

ARCH 465 | Contemporary Architecture and Theory
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Report 01 | Name of the Report

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INTRODUCTION

In this report, I will be investigating the first lecture of ARCH 465: Contemporary Architecture and Theory class. This lecture starts with the explanation of the term CIAM and the reasons behind why those architects have started to gather for modern architecture. According to the socio-economical state of that certain era, it was a necessary one. This gathering led to the emergence of master plans; i.e., Weissenhof Siedlung, a residential design by Van der Rohe. Even some interventions onto the European architectural language such as the introduction of flat-roofed-residentials in Germany. Then the lecture moves onto the selection of works made

by architects got displayed in an exhibition, and a prominent architecture historian started to point out the problematic issues of the international competition. The statement was that they did not like this competition due to the variety of architectural styles. This was the turning point to generate a standard, a limited architectural language for modern architecture. The lecture introduces this shift in paradigm that inevitably resulted in pointing out the main elements of architecture for an optimal design. These facts included linear roof, extensive usage of preferably white plaster, glass, steel, and stretching windows leaving the modern movement in

¹ Heynen, H. (1999). *Architecture and modernity: a critique*. MIT press.

architecture in abstract, quite dogmatic, and idealistic state that once will become against to a group of young minds that is called the Team X. The lecture then starts to discuss more about: Giedion and how he created the bible of modern architecture; and the relationship between modern architecture, cubist paintings, and scientific developments. It continues with further explaining the details of each CIAM meeting over the years from La Sarraz till the last congress. Finally, it concludes with the emergence of the young minds under the name "Team X", and its subtopics such as New Brutalism, and Structuralism. The aim of this report is to elaborate the topics

listed above in compare and contrast.

THE DEMAND FOR A NEW ARCHITECTURAL LANGUAGE

After the well-known competition called "the International Style: Architecture Since 2002, a prominent architecture historian pointed out the problematic issues of this competition. He states that there is a variety of architectural languages, and there should be a standard to avoid it. This statement, and Le Corbusier's vision led to the creation of a list called the Main Elements of Architecture:

- Linear roof
- Extensive usage of plaster (preferably white)

- Extensive usage of glass and steel
- and stretching windows.

I believe that bringing up a standard by creating a new architectural language and strictly going against to acknowledging the “old” is not beneficial since the heritage of previous cultures include variety of techniques, knowledge, and overall context to the existing countries in terms of architecture. Some might argue that the new socioeconomical conditions kept bringing up a demand for new ways of design, and the statement has a point since the post-war status of countries led them to focus more on cost management which became a huge factor in construction industry as in reduction of the skilled labor in sites.

This reduction, I believe, is one of the many reasons why it is sometimes hard to build a connection between the stereotypical, functionalist, cost-reducing buildings of modernity and the higher-formed, ornamented, monumentalism-centered buildings of the previous eras. From this point of view, it is reasonable to agree on those new solutions should be generated to this new condition of living. The problem is mainly upon to the rejection of everything older than what modernity brought. Turning our backs onto the cumulative knowledge on architecture of hundreds of years, and creating a limited architectural language specialized on modernity is only restricting the re-exploration of the previous eras. Because

of that, each building feels the need to look alike globally, at least Europe and US, leading the question of where did the heritage of that culture go? The local heritage, context, vernacularity seems to be vanished in modernity and its idealistic standards. It seems that everything became cost-efficient, even the vertical zoning due to less land cost compared to horizontal-emphasized structures, and the elevators decided upon strictly the economics of the building. A modern building is majorly designed to be purely utilitarian rather than having concerns like relation to the context, the community, the heritage. The continued growth of population in the great cities seems to not leave any choices to the architects for another solution than modernity at those

times. However, architecture was never meant to be purely cost-effective and minimal. It was supposed to have an effect and create an experience for the ones who feel the space, not to find the most cost-reductive place to situate an elevator inside the building. I believe, the architect should involve more emotion into the design, and not to be limited with a strict architectural language of a community of architects like CIAM or so with too many idealistic demands.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, there are many ideas and conversations about whether the creation of a standard is too idealistic, or needed at that time of a post-war community; and my point of view would be that a new

language was needed,
but not in a too idealistic,
abstract, and a dogmatic
way. And that was
exactly why the CIAM
did not survive, and why
the Team X emerged. I
think modern
architecture, if stayed to
be dogmatic and
idealistic forever, would
keep on not relating to
the local heritage, its
audience; thus, leaving
the structure with a lack
of emotion and
experience.

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