

BETWEEN CIAM AND TEAM 10: THE “EAST” AND THE PERIPHERIES OF CIAM

“The English group is right but we hope to be right also!” With these words in their letter of the 27th of August 1957, Oskar Hansen and Jerzy Sołtan politely underscored their claim to a say in debates about the reorganization of CIAM. By articulating their opinion “that the existence of an active organization continuing the CIAM line is of great importance to our ‘milieu’ as well as to many architects of middle and younger generations of eastern [sic] Europe,” they made clear their own position, both as active members of CIAM and as representatives of specific “Eastern” interests.¹ [see INSERT]

Looking at the Polish members can help to differentiate some established narratives about the development from CIAM to Team 10 that occurred between the 10th Congress in Dubrovnik in 1956 and the 1959 meeting in Otterlo. Since the mid 1950s, the renewal of CIAM—in terms of its organization and with respect to its orientation—was discussed in occasionally fierce disputes. The internal front lines were not only drawn between different CIAM generations—the prewar CIAM versus Team 10—but also between the organizational core and the peripheries of the group.² In the postwar period, the CIAM meetings experienced significant growth in participation and saw the arrival of new groups, also non-European. The transition from CIAM to Team 10 meant a reduction of the number of members, questioning the further participation of members and national groups that were less actively involved. In this situation, Sołtan made himself the spokesman of those who were at the peripheries. [FIG. 1]

In Dubrovnik, Sołtan joined CIAM as a representative of a newly formed Polish group, the ASP Group (*Akademia Sztuk Pięknych*). In so doing, he

took particular advantage of relationships he formed during his stay in France from 1945 to 1949 and while working in Le Corbusier’s team, thus marginalizing the former Polish delegate, Helena Syrkus, as a presumed advocate of socialist realism.³ Hansen had taken part in the CIAM Summer School in 1949 during his stay in France during that period at Pierre Jeanneret’s studio, and he was also invited to Dubrovnik on Sołtan’s request, but did not attend. Both architects had reason to feel connected to the CIAM tradition but in terms of their attitudes, they, and especially Hansen, belonged to the reformist wing.

Toward the end of the congress in Dubrovnik, the future of CIAM was discussed and a decision was made to reduce the number of members to 30. Following the meeting, competing lists of future members were circulated, and at the same time, Peter Smithson—as the most “radical” representative of Team 10—pleaded for a complete end to CIAM, expressing preferences for an informal continuation of debates.⁴ Under these conditions, a crisis meeting was held in La Sarraz on the 1st and 2nd of September 1957, in which the CIAM Council, the delegates and the Reorganization Committee attempted to reach a final decision on the future of the organization. In his capacity as secretary, Jaap Bakema gathered expressions of opinion and summarized them in a letter sent in advance to all the participants, in which three positions were highlighted. In addition to the “English” (William Howell, Denys Lasdun, Peter Smithson and John Voelcker) and the “Americans” (Sigfried Ciedion, Walter Gropius, Jacqueline Tyrwhitt and José Luis Sert), the new and the old generations, respectively, Sołtan represented a third stance, which Bakema tersely

labeled *Continue CIAM*.⁵ Sołtan answered in the letter quoted above, written jointly with Hansen, reaffirming his previously voiced position and making it heard by those attending the meeting in La Sarraz.

Sołtan's stance on the continuation of CIAM arose from his understanding of the condition of architecture in socialist Poland, and his own professional prospects in such a condition. In 1955, Sołtan told Le Corbusier that prospects for his own projects had improved but remained subject to fluctuations;⁶ this uncertainty provided a personal motivation to establish solid international contacts. At the same time, this position made Sołtan feel sympathetic to the countries that were more on CIAM's periphery, and he accordingly acted as their advocate: "A steady exchange of thought in the CIAM spirit, if now just less necessary for the architects of western Europe and the Americas, BEGINS only to have a real importa[nce] for the architects of eastern [sic] Europe, the Middle East, India and so on." This statement sheds light on Sołtan's priorities for the future of CIAM.⁷ He saw the tasks ahead for CIAM as being related primarily to development work and the dissemination of the principles of modern architecture—an opinion that he shared with Sert.

In contrast, the Dutch and English members had no reason to see modern architecture in danger in their personal or professional contexts. They were more interested in formulating, as precisely as possible, a concrete architectural notion of a new avant-garde that overcame the identified shortcomings of functionalism. They opposed the old guard inside CIAM, while simultaneously seeking to restore the basic character of the group as an avant-garde union, just as it had been defined in the late 1920s. By selectively restricting membership to active par-

group was supposed to remain agile and productive, supported by a common spirit: a "family," as Team 10 described itself.⁸

Even the forms of communication within Team 10 did not follow the model of a democratic organization, but rather that of an avant-garde group of artists who fought for a pure doctrine. In a letter following the Team 10 meeting in Bagnols-sur-Cèze in 1960, where Hansen had been verbally attacked by Alison Smithson, he criticized the authoritarian culture of discussion at the meeting: "Let us cast off the 'general's uniform' and listen to each one of us. Even should one who has the opportunity to speak remain silent—he has spoken in the opinion of all."⁹ According to the Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa, who attended two of the Team 10 meetings, the group championed a destructive type: "it tends to alienate members, in some cases it drives out all but one single member."¹⁰

The last CIAM meeting was held in Otterlo in September 1959, to which a mere 43 people were invited—as opposed to 150 participants in Dubrovnik. [FIG. 2] At the congress, Hansen pleaded for individualizing architectural aesthetics with respect to the specific needs of inhabitants, and brought "psychological" categories into play vis-à-vis functionalism. Although Smithson found the design presented by Oskar and Zofia Hansen for the Rakowiec housing estate to be "quite arbitrary," it showed that Hansen was largely in line with Team 10.¹¹ However, Sołtan was no longer arguing from the perspective of a modernism endangered by socialist realism, but against its "interior enemy," the spread of a modern style without constructive, social or functional foundation by architects who were not familiar with the true principles of modern architecture. This speech made Aldo van Eyck see red: his "enemy" remained the reductionism of the "functional city," i.e. the tradition of



FIG. 1 JERZY SOŁTAN AT THE CIAM MEETING IN OTTERLO, 1959

modernity itself, whose blatant damage could, according to him, be observed in the Netherlands.

Sołtan's position was more global. He had been in contact with the *Groupe d'études d'architecture mobile* (CEAM) since 1957, which had emerged at the periphery of CIAM around notions of mobility and the participation of users in the design of their built environment. Since the beginning of 1959, he had also intensified his contact with Harvard. In June, he presented Sert and Thyrwitt with a proposal to the very *Charte d'Habitat* that Team 10's majority viewed as an expression of an outdated approach. At the time, Sert supported the idea of an international CIAM, which would be more closely linked to the work of the United Nations.¹² In his proposal for the *Charte*, Sołtan stressed that it should serve the "average architect from all over the world (the so-called backward and [u]nderdeveloped countries included) more than the 'braintrust' of the CIAM," and in so doing maintained his commitment to a global mission for modernism.¹³

In the interest of this mission, Sołtan also tried persuading Kenzo Tange to remain in Team 10. Tange, who had left the meeting earlier,

appeared rudely surprised by the decision taken in Otterlo to part with the name CIAM, and he regretted what he saw as the "family's" omission of the crucial role of technological development. In a letter to Tange, Sołtan described the current realignment as "richness," in that it "means above all the possibility of the expression by everybody, by every user, by every inhabitant of the world (not by the architect only) of his own needs and dreams. Richness therefore means above all creating FLEXIBILITY, mobility and interchangeability instead of STIFFNESS and RIGIDITY, it means creating more architectural 'framework' than finished 'masterpieces'."¹⁴ Sołtan called less for an avant-garde renewal of modernism and more for the continuity of a modern attitude under different circumstances, based on faith in the emancipatory potential of modernization. Using the term "framework," Sołtan appropriated thoughts from Hansen's theory of Open Form and also from the prefabrication-oriented designs of CEAM and Charles Polányi, fusing them with ideas originating from the colonial projects of Candilis-Josic-Woods to attain, by starting from the fringes, an integrative definition of the goals for Team 10.

- 1 Oskar Hansen and Jerzy Sołtan, "Letter to the Council Members," Warsaw, August 27, 1957, gta Archive, ETH Zurich, 42 AR 17 46.
- 2 Marilena Kourniati, "L'auto-dissolution des CIAM," in *La modernité critique. Autour du CIAM 9 d'Aix en Provence*, edited by Jean-Lucien Bonillo, Claude Massu and Daniel Pinson, Marseille: Imbernon, 2006, pp. 63–75.
- 3 R.E. Aujame, "Letter to Jacqueline Tyrwhitt, Boulogne, Seine," February 9, 1956, gta Archive, ETH Zurich, 42 JLS 28 30.
- 4 Annie Pedret, *CIAM and the Emergence of Team 10 Thinking 1954–59*, PhD dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2001, p. 219.
- 5 Jaap Bakema, "C.I.A.M. en réorganisation," August 13, 1957, gta Archive, ETH Zurich, 42 SC 49 9-17.
- 6 Jerzy Sołtan, "Letter to Le Corbusier," March 15, 1955, Fondation Le Corbusier, R3 4 546.
- 7 Sołtan, "The Future of C.I.A.M.," [before July 28, 1957], gta Archive, ETH Zurich, 42 JLS 33 14.
- 8 Kees Somer, *The Functional City. CIAM and the Legacy of Van Eesteren*, Rotterdam: NAI, 2007, pp. 26–30; Alison Smithson and Peter Smithson, "Letter to Jacob Bakema," July 28, 1958, NAI, bake g5.
- 9 Oskar Hansen, "The Open Form in Architecture. The Art of the Great Number," [1960], NAI, bake g121.
- 10 Kisho (Noriaki) Kurokawa, "Will the Future Suddenly Arrive" [1967], in *Metabolism. The City of the Future*, edited by Mami Hirose [et al.], Tokyo: Mori Art Museum, 2011, pp. 255–60, here p. 258.



FIG. 2 DISCUSSION AT THE CIAM MEETING IN OTTERLO, 1959

- 11 Oskar Hansen and Zofia Hansen, "The Open Form in Architecture—the Art of the Great Number," in Oscar Newman, *CIAM '59 in Otterlo*, Stuttgart: Karl Krämer, 1961, p. 190; Oskar Hansen and Zofia Hansen: "Residential Quarter 'Rakowiec' in Warszawa," in *CIAM '59 in Otterlo*, op. cit., p. 196.
- 12 Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928–1960*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000, pp. 256–57.
- 13 Sołtan, "Some Ideas Concerning the Charte de l'Habitat," June 3/8 1959, *gta Archive*, ETH Zurich, 42 JT 22 180-184.
- 14 Sołtan, "Letter to Kenzo Tange," Cambridge, May 2, 1960, Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts Museum, Jerzy Sołtan Archive.