

# SOCIAL DEBATES

## CIAM

For nearly thirty years the members of the CIAM discussed questions of urban living, space, and belonging. Their conclusions eventually had a tremendous influence on architecture, urbanism and society of the 20th century and until today the urban fabric of many cities is strongly shaped by their ideas. The collapse of the city, as a phenomenon of rapid industrialisation, required planning interventions in the historical structures of cities. Therefore the members of CIAM presented their first theories on how to deal with the condition of 19th century cities. Functionality, abstraction, reduction as the key words of the avant-garde art and architecture movement were however not just limited to material values, but related to socio-economic aspects too; Functionality was seen as an opportunity to improve the human environment and intended to even create a better kind of society.



CIAM, 1928-1959

The organisation's declaration was signed by twenty-four architects in La Sarraz, Switzerland, in 1928.

Since the Declaration of La Sarraz, the first meeting of the "Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne", special attention was paid to urban planning. Urbanism was from now on perceived as the organisation of all functions of collective life in the city and urban planning was not determined by aesthetic considerations anymore (as opposed to urbanism of the 19th century), but only by functional consequences. The priority in urban planning was the organisation of functions: living, working, recreation. This division of functions became the main topic of the movement and hence the most important conclusions of the Charter were summarised as follows:

"The city must ensure individual freedom and the benefits of social interaction on an intellectual and material level. The keys to urban development lie in the following four functions: Living, Working, Recreating, Moving around. "

The desire to re-shape cities and towns is clear. The "chaotic" jumble of streets, shops, and houses which was present in European cities at the time was perceived as something negative; The zoned city, consisting of standardised dwellings and separate areas for work, home, and leisure, intended to solve the issues of previous cities.

The Charter was published in 1943, and its influence on public authorities in post-war Europe was to be profound.

# THE ATHENS CHARTER

The fourth CIAM Congress in 1933, with the theme: "The Functional City", consisted of an analysis of thirty-four cities and proposed solutions to urban problems. The charter effectively committed CIAM to rigid, functional cities in which citizens were to be housed in high, widely spaced apartment blocks. Green belts were to separate the different zones of the city.

## FOUR STAGES OF BLOCK PLANNING

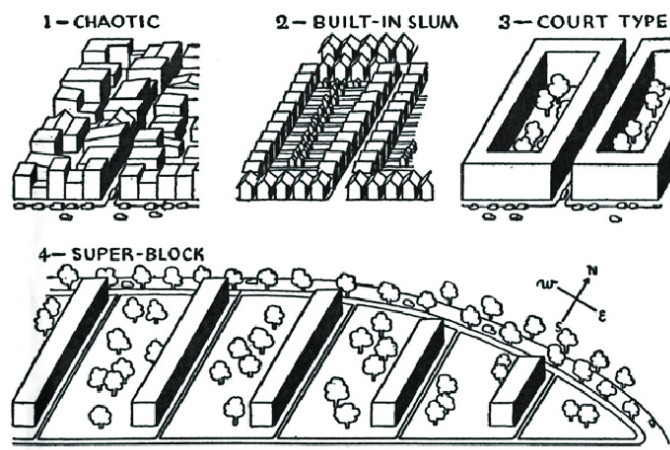
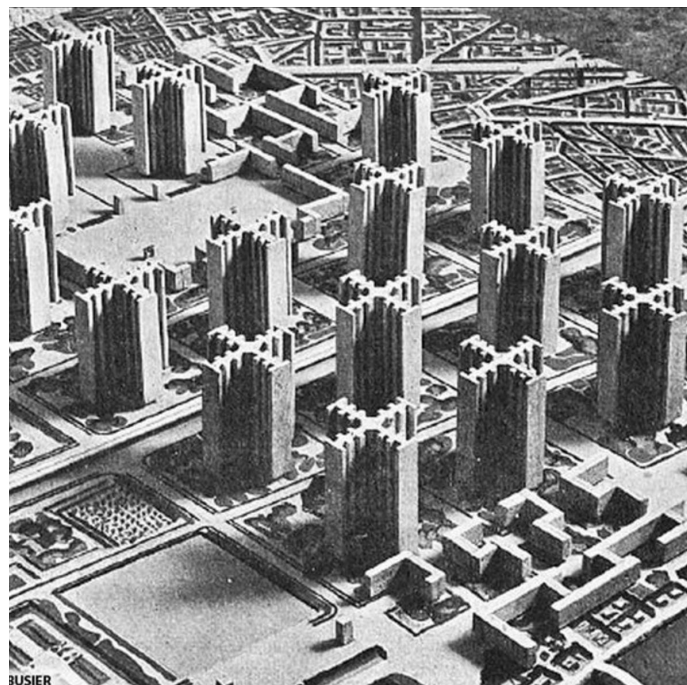


Diagram of Zellenbau planning, Reed and Ogg, 1940



Plan Voisin, Le Corbusier, 1925

## SAINT-DIÉ

Early on, Le Corbusier was influenced by changing theories. Initially, he showed great enthusiasm for martial gestures, repeatedly citing references to the works of Haussmann or Louis the XIV. It should be noted that the focus of projects as the one of Ville Radiusee is not on urbanity, but much more on urban form. One can thus say that the city becomes a kind of sculpture here primarily because of it's uniformity, which is visible from a bird's eye view. St Dié shows a break with previous works of Le Corbusier. The aspect of order is still paramount here. However, Le Corbusier's aim is now to strengthen communication within the city. Like Nemours, it shows a strict subdivision of functions envisaged by the CIAM, yet it loosens up this strictness, in that the planning integrates a forum for the first time, whose function as a meeting place and urban centre had previously been rejected by Modernism and the CIAM.



St Dié, Le Corbusier, 1945

Le Corbusier's previous projects, like Ville Radieuse, are characterised above all by their almost autonomous character, existing independently of social circumstances. St Dié, on the other hand, shows a turn in Le Corbusier's urban planning. For the first time, in contrast to Ville Radieuse, it is not the structure itself that is important, but the spatial relationship between the individual buildings. Le Corbusier's intention hence was to guarantee the appearance of this project as a unified composition for the future.



St Dié, Le Corbusier, 1945

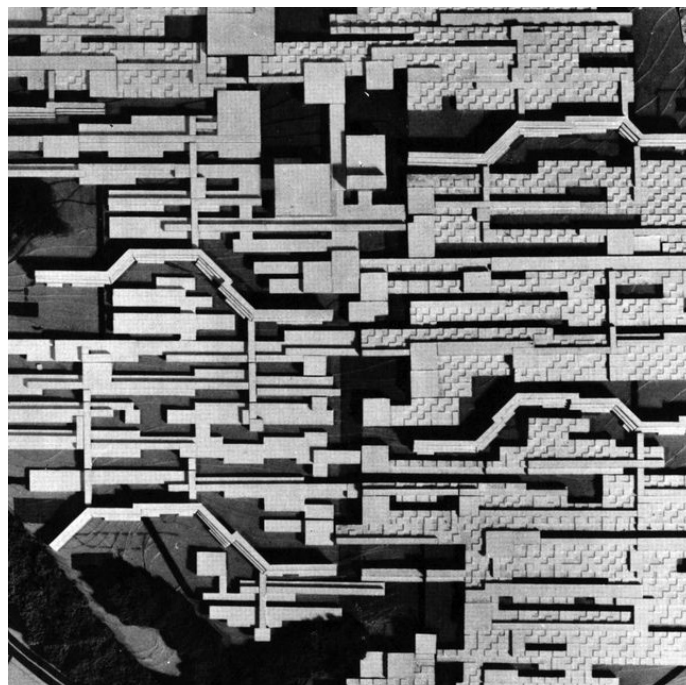
## TEAM 10

Because they were dissatisfied with the results of the ninth CIAM, which had taken place in Aix-en-Provence in 1953, some younger members drew up their own manifesto on the congress theme of Habitat. They opposed the pure functionalism of modernism and propagated a context-conscious architecture focused on people. The younger generation took over and reforms were decided upon. CIAM finally disbanded in 1959. The inner circle of the group consisted of the Smithson, Jaap Bakema, Aldo van Eyck, Georges Candilis and Shadrach Woods, and Giancarlo De Carlo. Later Ralph Erskine, Jose Antonio Coderch, Herman Hertzberger and Oswald Mathias Ungers took part in the meetings. There were many different opinions within Team 10. The focus in the early years was on creating order, aesthetics, and a “feel-good factor” in mass housing.



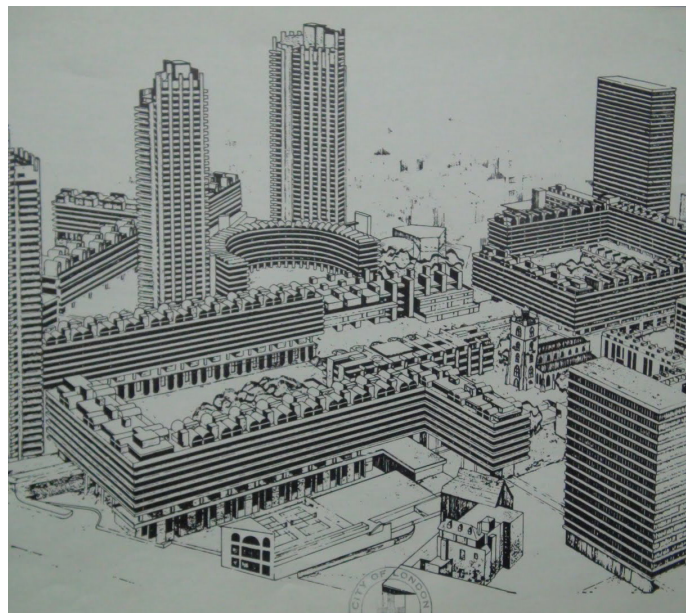
Congress Team 10 in Otterlo, 1959

The view of a hierarchy-free architecture of micro- and macrocosms was also shared by many participants. In addition, however, the individual members always had their own individual themes that they presented. For the Smithsons, for example, the street played an important role as a structuring and social element. Van Eyck, on the other hand, was concerned with playgrounds, as a collective space. The members were also willing to reconcile modern urban planning tasks with historic and contextual urban structures. Flexible plans were intended to accommodate future growth and change, and were at the same time more adaptable and flexible in terms of their integration into existing urban structures. With this attitude, a departure from the previous tabula rasa approach can also be observed. Under this attitude, the architectural models of “web” and “stem” emerged, which found their implementation in university buildings such as Candilis-Josic-Woods’ design for the Free University of Berlin and Giancarlo De Carlo’s university campus in Dublin.

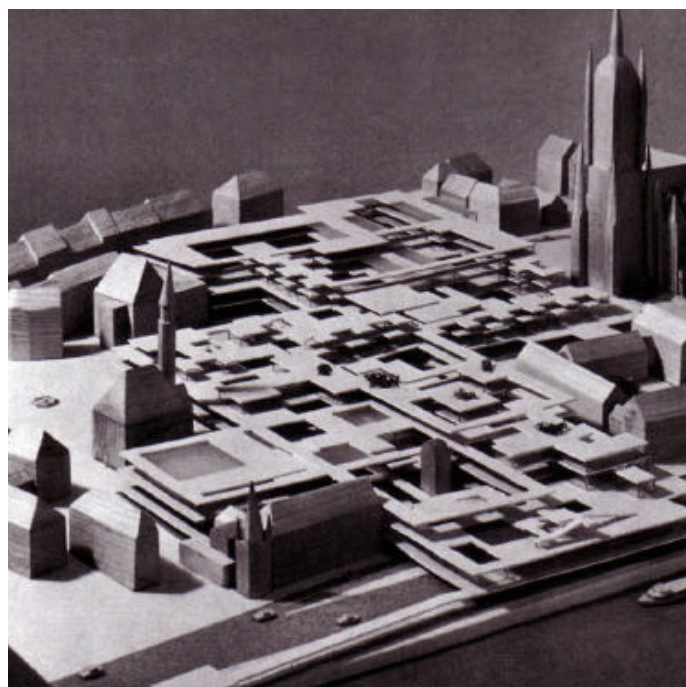


In this context, buildings became a small, polycentric city with streets and squares that were intended to function as meeting zones and collective spaces within the building.

On the one hand, it was important for the members to respect the context and existing urban structures; on the other hand, they wanted to take into account the demands of modern life, such as mobility. This attitude shows an attempt to create a sense of identity and a more context-conscious attitude in the design of large-scale projects, but it also represents the dilemma of these almost incompatible aspects.



Chamberlin, Powell and Bon, The Barbican Center, 1982

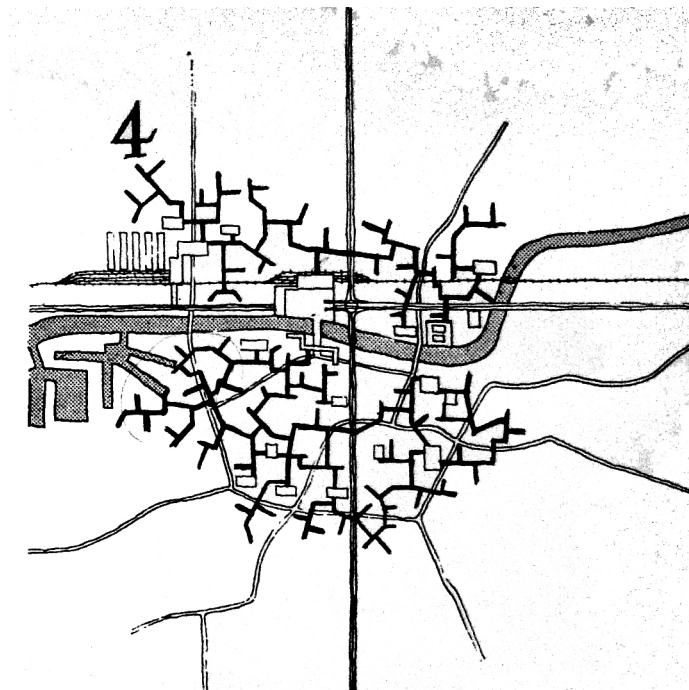


Candilis, Josic, Woods, Competition for Römerberg, Frankfurt, 1963



## THE GOLDEN LANE PROJECT

Alison and Peter Smithson's competition entry for the reconstruction of London's post-war ruins envisioned a high density of people while at the same time significantly improving the quality of life within these buildings. "Streets in the air" were to connect clusters of apartments. They believed that concentrating pedestrian circulation would create a community. Separating pedestrian streets from the ground was also their response to the growing omnipresence of the automobile. Although the prefab design of the Golden Lane Project adopted much from Le Corbusier's Unite d'Habitation and its internal street, there is a shift away from the building as an entity. Instead, they sought to implement a network of connected buildings. Such a network, they hoped, would respond to local needs and act as a kind of additional urban layer to the existing urban structure. The approach to create a flexible system, can be seen as a rejection of the high modernist grid.



Peter and Alison Smithson, The Golden Lane Project, 1952

Although the emphasis on community, flexibility, adaptability, and pedestrianism is laudable, the disconnection of residential life from the streets proved eventually to be very harmful to cities. The Robin Hood Gardens project was demolished. Perhaps it is a matter of scale, but also a rejection of the urban block as essential element of the existing city, which ultimately caused this architecture to fail in many cases.



Peter and Alison Smithson, Robin Hood Gardens, completed 1972