2015) La libertà religiosa, i diritti delle comunità islamiche. Alcune considerazioni critiche su due progetti di legge in materia di moschee e imam, «Stato, Chiese e pluralismo confessionale», 5, 1-35.

Madadin, M., Al Sahwan, H.,, Altarouti, KK., Al Eswaikt , Z., Menezes, R. (2020) The Islamic perspective on physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia «Med Sci Law» 60(4):278-286.

Madsen, M.R. and Verschraegen, G. (2013) Making Human Rights Intelligible: Towards a Sociology of Human Rights, Oxford, United Kingdom: Hart Pub.

Maestripieri, L. (2013) Impact of local welfare systems on female labour force participation and social cohesion. The case of Bologna. DAStU Working Papers, 5.

Marchisio R. (2012) Produrre il sacro. Organizzazione e vita religiosa. Roma: Aracne.

Marchisio R. (2005), "Ripensare la laicità : tra pluralismo e individualismo religioso", Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia, 4, 605-629, doi: 10.1423/21016

Marchisio R. (2002), Religione e religiosità, Roma: Carocci.

Mancini, S. (2008), Il potere dei simboli, i simboli del potere. Laicita` e religione alla prova del pluralism, Milano: Cedam.Marsden, G. M. (1991) Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Marshall, T H. (1950) Citizenship and Social Class: And Other Essays. Cambridge University Press.

Martinelli, M. (2020) Religion in Secularized and Post-Secularized Europe, in Zanfrini L. (eds.) *Migrants and Religion: Paths, Issues, and Lenses: A Multidisciplinary and Multi-Sited Study on the Role of Religious Belongings in Migratory and Integration Processes*, edited by Laura Zanfrini, 74–110. Brill

Martínez-Ariño, J. (2019) Governing religious diversity in cities: critical perspectives. Religion, State and Society, 47, 364-373

Marzano, M. and Pace, E. (2013) 'Introduction: the many faces of Italian Catholicism in the 21st century' «Social Compass» 60, 3, 299–301.

Marzano, M. (2012) Quel che resta dei cattolici, Feltrinelli Editore.

McCrea, R. (2016) Secularism before the Strasbourg Court: Abstract Constitutional Principles as a Basis for Limiting Rights, «The Modern Law Review», 79(4), 691-705.

McLaren, L. M. (2003). Anti-immigrant prejudice in Europe: contact, threat perception, and preferences for the exclusion of migrants «Social Forces» 81, 909–936.

McPherson, J. M. (1982) Hypernetwork sampling: Duality and differentiation among voluntary organizations, «Social Networks» 3(4), 225-249.

Monnot, C. and Stolz, J. (2018) Congregations in Europe. Cham: Springer.

Monnot C. and Stolz J. (2020) The Diversity of Religious Diversity. Using Census and NCS Methodology in Order to Map and Assess the Religious Diversity of a Whole Country, in Körs, A., Weisse, W., and Willaime, JP. (eds.) *Religious Diversity and Interreligious Dialogue Religious diversity and interreligious dialogue*. Cham: Springer, 133-152.

Morgan, R. (2009) 'Human rights research and the social sciences'. In *Interpreting human rights: Social science perspectives*, edited by Morgan R. and Bryan S. Turner, 1–22. London, New York: Routledge.

Morgan, R. and Turner, S. (2009) Interpreting Human Rights: Social Science Perspectives. New York, NY : Routledge.

Morse, H.N., and deS. Brunner E. (1923) The town and country church in the United States as illustrated by data from one hundred seventy-nine counties and by intensive studies of twenty-five. NY: George H. Doran Company.

Morsink, J. (1999) The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Origins, Drafting, and Intent. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Moscati, M. F. (2010) Trajectory of Reform: Catholicism, the State and the Civil Society in the Developments of LGBT Rights «Liverpool Law Review» 31 (1): 51–68.

Mudu, P. (2004). Resisting and challenging neoliberalism: The development of Italian social centers. «Antipode» 36(5), 917-941.

Nardi, P.M. (1998) The Globalization of the Gay & Lesbian Socio-Political Movement: Some Observations about Europe with a Focus on Italy «Sociological Perspectives» 41(3) 567-586.

Nash, K. (2015) The political sociology of human rights. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

NCS (2009) NCSII Final Report. Available at: https://sites.duke.edu/ncsweb/files/2019/03 NCSIIreport_final.pdf (accessed 20/09/2021)

NCS (2015) NCSIII Final Report. Available at: https://sites.duke.edu/ncsweb/files/2019/02/ NCSIII_report_final.pdf (accessed 20/09/2021)

NCS (2021) NCSIV Final Report. Available at: https://sites.duke.edu/ncsweb/files/2022/02/ NCSIV_Report_Web_FINAL2.pdf (accessed 20/09/2022)

Nesti A. (1975), "Gramsci et la religion populaire", Social Compass, 22(3-4), 343-354

Nicolini, The Copts in Italy (2020) Migration and Generosity *in* (Ed.) L. Zanfrini, *Migrants and Religion: Paths, Issues, and Lenses. A Multisciplinary and Multi-Sited Study on the Role of Religious Belongings in Migratory and Integration Processes*, Brill Academic Publishers, 589-596.

Nimbalkar, N. (2007) Euthanasia: the Hindu Perspective, paper presented at the National Seminar at the National Seminar on BIO ETHICS

O'Gorman, K.D. and MacIntosh, R. (2015) "Mapping Research Methods" Oxford: Goodfellow Publishers.

Ozzano, L. (2015). The debate about same-sex marriages/civil unions in Italy's 2006 and 2013 electoral campaigns. «Contemporary Italian Politics», 7(2), 144–160.

Ozzano, L. (2016). Two forms of Catholicism in twenty-first-century Italian public debate: An analysis of positions on same-sex marriage and Muslim dress codes. «Journal of Modern Italian Studies» 21(3), 464–484.

Ozzano, L. and Giorgi, A. (2015) "Italy and controversies around religion-related issues: overemphasizing differences"

Pace, E. (2014) Increasing Religious Diversity in a Society Monopolized by Catholicism. In *Religious Pluralism: Framing Religious Diversity in the Contemporary World*; Giordan, G., Pace, E., Eds. ; Springer: Cham, Switzerland, 93-114.

Pace, E., (2013) Le religioni nell'Italia che cambia. Mappe e bussole; Carocci: Roma, Italy.

Pallotta-Chiarolli, M., Reem S., & Budi S.. (2021) 'You Can't Be Gay and Do Religion': Understanding Muslim LGBTIQ+ Experiences of Accessing Support Services. «Journal of Intercultural Studies» 43: 148–65.

Pavolini, E., Arlotti, M. and Ascoli U. (2021) "Last Actor Standing Against Populism? The Role of the Catholic Church in Italy and its Defence of Social Assistance and Migration Policies" Cambridge University Press

Pero, D. (2005) Left-wing politics, civil society and immigration in Italy: The case of Bologna Ethnic and racial studies, 28 (5), 832-858.

Perry, S. L. (2019) Addicted to Lust: Pornography in the Lives of Conservative Protestants. New York: Oxford University Press.

Perry, S. L. (2020.) The Bible as a Product of Cultural Power: The Case of Gender Ideology in the English Standard Version «Sociology of Religion» 81(1):68–92.

Pettigrew, T. F. (1998). Intergroup contact theory «Annual Review of Psychology» 49, 65–85.

Pettigrew, T. F. and Tropp, L. R. (2006). A meta- analytic test of intergroup contact theory. «Journal of Personality and Social Psychology» 90, 751–783.

Pew Research Center. 2016. The Gender Gap in Religion around the World. Available online: http://www.pewforum.org/2016/03/22/the-gender-gap-in-religion-around-the-world/ (accessed on 5 September 2022).

Pin A. (2006), "Il percorso della laicità "all'italiana". Dalla prima giurisprudenza costituzionale al Tar Veneto: una sintesi ricostruttiva", Quaderni di diritto e politica ecclesiastica, 1, 204-230.

Pini, A. (2010) Quando eravamo froci. Gli omosessuali nell'Italia di una volta. Milano: Il Saggiatore.

Pollack, D., and Müller, O. (2013). *Religionsmonitor. Religiosität und Zusammenhalt in Deutschland*. Herausgeg. von der Bertelsmann Stiftung, Gütersloh.

Polson, E. C. (2015) Social diversity and civic engagement: The effects of ethnic and social heterogeneity on the community involvement of American congregations. «Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly» 44: 968–87.

Polson, E. C. (2016) Putting civic participation in context: Examining the effects of congregational structure and culture. «Review of Religious Research» 58: 75–100.

Polson, E.C. and Gillespie, R. (2019) The Bridging Activity of Multiracial Congregations. «Religions» 10(3), 204.

Prandi C. (1977), "Religion et classes subalteres en Italie. Trente annees de recherches italiennes", Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religons, 43(1), 93-139.

Rehman, J. (2007) Conflicting Values or Misplaced Interpretations? Examining the Inevitability of a Clash between 'Religions' and 'Human Rights' in Ghanea, N. ,Stephens, A. and Walden R. (eds.) *Does god believe in human rights* Brill: Boston

Richardson, J.T. (2006)The sociology of religious freedom: A structural and socio-legal analysis. «Sociology of Religion» 67(3):271–94.

Richardson, J.T. (2007) Religion, law, and human rights. In *Religion, globalization, and culture*, edited by Peter Beyer and Lori Beaman, pp. 407–28. Leiden: Brill.

Richardson, J.T. (2015) Managing religion and the judicialization of religious freedom. «Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion» 54(1):1–19.

Richardson, J.T. (2019) 'Religious Freedom in Flux: The European Court of Human Rights Grapples with Ethnic, Cultural, Religious, and Legal Pluralism', «Changing Societies & Personalities» 3(4), 302-317.

Richardson, J.T. and Introvigne, M. (2001) "Brainwashing" Theories in European Parliamentary and Administrative Reports on "Cults" and "Sects". «Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion» 2, 143–68.

Ricucci R. (2017). Diversi dall'Islam. Figli dell'immigrazione e altre fedi. Bologna: Il Mulino

Rinaldi, A. (2005). The Emilian model revisited: Twenty years after. Business History.

Rochefort F (2007) Le Pouvoir du genre. La ̈icite ́s et religions 1905–2005. Toulouse: PUM.

Rodriguez, E. M. (2010). At the intersection of church and gay: A review of the psychological research on gay and lesbian Christians. «Journal of Homosexuality» 57, 5-38.

Rossi Barilli, G. (1999) Il movimento gay in Italia. Milano: Feltrinelli.

Safran, R. (2012) A Multidimensional Assessment of Orthodox Jewish Attitudes Toward Homosexuality, *Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses (ETDs)*

Saraceno C. and G.E. Rusconi (1970), Ideologia religiosa e conflitto sociale, Bari: De Donato.

Scappucci, G. (2001) "Italy Walking a Tightrope Between Stockholm and the Vatican: Will Legal Recognition of Same-Sex Partnerships Ever Occur?" In Legal Recognition of Same- Sex Partnerships. A Study of National, European and International Law, edited by M. Andenaes, and R. Windemute, 519–530. Oxford: Hart Publishing.

Scheitle, C. P., and Dougherty, K.D. (2008) 'The sociology of religious organizations', «Sociology Compass» 2 (3), 981–999.

Scotto, A. (2013),"Focusing on the emergencies or on their roots? The role of religious associations in immigrant policy-making in Italy", paper for the ECPR 2013 General conference.

Scrinzi F. (2008), "Migrations and the restructuring of the welfare state in Italy: change and continuity in the domestic work sector", in Lutz H. (ed.) *Migration and domestic work. A European perspective on a global theme*, Aldershot: Ashgate: 29-42.

Sellars, K. (2002) 'The rise and rise of human rights' Stroud, U.K.: Sutton Press.

Sgreccia, E. (2012). Personalist Bioethics: Foundations andApplications. Philadelphia: The National Catholic BioethicsCenter.

Sherr A. (2007) Religion and Human Rights: Redressing the Balance, in Ghanea, N. Stephens, A. and Walden R. (eds.) *Does god believe in human rights*, Brill: Boston.

Segatti, P. (2006), "I cattolici al voto, tra valori e politiche di valori", in Dov'e` la vittoria? Il voto del 2006 raccontato dagli italiani, edited by ITANES, Bologna: Il Mulino, pp. 109–126.

Segatti, P. (1999), "Religiosità e territorio nel voto alla Democrazia Cristiana dal 1948 al 1992", Polis, 13(1), 45-65.

Segatti P. and C. Vezzoni (2008), "Religion and Politics in Italian Electoral Choice. Which Comes First in the New Century Electoral Divisions?", POLENA, 5(2), 9–28.

Somers, M.R and Roberts C. (2008) Toward a New Sociology of Rights: A Genealogy of "Buried Bodies" of Citizenship and Human Rights, «Annual Review of Law and Social Science» 4:385–425

Stolz, J., & Chaves, M. (2017). Does disestablishment lead to religious vitality? The case of Switzerland. «The British Journal of Sociology» 68, 412–435.

Stolz, J., and Monnot, C. (2017). The established and the newcomers: A Weberian–Bourdieusian view of congregations in the Swiss religious field. «Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses» 97(1), 69–90.

Stolz, J., Chaves, M., Monnot, C., and Amiotte-Suchet, L. (2011) Communities in Switzerland: Properties, Activities, Development. Berne: Fonds National Suisse.

Stolz, J., and Monnot, C. (2019a), "L'accès des femmes au pouvoir dans le champ religieux suisse. Résultat d'une étude quantitative", in R. Carnac, D. Guidi & G. Roucoux (Eds), *Les

autorités religieuses face aux questions de genre. Reconfigurations contemporaines des mondes confessionnels autour des nouvelles questions sexuelles, Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes.

Stolz and Monnot (2019b) Religious leadership in Switzerland: norms, power, and money. «Journal of Contemporary Religion» 34, 353-373.

Stolz and Monnot (2019c) Does the establishment suppress the political activities of religious congregations? Evidence from Switzerland «Politics and Religion» 12 (2), 1-29.

Storm, I. (2008) Liberal and Conservative Religion. Different Socio-ecological Strategies Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller.

Sundermeier, T., (1999) Was ist religion: Religionswissenschaft im theologischen Kontext, Kaiser Verlag, Gütersloh.

Swidler, L., (2013) The history of inter-religious dialogue, in C. Cornille (ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell companion to inter-religious dialogue*, John Wiley & Sons, West Sussex.

Taylor, C. (2007). A secular age. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Testoni, I. Tiberto, E. Pompele, S and Maccarini, A. (2019) Death Education and Advance Healthcare Directive: A Qualitative Research on The Bioethical Positioning among Undergraduate Psychology and Social Service Students «Behav Sci» 10(10).

Thomas, M.L. (2009) "Faith and collaboration: A qualitative analysis of faith-based social service programs in organizational relationships." «Administration in Social Work» 33: 40–60.

Tosi S. and Vitale T. (2009), "Explaining how political culture changes: Catholic activism and the secular left in Italian peace movements", «Social Movements Studies» 8(2): 131-147.

Trombetta P.L. (2005), "Fecondazione assistita e potere religioso. Appunti per un'analisi politica dell'azione religiosa", Religioni e Società, 53, 90-96.

Tsitsos, W. (2003) 'Race differences in congregational social service activity', Journal for the «Scientific Study of Religion» 42 (2), 205-215.

Turina, I. (2013) Chiesa e Biopolitica. Il discorso cattolico su famiglia, sessualità e vita umana da Pio XI a Benedetto XVI, Mimesis Edizioni, Milano-Udine.

Turner, B. (1997) A Neo-Hobbesian theory of human rights: A reply to Malcolm Waters. «Sociology» 31(3):565–71

Turner, B. (2009) A sociology of citizenship and human rights: Does social theory still exist? In *Interpreting human rights: Social science perspectives*, edited by Rhiannon Morgan and Bryan S. Turner, pp. 177–99. London, New York: Routledge.

Turner, B. S. (1993) 'Outline of a Theory of Human Rights', «Sociology» 27(3): 489–512.

Turner, B. S. (2006) Vulnerability and Human Rights, University Park, PA: Penn State University Press.

Turner, B. S., Rowland, R., Connell, R., Waters, M., and Barbalet, J.M.(1995) Symposium: Human rights and the sociological project. Journal of Sociology 31(2):1–44.

Valentine, G., & Waite, L. (2012). Negotiating difference through everyday encounters: the case of sexual orientation and religion and belief. Antipode, 44 (2), 474-492.

Voas, D., McAndrew,S. and Storm, I. (2013) Modernization and the gender gap in religiosity: Evidence from cross-national European surveys. Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologic und Sozialpsychologic 65: 259–83.

Walker, M. D. (2013). When Clients Want Your Help to "Pray Away the Gay": Implications for Couple and Family Therapists. «Journal of Feminist Family Therapy» 25 (2), 112- 134.

Warner, R. S. (1994) 'The Place of the Congregation in the Contemporary American Religious Configuration' in J. Wind and J. Lewis (eds.) *American Congregations: New Perspectives in the Study of Congregations*, Chicago, 54–99.

Waters, M. (1996) 'Human rights and universalization of interests: Toward a social constructionist approach' «Sociology» 30 (3):593–600.

Weber, M. (1993) The Sociology of Religion Boston: Beacon Press, 1993

Wegner, G. (2017) 'Congregational Studies: An Introduction' in Latzel, T.,Wegner, G. (eds.) Congregational Studies Worldwide: The Future of the Parish and the Free Congregation. Leipzig: Evagelische Verlagsanstalt, 11-26.

Weller, P. (2007) 'Human Rights', 'Religion' and the 'Secular':Variant Configurations of Religion(s), State(s) and Society(ies)' in Ghanea, N. ,Stephens, A. and Walden R. (eds.) 'Does god believe in human rights'. Brill: Boston

Whitehead A. (2013) 'Gendered Organizations and Inequality Regimes: Gender, Homosexuality, and Inequality Within Religious Congregations', «Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion» 52 (3).

Witte, J.Jr. and Green, C. M. (2012) Religion and Human Rights: An Introduction. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Woodhead L (2001) Feminism and the sociology of religion: From gender-blindness to gendered difference. In: Fenn RK (ed.) The Blackwell Companion to Sociology of Religion. Maldon, MA: Blackwell, pp. 67–84.

Wuthnow, R. (1991) Acts of compassion: Caring for others and helping ourselves. Princeton, NJ:Princeton University Press.

Wuthnow, R. (2011) America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Wuthnow, R. (1998) Loose connections: Joining together in America's fragment- ed communities, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

Yarhouse, M. A., & Nowacki, S. K. (2007). The Many Meanings of Marriage: Divergent Perspectives Seeking Common Ground. «*The Family Journal*» *15*(1), 36–45.

Yip, A. K. (2005). Queering religious texts: An exploration of British non-heterosexual Christians' and Muslims'strategy of constructing sexuality-affirming hermeneutics. Sociology, 39(1), 47–65)

Zamagni, V. (2016) The Cooperative Movement. In The Oxford Handbook of Italian Politics; Jones, E., Pasquino, G., Eds.; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 554-568.

Zaharin, K. (2022) "Reconsidering Homosexual Unification in Islam: A Revisionist Analysis of Post-Colonialism, Constructivism and Essentialism" «Religions» 13(8), 702

Zanfrini, L., and Bressan, L. (2020). The Multi-Ethnic and Multi-Religious Transformation of the Largest Diocese in the World: The Church of Milan and the Synod from the Peoples

Zrinščak, S. (2012) 'Local immigrant communities, welfare and culture: An integration/segregation dilemma' in Migration and welfare in the new europe (pp. 197-212). Policy Press.

Zrinščak, S. (2014) 'Re-Thinking Religious Diversity: Diversities and Governance of Diversities in Post-Societies' in Giordan G. and Pace E. (eds.) Religious Pluralism: Framing Religious Diversity in the Contemporary World. Cham: Springer, 115-132

7. Appendix

APPENDIX A - *Membership trend of minorities in Bologna (N)*

Religious Tradition	Increased	Remained the same	Decreased
Muslim	8	-	2
Jewish	-	1	-
Orthodox	4	-	1
Buddhist	1	-	1
Hindu	2	-	1
Evangelical	13	2	3
Baha'i	-	-	1
Scientology	1	-	-
Jehovah's Witnesses	2	-	9

APPENDIX B - *Membership trend of minorities in Milan (N)*

Religious Tradition	Increased	Remained the same	Decreased
Muslim	12	1	-
Jewish	2	2	1
Orthodox	11	1	3
Buddhist	6	-	1

Hindu	1	-	-
Evangelical	28	6	6
Baha'i	1	-	-
Scientology	1	-	-
Jehovah's Witnesses	-	-	-
Reformed	1	-	-
Mormon	3	-	-
Anglican	1	-	-

APPENDIX C - *Age and Gender composition of minorities in Bologna (%)*

Religious Tradition	Women	Over 60	Under 35
Muslim	10,5%	14%	44%
Jewish	65%	70%	8%
Orthodox	60%	6%	47%
Buddhist	54%	15%	17,5%
Hindu	70%	23%	33%
Evangelical	59%	17%	38%
Baha'i	50%	60%	10%
Scientology	50%	0%	55%
Jehovah's Witnesses	58%	60%	21%

APPENDIX D - *Age and Gender composition of minorities in Milan (%)*

Religious Tradition	Women	Over 60	Under 35
Muslim	20%	15%	51%
Jewish	46%	39%	22,5%
Orthodox	59%	26%	48,5%
Buddhist	63%	38%	19%
Hindu	65%	0%	20%
Evangelical	60%	21%	32%
Baha'i	52%	13%	33%
Scientology	50%	0%	-
Jehovah's Witnesses	-	-	-
Reformed	60%	60%	10%
Mormon	60%	45%	27,5%
Anglican	75%	80%	10%

APPENDIX E - *Theological orientation of minorities in Bologna (N)*

Religious Tradition	Conservative	In the middle	Liberal	Missing data
Muslim	10	-	-	-
Jewish	1	-	-	-
Orthodox	3	2	-	-
Buddhist	1	1	-	-
Hindu	1	-	-	2
Evangelical	15	-	2	1
Baha'i	-	-	1	-

| Scientology | 1 | - | - | - |
| Jehovah's Witnesses | 11 | - | - | - |

APPENDIX F -*Theological orientation of minorities in Milan (N)*

Religious Tradition	Conservative	In the middle	Liberal	Missing data
Muslim	7	-	-	6
Jewish	3	1	1	1
Orthodox	12	-	-	4
Buddhist	1	2	3	1
Hindu	-	-	1	-
Evangelical	33	1	3	3
Baha'i	-	-	-	1
Scientology	-	-	-	1
Jehovah's Witnesses	17	-	-	-
Reformed	-	-	1	-
Mormon	2	-	-	1
Anglican	-	1	-	-

APPENDIX G - *Congregational size of minorities in Bologna (N, Mean)*

Religious Tradition	People Involved	People involved in the most attended event	Weekly participants	Weekend participants
Muslim	228	226	223	210

Jewish	160	160	100	100
Orthodox	556	610	126	131
Buddhist	110	50	30	30
Hindu	212	137	77	36
Evangelical	85	70	62	62
Baha'i	50	50	50	50
Scientology	15	15	15	15
Jehovah's Witnesses	106	106	106	106

APPENDIX H - *Congregational size of minorities in Milan (N, Mean)*

Religious Tradition	People Involved	People involved in the most attended event	Weekly participants	Weekend participants
Muslim	823	900	542	575
Jewish	335	483	202	109
Orthodox	1129	249	279	240
Buddhist	960	306	317	208
Hindu	350	350	60	50
Evangelical	183	196	127	122
Baha'i	200	120	25	25
Scientology	1100	1250	1100	1100
Jehovah's Witnesses	435	435	435	435
Reformed	550	175	95	95
Mormon	173	150	140	140

Anglican	250	120	80	75

APPENDIX I - *Places of worship' portrait of minorities in Bologna (yes, N)*

Religious Tradition	Place of worship specifically built for religious purposes
Muslim	-
Jewish	1
Orthodox	5
Buddhist	2
Hindu	-
Evangelical	6
Baha'i	-
Scientology	-
Jehovah's Witnesses	-

APPENDIX J - *Places of worship' portrait of minorities in Milan (yes, N)*

Religious Tradition	Place of worship specifically built for religious purposes
Muslim	1
Jewish	5
Orthodox	13
Buddhist	5
Hindu	-
Evangelical	19
Baha'i	-
Scientology	1

Jehovah's Witnesses	5
Reformed	1
Mormon	1
Anglican	1

APPENDIX K - *Participation in lobbying\marching activities of minorities in Bologna, by topics addressed (yes, N)*

Religious Tradition	Lobbying activities	Lobbying Abortion (Pro-life)	Lobbying LGBTQ issues (Against)	Lobbying poverty issues	Lobbying "Other issues"
Muslim	-	-	-	-	-
Jewish	-	-	-	-	-
Orthodox	1	1	-	1	-
Buddhist	-	-	-	-	-
Hindu	-	-	-	-	-
Evangelical	3	1	-	1	2
Baha'i	-	-	-	-	-
Scientology	-	-	-	-	-
Jehovah's Witnesses	-	-	-	-	-

APPENDIX L -*Participation in lobbying\marching activities of minorities in Milan, by topics addressed (yes, N)*

Religious Tradition	Lobbying activities	Lobbying Abortion (Pro-life)	Lobbying LGBTQ issues (Against)	Lobbying poverty issues	Lobbying "Other issues"
Muslim	-	-	-	-	-
Jewish	2	-	-	-	1
Orthodox	1	-	-	-	1
Buddhist	1	-	-	-	1
Hindu	-	-	-	-	-
Evangelical	3	1	1	-	-
Baha'i	-	-	-	-	-
Scientology	-	-	-	-	-
Jehovah's Witnesses	-	-	-	-	-
Reformed	-	-	-	-	-
Mormon	-	-	-	-	-
Anglican	1	-	-	1	1

APPENDIX M - *Commitment towards immigration\immigrants of minorities in Bologna (yes, N)*

Religious Tradition	Sanctuary for undocumented immigrants	Political activities pro immigration	Services for immigrants
Muslim	2	-	9
Jewish	-	-	-
Orthodox	1	-	4
Buddhist	-	-	2

Religious Tradition			
Hindu	-	-	-
Evangelical	6	1	11
Baha'i	-	-	1
Scientology	-	-	-
Jehovah's Witnesses	-	-	2

APPENDIX N - *Commitment towards immigration \ immigrants of minorities in Milan (yes,N)*

Religious Tradition	Sanctuary for undocumented immigrants	Political activities pro immigration	Services for immigrants
Muslim	1	-	10
Jewish	-	-	-
Orthodox	3	-	8
Buddhist	-	-	-
Hindu	-	-	-
Evangelical	2	1	9
Baha'i	-	-	-
Scientology	-	-	-
Jehovah's Witnesses	-	-	-
Reformed	-	-	1
Mormon	-	-	-
Anglican	-	-	-

APPENDIX O - *Interreligious commitment of Catholics and minorities of minorities in Bologna (yes, N)*

Religious Tradition	Interreligious activities	Joint celebrations
Muslim	8	4
Jewish	1	1
Orthodox	4	3
Buddhist	1	1
Hindu	2	2
Evangelical	12	11
Baha'i	1	1
Scientology	-	-
Jehovah's Witnesses	-	-

APPENDIX P - *Interreligious commitment of Catholics and minorities in Milan (yes, N)*

Religious Tradition	Interreligious activities	Joint celebrations
Muslim	5	4
Jewish	1	1
Orthodox	14	12
Buddhist	3	5
Hindu	-	-
Evangelical	4	4
Baha'i	-	1
Scientology	-	-
Jehovah's Witnesses	-	-

Reformed	1	-
Mormon	2	1
Anglican	1	1

APPENDIX Q - Agreement or Disagreement with the statement *"All religious leadership positions should be open to women"* among minorities in Bologna *(N)*

Religious Tradition	CD	MD	SD	NN	SA	MA	CA
Muslim	7	1	1	-	-	-	-
Jewish	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Orthodox	3	1	-	-	-	-	1
Buddhist	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Hindu	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Evangelical	5	2	1	1	-	1	6
Baha'i	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Scientology	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Jehovah's Witnesses	5	6	-	-	-	-	-

APPENDIX R - Agreement or Disagreement with the statement *"All religious leadership positions should be open to women"* among minorities in Milan *(N)*

Religious Tradition	CD	MD	SD	NN	SA	MA	CA
Muslim	5	1	1	-	-	-	-
Jewish	4	-	-	-	-	-	1
Orthodox	12	-	-	-	-	-	-

Buddhist	-	-	-	-	-	1	5
Hindu	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Evangelical	20	4	2	-	-	3	6
Baha'i	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Scientology	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jehovah's Witnesses	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reformed	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Mormon	1	2	-	-	-	-	-
Anglican	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

APPENDIX S - Agreement or Disagreement with the statement *"In some circumstances a patient should be allowed to die by withholding possible treatments"* among minorities in Bologna *(N)*

Religious Tradition	CD	MD	SD	NN	SA	MA	CA
Muslim	1	-	-	1	4	3	1
Jewish	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Orthodox	-	-	-	2	-	1	2
Buddhist	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Hindu	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Evangelical	2	2	-	1	3	5	5
Baha'i	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Scientology	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Jehovah's Witnesses	-	-	-	-	7	2	2

APPENDIX T - Agreement or Disagreement with the statement *"In some circumstances a patient should be allowed to die by withholding possible treatments"* among minorities in Milan *(N)*

Religious Tradition	CD	MD	SD	NN	SA	MA	CA
Muslim	-	1	2	1	1	-	1
Jewish	-	1	1	-	-	2	1
Orthodox	-	1	-	-	1	1	7
Buddhist	-	1	-	-	1	1	4
Hindu	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Evangelical	1	-	13	5	1	5	10
Baha'i	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Scientology	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jehovah's Witnesses	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reformed	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Mormon	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Anglican	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

APPENDIX U - Agreement or Disagreement with the statement *"In some circumstances a patient should be allowed to end his or her own life by taking a physician-supplied overdose of drugs"* among minorities in Bologna *(N)*

Religious Tradition	CD	MD	SD	NN	SA	MA	CA
Muslim	10	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jewish	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Orthodox	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Buddhist	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Hindu	-	-	1	-	-	-	2
Evangelical	11	3	1	-	2	-	1
Baha'i	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Scientology	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Jehovah's Witnesses	11	-	-	-	-	-	-

APPENDIX V - Agreement or Disagreement with the statement *"In some circumstances a patient should be allowed to end his or her own life by taking a physician-supplied overdose of drugs"* among minorities in Milan *(N)*

Religious Tradition	CD	MD	SD	NN	SA	MA	CA
Muslim	5	-	1	-	-	-	-
Jewish	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Orthodox	10	-	-	-	-	-	-
Buddhist	3	1	-	-	1	1	1
Hindu	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Evangelical	36	-	-	-	1	-	-

Baha'i	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Scientology	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jehovah's Witnesses	17	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reformed	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mormon	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Anglican	1	-	-	-	-	-	-

APPENDIX W - *Attitudes of religious leaders of minorities towards homosexual lay leadership* and *full-fledged membership, in Bologna (yes, N)*

Religious Tradition	Full-fledged membership of an openly gay or lesbian couple in a committed relationship	Lay leadership of an openly gay or lesbian couple in a committed relationship
Muslim	1	-
Jewish	1	-
Orthodox	1	2
Buddhist	2	2
Hindu	3	1
Evangelical	6	2
Baha'i	-	-
Scientology	1	1
Jehovah's Witnesses	-	-

APPENDIX X - *Attitudes of religious leaders of minorities towards homosexual lay leadership* and *full-fledged membership, in Milan (yes, N)*

Religious Tradition	Full-fledged membership of an openly gay or lesbian couple in a committed relationship	Lay leadership of an openly gay or lesbian couple in a committed relationship
Muslim	8	-
Jewish	1	1
Orthodox	2	-
Buddhist	7	7
Hindu	1	1
Evangelical	20	3
Baha'i	-	-
Scientology	-	1
Jehovah's Witnesses	-	-
Reformed	1	1
Mormon	-	-
Anglican	1	1

APPENDIX Y- Agreement or Disagreement with the statement *"All religious leadership positions should be open to people regardless of their sexual orientation"* among minorities in Bologna *(N)*

Religious Tradition	CD	MD	SD	NN	SA	MA	CA
Muslim	5	-	3	1	-	-	-
Jewish	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Orthodox	2	-	1	1	-	-	1
Buddhist	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Hindu	-	1	-	-	-	-	2
Evangelical	10	2	-	-	2	-	3
Baha'i	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Scientology	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Jehovah's Witnesses	7	1	1	2	-	-	-

APPENDIX Z - Agreement or Disagreement with the statement *"All religious leadership positions should be open to people regardless of their sexual orientation"* among minorities in Milan *(N)*

Religious Tradition	CD	MD	SD	NN	SA	MA	CA
Muslim	2	-	3	1	1	-	-
Jewish	2	2	-	-	-	-	1
Orthodox	10	-	1	-	-	-	1
Buddhist	-	-	-	-	-	1	5
Hindu	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

Evangelical	30	1	-	1	1	2	2
Baha'i	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Scientology	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jehovah's Witnesses	17	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reformed	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Mormon	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Anglican	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

APPENDIX A1 - Average availability\unavailability toward the question *"Would you perform the wedding of a same-sex couple if your religious group allowed it?"* among minorities in Bologna *(N)*

Religious Tradition	Definitely not	Probably not	Not sure	Probably yes	Definitely yes
Muslim	10	-	-	-	-
Jewish	1	-	-	-	-
Orthodox	2	2	1	-	-
Buddhist	-	-	-	-	2
Hindu	-	1	2	-	-
Evangelical	10	1	2	4	1
Baha'i	-	-	-	-	-
Scientology	-	-	-	-	-
Jehovah's Witnesses	-	-	-	-	-

APPENDIX A2 - Average availability\unavailability toward the question *"Would you perform the wedding of a same-sex couple if your religious group allowed it?"* among minorities in Milan *(N)*

Religious Tradition	Definitely not	Probably not	Not sure	Probably yes	Definitely yes
Muslim	10	-	-	-	-
Jewish	4	-	-	-	-
Orthodox	14	-	-	-	-
Buddhist	-	-	-	-	4
Hindu	-	-	-	-	1
Evangelical	33	2	-	-	3
Baha'i	1	-	-	-	-
Scientology	1	-	-	-	-
Jehovah's Witnesses	17	-	-	-	-
Reformed	-	-	-	-	1
Mormon	1	-	-	-	-
Anglican	-	1	-	-	-