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.

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. 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 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.

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 Giedion, Walter Gropius, Jacqueline Tyrwhitt and José Luis Sert), the new and the old generations, respectively, Sołtan represented a third stance, which Bakema tersely...
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: 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 importance for the architects of eastern Europe, the Middle East, India and so on.” This statement sheds light on Sołtan’s priorities for the future of CIAM.

According to the Dutch and English members, the last CIAM meeting was held in Otterlo in September 1959, to which a mere 43 people were invited—unlike the 150 participants in Dubrovnik. 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. 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...
modernity itself, whose blatant damage could, according to him, be observed in the Netherlands.

Soltan’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 1958, he had also intensified his contact with Harvard. In June, he presented Sert and Tyrwhitt with a proposal to the very Chartes 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. In his proposal for the Chartes, Soltan stressed that it should serve the “average architect from all over the world (the so-called backward and underdeveloped countries included) more than the ‘braintrust’ of the CIAM,” and in so doing maintained his commitment to a global mission for modernism.

In the interest of this mission, Soltan 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, Soltan 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.’” Soltan 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,” Soltan appropriated thoughts from Hansen’s theory of Open Form and also from the prefabrication-oriented designs of CEAM and Charles Polónyi, 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 Jerry Soltan, “Letter to the Council Members,” Warsaw, August 27, 1957, gta Archive, ETH Zurich, 42 AR 17 46.
9 Oskar Hansen, “The Open Form in Architecture. The Art of the Great Number,” [1960], NAI, bake g121.

