

# THE REPOSITIONING GENERATION-CLAM

International  
Conference

Debates,  
Proposals  
and Intellectual  
Framework

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# **REVISITING THE POST-CIAM GENERATION**

## **Debates, proposals and intellectual framework**

Proceedings

Edited by

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CEAA | Centro de Estudos Arnaldo Araújo  
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## REVISITING THE POST-CIAM GENERATION

### Debates, proposals and intellectual framework

In August 1956, Jose Luis Sert opened the *Congres Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM 10), held in Dubrovnik, by reading the well-known message of Le Corbusier in which he justified his absence by claiming the existence of a generational tension. Indeed, the doctrinarian values of modernism - such as functionalism, scientific progress, and rational social planning - that once drove the congress were challenged by a group of young architects and resulted in the emergence of new perspectives. Yet, this "generation" was far beyond from being a homogeneous group both in conceptual chronological and geographical terms.

In Portugal, immediately after that moment, the magazine *Arquitectura* completely redefined its editorial structure, starting a new edition in early 1957. Gathering a young group of architects, art historians, and critics of art and cinema, this magazine furthered the questions launched at CIAM, thus debating the duties and role of the critic, and scrutinizing the "strong relation" (Vieira de Almeida, 2012) between theory, criticism, history and architectural design.

Some of the actors and the narratives they shaped in this moment of change are widely known in architectural studies. However, the distinct manner of intellectual appropriation and critical reception of this debate in a transnational perspective is a matter that should be reexamined.

How was the debate reabsorbed by architectural criticism in different geographical areas? What was its actual impact on the mechanisms of mediation as well as on the profile of the agents of criticism?

This conference intended to address these questions. The aim was to examine, in a comparative view, the ways in which the same debate was received, discussed and disseminated in different regions, on one hand; and to understand how this moment contributed to a rethinking of the relation between architectural practice and critical production, on the other.

We selected papers that offer new insights on the topic by exploring themes such as: the circulation of ideas and the contribution of different regions to the 1960s and 1970s architectural culture; the relation between architecture and political engagement; the interaction between theoretical-critical production and architectural design; the mechanisms and strategies of dissemination, journals, books, manifestos, movies, documentaries, etc.); the introduction of concepts from other fields of knowledge and the inclusion of social sciences in architecture writing; the critical analyses of the historiography produced on the period.

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## **Conference organization**

## **DEBATING MODERN ARCHITECTURE**

### **A brief account of the Iberian Peninsula circa 1967**

**Tiago Lopes Dias**

CEAU-FAUP / CEAA / UPC, Barcelona, Spain

#### **Abstract**

*In the 1960s, a group of Portuguese and Spanish architects began to meet on a regular basis. An informal structure based on a network of close contacts, not unlike the Team 10, this group met to discuss architectural theory and practice, to visit buildings, and also – or above all – to socialize and share ideas and experiences. Despite the casual nature of most of these meetings, they had considerable impact in the evolution of Portuguese architecture, leading to a series of encounters with prominent European architects and the publication of several articles in international journals, as the result of a strategy of editorial exchange promoted by some of the meetings' participants. Concurrently, a number of architects and critics were invested in finding new tools and methods for thinking about architecture, and especially for debating and critiquing architecture. The present text provides an introduction to this context and explores the reciprocal influence that Spanish and Portuguese architects exerted on each other's work, by focusing on the moment when two important milestones concur: the Iberian meeting taking place in Portugal, promoted by Nuno Portas, and the publication of a critical analysis of Álvaro Siza's early works, written by Pedro Vieira de Almeida.*

**Keywords:** meetings, pequeños-congresos, debate, criticism, Siza

#### **1.**

Originally thought of as a meeting of the French- and German-speaking architectural elite, the *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM) soon became a complex and bureaucratic organizational structure. In 1929, only one year after the founding act, an estimated 130 architects from eighteen countries attended the CIAM 2 in Frankfurt (Mumford 2000: 34). From that point on, all work was organized through official organs such as the general assembly, the national committees, which consisted of elected delegates, and several study



groups. The apparatus continued to grow until the post-war Congresses, in which, according to Mumford, a new organizational structure for CIAM was created (Bridgwater, 1947), although with no tangible results: the following Congress (Bergamo, 1949) revealed '*CIAM's inability to develop a shared and coherent agenda, foreshadowing the lack of coherence of most of the post-war Congresses*' (*Ibid.*: 201).

When CIAM's leaders recognized the need for change and began to give the 'younger generation' a more prominent role in the organization of the Congresses, it became clear that the change would be deeper than they had imagined. In 1953, after one of the most crucial and sought-after CIAM (Aix-en-Provence, attended by an estimated 500 members from thirty-one countries), a subset of the English committee met to reflect on the Congress and draft proposals for immediate work. The group considered that '*the accepted definitions and methods of work within CIAM [were] not adequate for dealing with the problems*' they were facing (Smithson 1982: 10)<sup>1</sup>. When this group joined the organization of CIAM 10 (Dubrovnik), they preferred to think of the committee as a small group of individuals with shared interests, and they strove to limit the number of Congress participants. Not surprisingly, in the Congress' report, they commended the fact '*that CIAM as a whole began doubting the reason for its continuing existence*' (*Ibid.*: 71)<sup>2</sup>.

In December 1956, the Smithsons wrote a proposal for the sort of organization they thought should replace CIAM, in which they called for a '*complete break with the name CIAM*'. In their opinion, while '*Architecture Moderne*' was inextricably associated with the aesthetic of the 1920s, the international aspect of the old CIAM had become irrelevant since, according to them, it was now more important '*to concentrate the few people who feel a common aim*' (*Ibid.*: 75-76)<sup>3</sup>. Three months later, the English group repudiated a proposal for a reorganization of

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<sup>1</sup> Document signed by A&P Smithson, W&G Howell and John Voelcker, dated December 18, 1953.

<sup>2</sup> Document not signed, with a stamp 'Alison and Peter Smithson – Architects', dated August 8, 1956 (possibly written at the Congress).

<sup>3</sup> 'Future of CIAM/ To Team X and old CIAM COUNCIL / From A. and P. Smithson', dated December 9, 1956.

CIAM, maintaining that any '*re-creation of a CIAM type formal organization would lead to a dispersal of energy*' and stating that they would not agree with any such proposal, '*or indeed to anything but maintaining a series of informal contacts until the moment that group action becomes necessary*' (*Ibid.*: 78)<sup>4</sup>.

Planned as a working session, the last 'official' CIAM meeting is the result of a series of informal contacts. The coordinating group addressed personal invitations to every participant, inviting each to submit a project for critical discussion and evaluation. For eight days, a small assembly of forty architects, mostly from Europe, debated at the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo (the Netherlands). According to Oscar Newman (1961: 7), '*the Otterlo group was able to maintain complete informality: colleagues spoke up freely to criticize or defend each others' work and directives and were able to illustrate their arguments graphically*', with the assembly '*gathering and moving, reassembling and dispersing from panel to panel*'. In the concluding evaluations, it was decided that no formal structure should be given to the group, and that all contact should be maintained through a 'Post-Box' with the address of the congress coordinator, Jaap Bakema. This network of close ties, with an atmosphere of familiarity, would come to define Team 10's meetings<sup>5</sup>.

## 2.

In September 1959, while a young and a not-so-young generation of CIAM's participants were gathered in Otterlo, Oriol Bohigas was visiting Madrid with a local friend, Antonio Perpiná. When he realized how isolated the architects of Madrid and Barcelona were from each other, he decided to organize '*a small conference of good will architects*', an opportunity to meet and talk at length<sup>6</sup>. In

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<sup>4</sup> 'CIAM [reorganization or] dissolution[?]', dated March 22, 1957, signed by Howell, Lasdun, Smithsons, Voelcker.

<sup>5</sup> As recalled by Alison Smithson (1982: 4): '*Team 10 functions without chairman, secretary, or any bureaucratic structure... our idea was to be totally different from what had gone before... function naturally in the manner of a real family; accepting in the beginning that when its cohesive energy died, it would die*'.

<sup>6</sup> In this part of the text I make use of some documentation from Oriol Bohigas' archive gathered in Nuno Correia's Master Thesis (see references).

a letter to Carlos de Miguel, editor of *Arquitectura*, the magazine of the Architects' Association of Madrid, Bohigas outlined the kind of programme that would encapsulate his idea:

Then, we thought about you, about the magazine and the 'sessions of criticism'. Why not organize a meeting during two or three days in Madrid with detailed visits and discussions about each building, with trips to the outskirts (...), with dinners and meals, so we can get together and chat, even if only about bulls? (Correia 2010: 32)

In November 1959, almost forty architects from Barcelona joined their colleagues in Madrid for three days of debate, informal talks and visits to modern and historical buildings. Given the warm reception and the event's success, a second meeting was held in Barcelona in return. These two events, separated by only six months, mark the beginning of what would become known as '*Pequeños Congresos*' (small conferences). Initially intended to connect architects from Spain's two main cultural centres, the meetings were soon extended to architects from the rest of the country and began to take place in other cities, such as San Sebastian (1960), Cordoba (1961), Malaga (1963), Tarragona (1963, 1967) and Segovia/Toledo (1965). The programme, however, remained similar: a three-day stay at a hotel, rigorously scheduled sessions of criticism (presentation of plans or projects) and visits to buildings, interlaid with lively meals.

In 1967, Oriol Bohigas sent an invitation to Nuno Portas to join the 8<sup>th</sup> *Pequeño Congreso*, to be held May 4–7 in Tarragona<sup>7</sup>. Portas went together with Carlos Duarte, who he knew well from ten years of intense collaboration in the Portuguese magazine *Arquitectura*. Their accounts of the meeting with the Spanish group coincide. Both describe it as a stimulating experience, full of vitality, and both show some surprise at the informality and general feeling of ease. Nuno Portas, notoriously enthusiastic about the results of the meeting, wrote a note inviting Portuguese architects to reflect upon '*the inertia and the*

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<sup>7</sup> In 1966, the magazine *Hogar y Arquitectura*, edited in Madrid by Carlos Flores, launched an issue (62) dedicated to 'housing with community spaces' in which were published a building in Barcelona by MBM – Martorell, Bohigas, Mackay – and the seven-storey building in Olivais Sul by Portas and Costa Cabral. Both began to exchange correspondence due to the mutual interest on their work.

*collective inefficiency (...) that have dominated the field of critical and theoretical thought in the last years'*, and launched an urgent call for periodic and intensive work meetings to discuss and *'prepare a new common front for professional action within the present conditionalism'* (Portas 1967: 88). He praised groups such as Team 10, forums where new ideas and concepts flowed and were extensively debated. This practice of small forums already had a tradition in Spain, since the *Pequeños Congresos* had come to fill the void left by the disappearance of two avant-garde groups, the GATEPAC and Grup R.

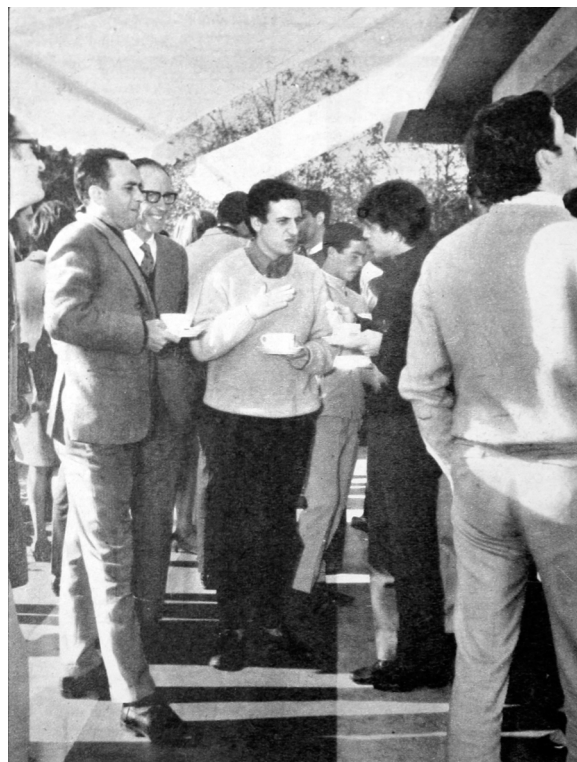
Portas and Duarte's enthusiasm in Tarragona earned them the organization of the next meeting, to be held in Portugal by the end of 1967. This was seen as a unique opportunity to 'import' the same model of debate, and therefore the format of the previous meetings was for the most part preserved, the only major difference being that the visits and the 'hotel sessions' were scheduled for separate days. The meeting took place in December 1967, and almost one hundred architects attended. The first day was dedicated to Lisbon, and included a tour of the modern neighbourhood of Olivais, while the last day was dedicated to Porto, including visits to buildings by Álvaro Siza. Between the two, the architects stayed in Tomar, in a new hotel designed by Carlos Manuel Ramos. The event was reported in the popular press<sup>8</sup> alongside testimonials from several participants, which were later included in the journal *Arquitectura*.

Most testimonials agreed that the meeting's occurrence was in itself a highly positive accomplishment, facilitating professional and personal contact between architects from the two countries. In general, it was felt that the Spanish architects elevated the debate to an international level. Carlos Duarte (1967: 189) recalled that the names Kevin Lynch, Christopher Alexander and Giancarlo de Carlo were mentioned in the critiques to each and every project or building presented. According to him, *'the debate of ideas at the international level (...) was always present in the interventions of the Spanish group'*, and *'this being within the process and contributing to it'* was what he had found most valuable (*Ibid.*).

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<sup>8</sup> Arquitectos portugueses e espanhóis reunidos em Tomar discutiram problemas urbanísticos e habitacionais. (1967) *O Século Ilustrado*, nº1565, December 30, p.62-63.

Notwithstanding, the testimonials also pointed out several shortcomings of the meeting, with regard to its objectives, namely the large number of participants, which compromised the possibility of creating a 'working group', and the lack of participation by part of the audience. In Nuno Portas' testimonial, there is a discernible dampening of enthusiasm and a certain resignation about the possibilities of this model: '*The essential was the get-together (for how long had there been no discussion about architecture wider than the atelier or the cafe group?)*', reaffirming that '*the merit of this formula lies in its relative informality*' (O I Encontro..., 1967: 218). It is possible that he was facing a contradiction: while he favoured the lightness of the *Congresos*, he wondered if achieving certain objectives – such as organizing *a new common front* – would require a more institutionalized and bureaucratic type of organization.



**Figure 1.** Tomar meeting, December 1967: Nuno Portas amongst Spanish architects. *O Século Ilustrado*, 1565, 1967-12-30.

In fact, these meetings were neither so 'small' nor free of 'institutional' features: there were organizing committees, invited lecturers, themes – 'Housing units: common ground between architecture and urbanism' was the theme for both the Tarragona and the Tomar meetings –, schedules, and in 1960, statutes were drafted. Nevertheless, when Oriol Bohigas received an official letter from the Portuguese section of the *Union Internationale des Architectes* (UIA)<sup>9</sup>, a delegation that gave economic and legal support to the event in Tomar, he wrote to Nuno Portas explaining that such an involvement was not much to the liking of the Spanish architects, due to the compromises it entailed (such as the obligatory participation in the meetings of a UIA delegate)<sup>10</sup>. They didn't want UIA meetings, and neither did Portas: on his return from a UIA Housing Commission meeting in July 1967, he wrote to Bohigas saying he had missed him in Prague, for the friendship and '*not for the big congress [sic] that was not worth a thousandth of 'our' pequeño congreso*'<sup>11</sup>.

Informality and a certain degree of 'anarchy' continued to characterize the *Pequeños Congresos*, which had two further editions, in Vitoria (1968) and La Garriga (1970), both with Portuguese participation. These meetings had an impact in the course of Portuguese architecture throughout the 1970s, due to both the relevance of the debates<sup>12</sup> and the presence of high profile international speakers. Marcial Echenique and Aldo Rossi were guest speakers in Tarragona, while Vittorio Gregotti and Peter Eisenman were guest speakers in Vitoria<sup>13</sup>. In the latter meeting, a group that had travelled to the USA had brought with them Robert

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<sup>9</sup> Letter from Nuno Teotónio Pereira, as president of the Portuguese section of the UIA, to Oriol Bohigas, signed, not dated (Oriol Bohigas Archive, Barcelona). The event is referred as '*Iº Encontro de Outono*'.

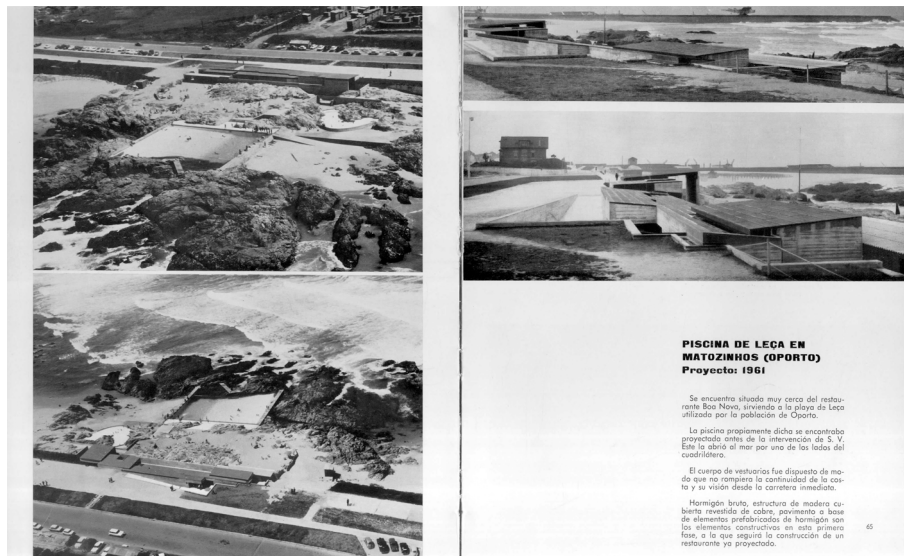
<sup>10</sup> Letter from Oriol Bohigas to Nuno Portas, signed, dated November 27, 1967 (Oriol Bohigas Archive, Barcelona).

<sup>11</sup> Letter from Nuno Portas to Oriol Bohigas, signed, not dated (Oriol Bohigas Archive, Barcelona).

<sup>12</sup> See: Lopes Dias, T. (2016) *Arquitecturas en Portugal, 1967-1972: ¿marginadas o en las márgenes?* In Pozo, J.M. (Ed.) *Arquitectura importada y exportada en España y Portugal (1925-1975)*. Pamplona: ETSAUN, pp.375-384.

<sup>13</sup> Echenique was working in Cambridge with Leslie Martin, and would be a fundamental link between Martin's Centre for Land Use and Built Forms and Manuel de Solà-Morales' *Laboratorio de Urbanismo de Barcelona*.

Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966)<sup>14</sup>. Venturi and Eisenman's divergent (grey / white) 'post-functionalism', which has had decisive influence on the work of Álvaro Siza<sup>15</sup>, must have first become apparent to Siza in the Victoria meeting. On the other hand, the work of the Portuguese architects, and in particular the visit to Siza's Swimming Pools in Leça also had a powerful impact on the Spanish group<sup>16</sup>.



**Figure 2.** Swimming Pools in Leça (Porto): presentation of Álvaro Siza's work in the magazine edited by Carlos Flores. *Hogar y Arquitectura*, 68, 1967.

Finally, while the *Pequeños Congresos* targeted a restricted circle, the debates that animated them were extended to architectural magazines<sup>17</sup>. After the issue

<sup>14</sup> A group from the *Pequeños Congresos* travelled together to the USA in the summer of 1968 to attend the Aspen International Design Conference: Oriol Bohigas, Rafael Moneo, Federico Correa, Nuno Portas et al. Correa and Portas were speakers and Eisenman was also part of the panel.

<sup>15</sup> See: Varela Gomes, P. (1995) *Arquitectura, os últimos vinte e cinco anos*. In Pereira, P. (Ed.) *História da Arte Portuguesa*. Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, vol.III, pp.547-591.

<sup>16</sup> See the testimonies of Oriol Bohigas and Óscar Tusquets respectively in *Dit o Fet. Dietari de Records II* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1992) and *Amables Personages* (Barcelona: El Acantillado, 2014).

<sup>17</sup> Besides Carlos de Miguel and Carlos Flores, who were both editors, Bohigas was part of the editorial board of *Serra d'Or*, a cultural magazine published in Montserrat, Barcelona.

of *Zodiac* dedicated to Spain (nº15, 1965), which included a text on the panorama of modern Spanish architecture by Oriol Bohigas and Carlos Flores, the two started to present the new Catalan production in Madrid and vice versa. Soon after that, the exchange was extended to the magazine edited by Carlos de Miguel. Immediately, Portas and Duarte began to use the same strategy in *Arquitectura*, advertising the meetings and showcasing the work of the Spanish group, by presenting buildings and projects (for a short while in almost every issue) and publishing essays from their 'neighbours'. Meanwhile, the first in-depth study of Portuguese architecture is published abroad, in Flores' *Hogar y Arquitectura* (nº68, 1967). Nuno Portas presented the two post-war generations of Portuguese architects while Pedro Vieira de Almeida focused on the work of Álvaro Siza, to which the magazine dedicated almost forty pages. Further studies would be presented in *Cuadernos Summa* (1970) and *Controspazio* (1972).

### 3.

In parallel to all this activity, a critical thought current was developing, one concerned with the real possibilities for debate and critique, and its conceptual support. After Tomar, some of those who were present showed their frustration with the way criticism had been expressed. Palma de Melo considered that '*a relative clarification and convergence of opinions was overshadowed by a direct, bothersome and inconsequential form of criticism*' (O I Encontro..., 1967: 218). The perception that two different, if not opposed, approaches to architecture were at stake became generalized. Regarding this, a few months later, Pedro Vieira de Almeida – who wasn't at Tomar –, wrote:

What concerns me now about this meeting is that several architects that were present and did not share identical points of view told me later that they had felt unable to argue with those in the group that opposed them; both of them confessed '*We do not speak the same language*', and this simply stunned me. (Vieira de Almeida 1968: 42)



By then, he was responsible for the section on architecture in the cultural newspaper *Jornal de Letras e Artes*, for which he had been writing since 1965. This collaboration was key to introducing the architectural debate to a wider audience. Vieira de Almeida understood that his primary role should be in disseminating new ways of thinking rather than established ideas, i.e.: to debate methods of thought and action rather than specific buildings or projects. Throughout several articles<sup>18</sup>, he will endorse an engaged and responsible form of criticism, with literary echoes such as the praise of the 'egoistic' nature of the essay (in the sense of an avowed expression of the individual preferences of the author), an understanding of critique as an independent and creative act, and a profound rejection of an impersonal, objective and detached stance, a viewpoint that can also be found in the essayistic works of Virginia Woolf and Oscar Wilde, to name but two compelling authors.

Besides these texts with a clear emphasis on method, Vieira de Almeida wrote other, more targeted, articles, where he presented a particular new building, exhibition or event to the public while at the same time criticizing it. His strategy was often to incite a dialogue between the author of a building and the critic, a strategy that was not uncommon in literary criticism. In *Reviewing*, Virginia Woolf proposed to replace the bureaucratic and hasty book review by '*an expression of individual opinion, given without any attempt to refer to "eternal standards" by a man who is in a hurry [and] pressed for space*' (Woolf 1939: 14). Woolf despised the 'professional', distant and snobbish reviewer and considered that literature had much more to gain from a fearless and disinterested discussion between reader and writer.

In Vieira de Almeida's view of criticism, the dialogue between author and critic was paramount. The public, if not directly invited to participate in the debate, was at least made aware of its standing as an interested party. Fundamentally, he decried the view of the critic as 'judge', to which a large part of the profession still adhered, but which he deemed too comfortable. In his newspaper column, Vieira de Almeida looked for opportunities to provoke debate, by replying to letters or

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<sup>18</sup> See: Maia, MH; Correia, N, eds. (2018) *Pedro Vieira de Almeida: O Espaço Perdido e outros textos críticos*. Porto, CEAA.

reigniting some controversy that was waning in the public sphere, in the café or in the pages of a magazine.

However, the two examples that best illustrate this debate strategy are found in the journal *Arquitectura*, since both are architectural analyses. The first concerns the early work of Álvaro Siza, with an emphasis on the Swimming Pools in Leça – the same building that had caused a strong impression on the Spanish architects during their visit to Porto in 1967 –, and the second concerns a small chapel in the Portuguese hinterland designed by Diogo Lino Pimentel. After writing his review of the works, Vieira de Almeida sent it to the authors; his intention was to publish their remarks along with his text: the buildings were thus presented with a critical comment and a rebuttal from the author.

The importance of this invitation to dialogue between two interpreters – the one who creates and the one who reads the work – is worth emphasising. This behaviour was all the more remarkable in a cultural milieu where the open confrontation of ideas was not common practice. The proposal was well received by the editors of the magazine, as we can see in the editorial note:

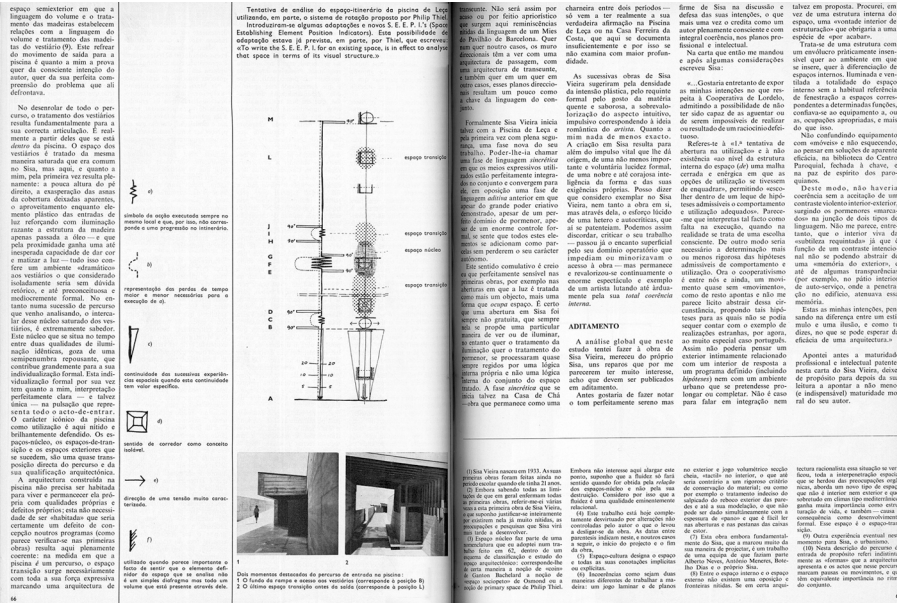
At our request, Pedro Vieira de Almeida wrote for *Arquitectura* a critical note about the chapel of the Seminary of Olival. By his suggestion, the author, Diogo Lino Pimentel, answered him clarifying some aspects of the project and discussing some of his statements. This is a kind of dialogue that we think is of the greatest interest to promote and which we'll try to continue in further issues of our magazine. (Vieira de Almeida 1967b: 242)<sup>19</sup>

By doing this, Vieira de Almeida meant to extend a practice that was already common to a small group of architects to the entire professional class. Vieira de Almeida, Lino Pimentel, Álvaro Siza, Nuno Portas, among others, regularly attended debate sessions promoted by the Movement for the Renovation of Religious Art (MRAR), which they saw as fundamental to compensate for the dearth of theory in architecture schools. MRAR played an important role in the Portuguese cultural scene. It hosted exhibitions, architectural competitions – in

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<sup>19</sup> The editorial note, included in the same page of Vieira de Almeida's review, is not signed.

which modern architecture was defended –, it published a periodical bulletin, and it organized regular debates on architecture. These were not attended exclusively by ‘progressive Catholics’: anyone interested in architecture or in the arts could attend, irrespective of religious confession or belief (Siza and Vieira de Almeida were not religious). The design teams presented their proposals for an assembly of architects, artists, priests and members of industrial workers committees, and everyone’s opinion was heard, in a frank and candid exchange of ideas that came as a breath of fresh air in the rarefied atmosphere of the dictatorship.



**Figure 3.** Swimming Pools in Leça (Porto): double page with diagram of space notation by Pedro Vieira de Almeida (left) and Siza’s rebuttal (right). *Arquitectura*, 96, 1967.

In the analysis of Siza’s works, and specifically in the case of the swimming pools, Vieira de Almeida put in practice a method that had as much of abstract and intellectual as of empirical and sensitive. The diagram of space notation, based on the work of Philip Thiel, meant to demonstrate how the architect controlled the spatial and sequential experience of the user in complete coherence with the use of materials, natural light and openings to the surrounding landscape. What Vieira de Almeida considered to be truly exemplary was Siza’s lucid effort to establish

critical bases within the discipline itself, something he considered essential for the maturity of the modern movement. From Siza's remarks (intended to clarify some design choices), he emphasized '*the perfectly calm but firm tone (...) in the discussion and defence of his intentions, which reveals him as an author who is fully conscious and coherent in the professional and intellectual spheres*' (Vieira de Almeida 1967a: 67).

This text, translated and included in the edition of *Hogar y Arquitectura* dedicated to the young generation of Portuguese architects<sup>20</sup>, had considerable diffusion. The magazine was launched around the same time that the Spanish architects visited Portugal, and it may have embolden Oriol Bohigas and Rafael Moneo to write about Siza's buildings. The former sent a letter to Vieira de Almeida asking for references on studies about 'the perception of space' and the line of research developed by Philip Thiel<sup>21</sup>. Vieira de Almeida's critique also had also an important impact on the author of the project: Siza acknowledged that the analysis contributed to his awareness of certain issues of composition and language, towards which he had admittedly been more intuitive than conscious<sup>22</sup>. Some of the issues Siza is referring to were addressed in a book that both critic and author had read and admired: *The Idea of Space in Greek Architecture* (1956), in which Rex Martienssen argues that the deliberate induction of a transitional experience is an essential factor in the creation of a system of formal architecture.

In the case of the chapel, Vieira de Almeida chooses to make a critical analysis focused on the syntactic coherence of the building. As an interpretative scheme, he draws a longitudinal axis that divides it in two opposite parts: on the left, an organic wall like a shell formed by the palm of a hand, with almost no detailing, defines a more enclosed and poetic space; on the right, a free plan layout finely detailed defines a lighter and modernistic space. Diogo Lino Pimentel observes that the two spatial, linguistic and constructive solutions (supposedly antagonistic)

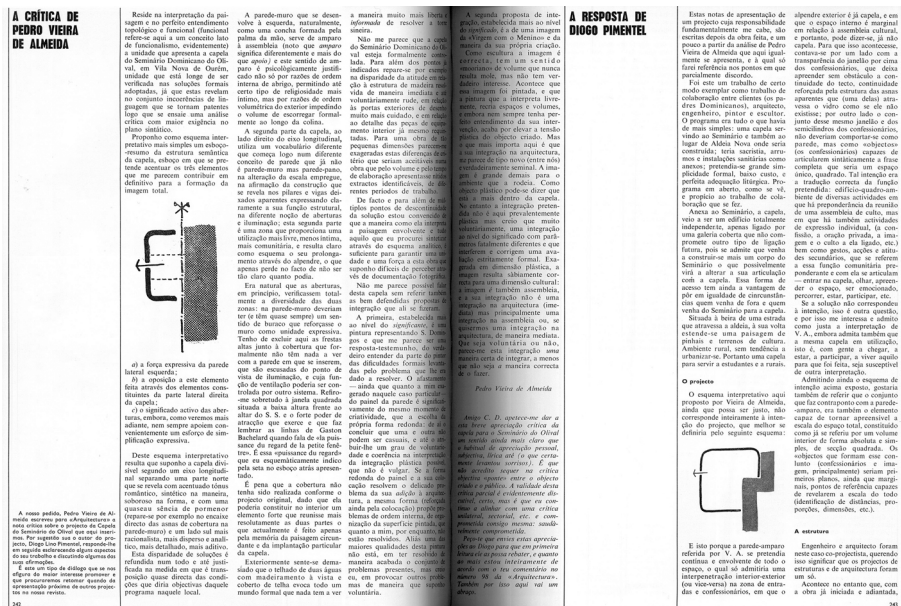
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<sup>20</sup> See: Vieira de Almeida, P. (1967) Un análisis de la obra de Siza Vieira. *Hogar y Arquitectura*, 68, 72-76. Although Siza's remarks are not included in the Spanish version of the text.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from Oriol Bohigas to Pedro Vieira de Almeida, signed, dated June 19, 1970 (Oriol Bohigas Archive, Barcelona).

<sup>22</sup> Interview of Tiago Lopes Dias to Álvaro Siza, recorded in his office in Porto, March 4, 2013.

do not correspond to the initial intention of the project, and therefore proposes a different diagram. Nevertheless, he is made aware of possible contradictions in certain design choices: *'If the solution did not correspond to the intention, that is another question, and so I am interested and I admit that Vieira de Almeida's interpretation is fair'* (Lino Pimentel 1967: 244).



**Figure 4.** Chapel of the Dominican Seminary of Olival: double page with interpretative diagram by Pedro Vieira de Almeida (left) and Diogo Lino Pimentel's rebuttal (right). *Arquitectura*, 100, 1967.

Despite the effort to create a space for debate in the magazine *Arquitectura* – which did not continue to publish ‘dialogues’ between authors and critics regularly – and Vieira de Almeida’s regular collaboration in high-circulation newspapers<sup>23</sup>, the architectural debate in Portugal remained poor and barely reaching the general public. It was not until the revolutionary period (1974-76) that architecture started to feature as a recurring subject in daily newspapers and even television. Nonetheless, the ties that grew out of the *Pequeños Congresos* seemed to further

<sup>23</sup> Vieira de Almeida wrote in daily newspapers such as *A Capital* and *O Comércio do Porto* in the late 1960s, *O Diário de Lisboa* in the 1980s, and in weekly newspapers such as *O Expresso* in the 1970s.

Portuguese participation in international meetings, debates and events throughout the 1970s. Indeed, *PC's* participants and guests met again on several occasions: in the symposium of Casteldefells (1972: Bohigas, Portas, Eisenman et al.), in the International Conference on Urban Models (Cambridge 1974: Echenique, M. Solà-Morales, Portas), in the 1<sup>st</sup> International Seminar on Architecture (Santiago de Compostela 1975: Peña Ganchegui, Siza, Rossi), in the Venice Biennial (1976: Gregotti, Eisenman, Siza<sup>24</sup>) and in the first retrospective exhibition of Siza's career (Milan 1979, curated by Gregotti). Some of these events changed the critical perception of Portuguese modern architecture.

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<sup>24</sup> The former two were the organizers of the event "Europe-America, Historical Centre-Suburb", which recovered the thematic of the 1968 edition of the Aspen International Design Conference, "Dialogues: Europe/America".

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