


# From the Athens Charter to the Human Association: Challenging the Assumptions of the Charter of Habitat

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### **From the Athens Charter to the “Human Association”: Challenging the Assumptions of the Charter of Habitat**

For Le Corbusier, the architect was the authority on living and their role was to know what is best for humans, as it becomes evident from what he declares in *The Athens Charter*: “Who can take the measures necessary to the accomplishment of this task if not the architect who possesses a complete awareness of man, who has abandoned illusory designs, and who, judiciously adapting the means to the desired ends, will create an order that bears within it a poetry of its own?”

The paper is focused on the critique of the principles of the Athens Charter and its relation to the attempt to strengthen the articulations between architecture and its social, economic and political context. It examines Team 10’s intention to replace the four functions — dwelling, work, recreation and transport — of the Charter of Athens by the concept of the “human association”, on the one hand, and to incorporate within the scope of architecture reflections regarding the impact of scale on the design process, on the other hand. The CIAM X was structured around two groups representing the two conflicting generations. As Nicholas Bullock notes, in *Building the Post-war World: Modern Architecture and Reconstruction in Britain*, the group representing the older generation focused on the work of CIAM since its foundation in the form of a charter similar to the Athens Charter, while the group representing the younger generation tried to extend the work of CIAM to rethink, as Alison and Peter Smithson noted in 1956, “the basic relationships between people and life”.

The goal of the CIAM X, held in Dubrovnik between 19 and 25 July 1956, was to challenge the assumptions of the Charter of Habitat. During this meeting, which neither Le Corbusier nor Walter Gropius attended, the younger generation consisting of Aldo van Eyck, Jacob Bakema, Georges Candilis, Shadrach Woods, and Alison and Peter Smithson established a new agenda for mass housing, “Habitat for the Greater Number”. It was at this CIAM meeting that the Smithsons presented their “Fold Houses”. A number of meetings preceding the CIAM X were held in London, Doorn, Paris, La Sarraz, and Padua. The main objective of this paper is to show how the debates that preceded the CIAM challenged the Charter of Habitat.