

Y EL MADRID, QUÉ, ¿OTRA VEZ CAMPEÓN DE EUROPA? ¿NO? AND REAL MADRID ONCE AGAIN EUROPEAN CHAMPION, RIGHT? Spanish Architecture and CIAM debates from 1953 to 1959

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Abstract

In August 11 1956 José Luis Sert opened the Dubrovnik CIAM 10 meeting with his speech on The Future of CIAM. Just two months earlier, June 13, the Real Madrid Football Club won the European Cup in Paris. It was the first European Cup as such and the first of the many trophies won by the Spanish club. This, of course, is an anecdote, but a fairly informative one. That a Spanish and exiled architect opened the CIAM 10 strongly contrasted with one of the few international events starred by Francoist Spain: winning the European cup.

This is an oblique way of saying that CIAM debates were far from being a concern in the Spanish theoretical and professional architecture milieu in the 1950s. Spanish architects were starting to incorporate the basic trends of post-war modernism to their designs at this time, and the American and European modern architecture slowly began to filter, but they were far from being involved in the heated 1956 CIAM debate. However, one Spanish architect, José Antonio Coderch entered CIAM, following Sert's suggestions, ready to participate as a Team 10 member in the 1959 Otterlo schwanengesang, and for sure some of the preoccupations that occupied CIAM also concerned the Spaniards.

This paper recounts how in this brief period, say between 1953 and 1959 with the key middle date of 1956, the contemporary CIAM debates obliquely entered the previously isolated Spain, and how Spanish architects caught up (if so) with post-war modernism and its criticism at the same time.

Keywords: Spanish Architecture, 1950s, CIAM, Modernism

This text is less about the post-CIAM period, than about how Modern architecture entered Spain after 1953. This is somewhat surprising. The thesis behind is that there were no real post-CIAM debates in Spain (or they came very late) because, in fact, there were no CIAM debates either. During the time when CIAM moved into TEAM X and beyond, modernism still was entering into the country. And when at least one significant encounter happened between the TEAM X group and one Spanish architect,

José Antonio Coderch, this was more on personal affinities than on intellectual bases. There was, of course, a post-CIAM period in Spain, at least in chronological terms. Some of the architectural operations that characterized the positions of, say, the Smithsons or Van Eyck were replicated in Spanish architecture, but without the intellectual and even philosophical acumen that went to define the emergent field of architectural theory. Let's say that we need to wait till the nineties seventies, when for example the journals *2C Construcción de la Ciudad* (1972) and *Arquitecturas bis* (1974) were founded in Barcelona. This is, then, the story of what happened before, the necessary counterpoint to understand that *almost nothing* happened after.

I. The ad

It was a very famous TV Ad in Spain. Launched in 1994, it helped to place the Mitsubishi Montero (named 'Pajero' in the rest of the world but changed because the involuntarily sexual connotations of the Spanish word) as one of the leading 4WD cars. The 30 minute ad happened mostly inside a dark shepherd's cabin. A young man eats from a bowl while the old shepherd, with his traditional cap (*boina*), repeats, in astonishment, some of the 'news' that the young guest seems to have told him. A famous businessman and a Spanish ex-minister are mentioned, critically, prompting the old man to ask himself: '*Y Franco, ¿qué opina de esto? Ah, leche, me dijo usted que Franco había muerto*' (And Franco, what does he think about it? Oh, damn, you told me Franco had died). And the he adds: '*Y el Madrid, qué, ¿otra vez campeón de Europa? ¿no?*' (And Real Madrid, once again European champion, right?). Cut and outside shot of a shiny red Mitsubishi parked by

the cabin. Moral: '*Donde te lleve tu Montero hace mucho que no ha llegado nadie*' (Where your Montero takes you, no one came long ago)¹.



Figure 1. Mitsubishi Montero Spanish TV Ad, 1994.

II. Spain in the 1950s

The ad was intelligent (and very funny), and still today many people remember it. In fact, the sentence '*Y el Madrid, qué, ¿otra vez campeón de Europa?*' entered the daily language long ago. Apart from that, it aptly summarizes Spanish life in the early 1950s: an isolated country, ruled authoritatively by the dictator Francisco Franco, its only point of contact with the reality of a bigger world being... football (not culture, not politics, not economy: just football). The stone shepherd's cabin lost in the countryside is an almost straightforward metaphor of the country itself, the shepherd of its inhabitants. The visitor, an alien from another planet

¹ Translation by the autor.

(America?), the modern car a sign of a time that has not arrived to this place yet. True? Mostly true. However, if the general picture is correct, this is not the whole story.

On the one hand, at the same time Real Madrid started winning its five consecutive European trophies (1955-56, 1956-57, 1957-58, 1958-59, 1959-60, what a set!) the country underwent an important series of transcendental changes that started in 1953 with the US-Spain Agreements (known as 'Pacto de Madrid') and culminated in the Plan de Estabilización in 1959. On the other, the isolation of the country during the decade of the 1940s, if real, did not prevent some continuities with pre-Civil War (Republican) state of affairs and the filtering, slow and partial but steady, of new/modern ideas in the cultural realm, including architecture and urbanism.

As said, 1953 was a key year. The signature of the 'Pacto de Madrid' opened the country to foreign influence. The agreements granted economic and military aid to Franco in exchange of the right to build an extensive set of military bases in Spain. And this meant not only the beginning of the return of the country to the Western community of nations, once the US superpower blessed the Franco regime, but also the beginning of a different economic policy and the slow but secure cultural Americanisation of the country. With the Americans entered into Spain a different tecno-economical rationality, and the country moved towards free-market or at least to a much more open and interconnected form of capitalism, which inevitable opened Spain to foreign influences, not only coming from America itself. The Agreements were signed September 23th, and this very same September, coincidentally, José Luis Sert began his tenure as Dean of the Graduate School of Design in Harvard. The by then liberal version of Sert could have been perfectly welcomed in Spain at the time, his role as an expert at the service of the economic system in which he lived and

practiced in this moment, and that helped to conform from the point of view of urban planning, was perfectly in tune with the needs of Spain in these years, although clearly not in political terms.

By the end of decade, if not directly enforced clearly suggested by the Americans, the Plan Nacional de Estabilización Económica was passed, an inevitable economic turn led by Opus Dei technocrats to prevent the bankruptcy of the country. At the same time, this Plan set the basis for the Spanish Economic Miracle of the 1960s (GDP growth over 7% of between 1960 and 1973) and for the transformation of the backward country in a quasi-modern one (but not a democratic one) in the following decades, till the oil crisis of 1973.

III. Post-war CIAM in Spain

The main dates framing this process, 1953 and 1959 coincide, curiously enough, with the important period of actualization, transformation and demise of CIAM itself, that started in Aix-en-Provence in 1953 (Charter of Habitat), crossed the midpoint of CIAM 10 in Dubrovnik in 1956 and ended in disarray in Otterlo in 1959. Or, what is the same, imploded forced by inner criticism of Team 10. In this brief period, the contemporary CIAM debates slowly entered the previously isolated Spain however obliquely, with the result that only in the last Otterlo meeting an Spanish (from Spain²) was present, José Antonio Coderch. In fact, it was the time when contemporary modern architecture, in its complex and varied forms, began to be practiced in Spain.

² I mean, of course, representing Spain. For sure, Jose Luis Sert was Spanish, as Antonio Bonet Castellana, who attended the Bergamo meeting, but in representation of Argentina together with Juan Kurchan (the two plus Jorge Ferrari Hardoy formed the Grupo Austral in 1938), where he exiled and was still living, although he eventually returned to Spain (definitively in 1963).

In that sense, José Antonio Coderch is a paradigmatic example. Coderch had been one of the founders of Grup R in 1951, a group of progressive Catalan architects which included Josep Maria Sostres, Antoni de Moragas, Josep Pratmarsó, Francisco Juan Barba Corsini, Joaquim Gili y Manuel Valls along with younger names as Oriol Bohigas, Josep Martorell or Manuel Ribas, although he quit by 1953. In a way they were inheritors of the pre-war GATCPAC³/GATEPAC group, the Catalan/Spanish section of CIAM at the time. But Grup R never entered CIAM as such, nor they were as connected with politics as their predecessors (in Cataluña) during Republican times. However they too were interested in popular architecture, especially Mediterranean-Catalan⁴, which for some like Coderch, and in the late 1940s-very early 1950s was a good way of justifying the practice of 'modern architecture' inside the predominant historicist and vernacular stylistic trends favoured by the Francoist regime (Ruiz Cabrero 2001, Cortés 2000). Coderch was invited by Sert, when still CIAM president, to join the organization; however no Spanish chapter was created. Following Coderch presence in Dubrovnik, he was asked by Bakema (secretary of the group) to join the Team 10 (Mumford 2002, 337; Rodríguez García 2014), which he finally did⁵. Coderch wasn't an intellectual, though, and modern and advanced as his architecture was in this years, he was personally more a right-wing traditionalist. Nevertheless, shortly after joining Team 10, he published his famous article 'No son genios lo que necesitamos ahora', along an English translation ('It is not geniuses that we need to-day') in *Domus* 384, in November 1961, as a kind of self-introduction to the group⁶.

³ Of which Sert was one of the more active members.

⁴ Like Sert (Pizza 1997) and his colleagues Torres-Clavé and Subirana were.

⁵ In a letter to Bakema, dated May 22, 1962 Coderch added this postscript: '*As I am convinced that the Team-ten is really useful and may become the impulse of many necessary reforms and initiatives for our trade of Architects, I have made up my mind to beg you -as the Secretary of the Team-10- to accept me as member of the Team-ten - if you think that my taking part in it would be useful*'. In Rodríguez García 2014.

⁶ Re-published by Alison Smithson as 'It's Not Geniuses We Need Now' in the *Team 10 Primer, Architectural Design*, December 1962.

And he kept attending Team 10 meetings till their end in the seventies, being a respected figure as a practitioner inside the much more experimental and intellectual group.



Figure 2. José Antonio Coderch and Manuel Valls, Casa Ugalde, Caldes d'Estrac, 1952.

IV. The long way towards modern architecture in the countryside and the city

It is significant, however, that, given the (mostly) anti-modern period of the 1940s in Spanish architecture, when Spanish architects started to introduce modern ideas and styles (and the plural is intentional) at the beginning of the 1950s, they were in need to catch up almost simultaneously with (post-war) modernism *and* its criticism, which can be clearly seen in the formation of the Team 10 group inside CIAM precisely at the moment that modern style started to be used in Spain. And even if some aspects of this criticism were already present in the previous Spanish

debates, the intellectual form they took was fairly different, since they came from a different tradition.

The Spanish Civil War ended April 1st 1939, with immediate consequences for Spanish architecture. Many architects, most of the modernist ones, were either forced to exile or disqualified to work by the fascist regime. Modern architecture was seen by many as foreign, associated with the loathed República, hence unfit for the new fascist Spain or even worse, directly communist. Architecture turns decidedly towards an historicist and neo-imperialist style, sometimes labelled 'Nationalcatolicism' or sank into regionalism. Germany and especially Italy, the friend fascists countries, were seen as models for many; for others it was the Imperial past of Spain, represented by El Escorial. In addition, the hard economic conditions after the war and the start of WWII, where Spain was technically neutral, forced the continuity of traditional techniques and designs, the possibility of full industrial development of building construction out of question.

The Francoist state opted for an economic policy based in autarky that lasted till the mid-fifties. From 1939 on, the priority of the Francoist state was the reconstruction of the agrarian and industrial tissue of the country; the material reconstruction of what had been destroyed in the cities was postponed. The two main aims were to transform a mostly traditional agriculture into an industrial one and to create a heavy industry sector of their own, both with self-sufficiency in mind (autarky). Two main state agencies were created to cope with the architectural demands, especially in the countryside, the Dirección General de Regiones Devastadas y Reparaciones (DGRDR) and the Instituto Nacional de Colonización (INC), who built extensively. During the 1940s most of the architecture they produced followed traditional techniques and designs, only slowly entering more rational and modern approaches towards the end of the decade. But if not always in stylistic terms, and surely not in terms of political

responses, preoccupations on social housing and urbanism shared concerns with some of the contemporary European developments. For example, in Scandinavia, and especially in Sweden, which also remained neutral during the War. Spain definitively wasn't a social democracy, but concerns with the deleterious effects on the 'common man' by way of the pressures of modernization were similar, even coming from different ideological and cultural approaches. In England J.M. Richardson, from the *Architectural Review*, proposed the term 'New Empiricism' to refer to this Scandinavian approaches, which, through the MARS group entered the CIAM debates too. By early 1950s a new generation of Spanish architects, graduated after the war, started to emerge and to introduce this contemporary ideas and debates. They were also aware of these first criticisms of Modern orthodoxy, and sought a mixed esthetical approach, far both from 'Nationalcatolicism' and straightforward versions of modernism, unsuited for the Spanish conditions as has been said.

Particularly relevant were the debates inside the Instituto Nacional de Colonización, that showed bot continuities with pre-war Republican ideas and with contemporary modern architecture, which meant that they found themselves, in many cases, nearer the first revisionist approaches without ever being fully modern. The INC was the responsible for the planning of entire new agricultural villages, with which the Regime tried to revitalize the countryside, producing attractive environments for the peasants to come and develop strong agricultural production poles in new irrigation areas. The roots of this policy can be seen, among others, in the Italian developments in the Agro Pontino and in the Spanish República initiatives around the Guadalquivir and Guadalquivir riverbeds, in both cases Pre-war initiatives. At the beginning of the decade of the 1950s some of the best Spanish architects were designing new Poblados de Colonización for the INC, like José Luis Fernández del Amo (Cañada del Agra, Vegaviana), Alejandro de la Sota (Esquivel), Antonio Fernández Alba (El Priorato) or the

lesser known Jesús Ayuso Tejerizo. And they did it with the basic idea of creating a sense of community in this newly created villages. The villages limited their size to between 100 and 400 single-family houses (which means between 500 and 2000 inhabitants in INC calculations). Houses included a pen and other spaces for tools and machinery. Social facilities, including a church gave identity to a central plaza, while pedestrian paths, sometimes covered, reinforced the domestic landscape. The carefully designed core of the small villages will allow a new community life to start. In many cases contemporary artists were summoned to participate in the definition of this community cores, designing jointly with the architects different pieces of art, most prominently but not exclusively in the churches (stained glass, sculpture, liturgical objects). A new generation of avant-garde Spanish painters and sculptors collaborated, as Manolo Millares, Manuel Mompó or Pablo Serrano. Particularly significant were this collaborations in the designs of José Luis Fernández del Amo, who was deeply interested in a modern 'fusion of the arts' (Gutierrez Cabrero 2001; Cortés 2000). Maybe not surprisingly his preoccupations demonstrated to be very close to Giedion's as exemplified at the Bergamo CIAM meeting in his 'Report on the Plastic Art' (Mumford 2000, 192).



Figure 3. José Luis Fernández del Amo, Poblado de Colonización de Vegaviana para el INC, Cáceres, 1954.

When the agricultural policy failed, regardless the efforts of the government (and the INC) a new problem entered into the equation: unregulated immigration to the cities, especially Madrid and Barcelona. The shortage of houses in the main cities transformed into a priority by early fifties, and new solutions were demanded. And here it is where, again, rational and modern proposals emerged. Growing immigration led in Madrid to a kind of emergency, unending shanty-towns surrounding especially the southern area of the city. Apart from moral and hygienic concerns, there were also economic ones, since these informal settlements occupied valuable land for the projected bourgeois development of Madrid. Prompted by the City planning office, a set of different types of Poblados were designed starting in 1954, with the help of a group of young but very talented architects, and almost only using modern language (Sambricio 2000). Planned as self-sufficient neighbourhood units, they tried, even if not always successfully (mostly because economic restrictions which resulted in low-quality urbanization and few, if any, social services), to follow advanced contemporary planning ideas on neighbourhood units (Unidades Vecinales in Spanish use). One of the most successful was surely Caño Roto, designed by Antonio Vázquez de Castro and José Luis Íñiguez de Onzoño between 1956 and 1963. Debates about the need of community facilities, the link of this neighbourhood units with the rest of the city, the separation between pedestrian and motor traffic, the mixture of single family units (mostly patio houses) with low rise blocks of three to four floors and high rise towers... all this produced important results, some of them perfectly in tune with the examples shown in CIAM 9, particularly to the North-African groups. Similar pressure in Barcelona and in other smaller cities as Bilbao or Zaragoza led to the generalization of the modern debate on social neighbourhoods.



Figure 4. Antonio Vázquez de Castro and José Luis Íñiguez de Onzoño, Poblado de Caño Roto, Madrid, 1956-1963.

Spanish architects also started to travel around the world, to the US (Oíza, Chueca), to Scandinavia (Fisac, Cubillo, Romaní), to Germany, Italy... and to report what they saw there. In 1951 an official delegation from the Instituto Nacional de la Vivienda was sent to the *Constructa Baustellung* in Hannover, and they returned deeply impressed. Industrial aspects of housing including prefabrication, the set of new standards for social housing, the planning of new social neighbourhoods... all them preoccupations present from before, now turned to be central in the architectural debate.

If some Spanish architects travelled abroad, also some important international figures started to come to Spain. Relevant was the attendance of Alberto Sartoris and Gio Ponti to the V Asamblea Nacional de Arquitectos held in Barcelona in 1949, but even more relevant was the presence of Bruno Zevi the following year, also in Barcelona. Alvar Aalto visited Barcelona and Madrid in 1951, Nikolaus Pevsner Barcelona in 1953 and Richard Neutra Madrid in 1954 and 1956. Zevi was an ardent promoter of

organic architecture, and produced a relevant critique of the 1949 CIAM Bergamo meeting. Many Spanish architects felt more than comfortable with the organic approach promoted by him, as can be seen in the work of Miguel Fisac or in the younger Antonio Fernández Alba. Surely the way architects of the Fisac generation, as he himself (born 1913), Francisco de Asís Cabrero (1912), Coderch (1913), Fernández del Amo (1914) or Alejandro de la Sota (1913), actualized popular architecture in the early 1950s, devoid of any formal-ideological prejudices, connected easily with Zevi's critique and the valorisation of organic architecture, or in general of a more human architecture, including New Empiricism, at least during the decade of 1950. In that sense, a kind of revisionism of modern dogma can be detected.

But what happens with urbanism and urban planning as such? In August 11 1956 José Luis Sert opened the Dubrovnik CIAM 10 meeting with his speech on The Future of CIAM (and just two months earlier, June 13, the Real Madrid Football Club won the European Cup in Paris). One of the few Spanish linked to CIAM (although not representing Spain), Sert had been closely involved with CIAM before the war(s), actively participating in the Barcelona CIRPAC meeting of 1932 and in the following Mediterranean sail to Athens in 1933. After emigrating to the US, he published in 1942 the book *Can our Cities Survive?*, his own version of the CIAM 4, the discussions on the functional city and the 'Constatations' that resulted from the conference (Mumford 2000; Loren 2014). Its relevance inside the US and in the general CIAM debate was important, and even attracted interest if not praise from Lewis Mumford, but it seems that his critique was not known inside Spain at the time. Contrary to Mumford's.

Gabriel Alomar Villalonga, architect and urban planner, graduated in 1934 in Barcelona, just before the start of the Civil War (1936-39). He visited Frankfurt and Paris in 1934, and in 1941 won a competition for the new

Plan de Reforma y Ordenación de Palma de Mallorca. During 1944-45 he enrolled in a postgraduate on City and Regional Planning at the M.I.T., where he became acquainted with the urban ideas of Howard, Geddes, Perry and, of course Lewis Mumford, with whom apparently established a personal connection after coming as visiting professor of Urban Sociology. Back in Spain, Alomar published the influential *Teoría de la ciudad. Ideas fundamentales para un Urbanismo humanista* (1947, published by the Instituto de Estudios de la Administración Local), a real landmark in Spanish intellectual milieu at the moment. Far from the strict functional ideas of CIAM, he proposed an organicist approach to urbanism, in which sociology has to have a major role. Alomar was a key figure not only because he was one of the few that brought modern (but not strictly functionalist) ideas to Spain, but also because his close acquaintance with Pedro Bidagor, with whom he collaborated. Bidagor, graduated in 1931, was the author of the Plan General de Ordenación Urbana de Madrid (1939-1946). The Master Plan he proposed for Madrid introduced some modern concepts coming from organic approaches to urbanism as well as the functional city. Its links with the Abercrombie Plan for London were relevant (Bidagor claimed that his plan came first, but he knew for sure Abercrombie's writings from the 1930s, see Monclús 2017), although it follows also at many points the pre-Civil War Plan for Madrid by Secundino Zuazo and Hermann Jansen. Initially the Plan showed a clear rejection of the strict functionalist division of the city and the criteria contained in the Charter of Athens even if it was clearly compatible with some of its fundamentals. When Bidagor started to work in it, in 1939, prevailing ideas came from a different mindset, namely Falange (the fascist Spanish party). Falange, through the words of one his main intellectuals, the architect Pedro Muguruza, Director General de Arquitectura and Jefe de los Servicios Técnicos de Falange, tried to implement a vision of the city in which segregation of the different classes and activities blurred. Those ideas

lasted till the moment in which Franco realized that the Axis was going to lose the war, and from then on were duly deactivated. Bidagor at the beginning struggled to incorporate these concepts in the Plan, but they were finally abandoned in favour of a more functionalist approach, tamed, by an organic sensibility.

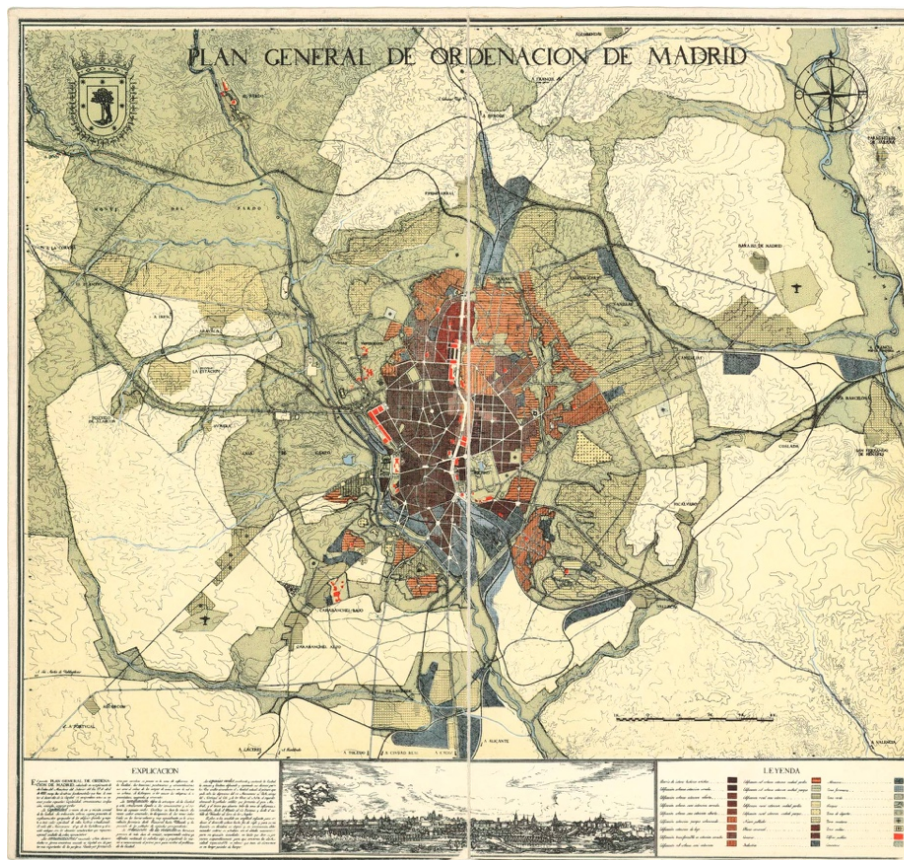


Figure 5. Pedro Bidagor. Plan General de Ordenación Urbana de Madrid (Plan Bidagor), 1943.

V. The end

The year 1959 marked the end of this tale, and the beginning of a new one. Social housing, that till that moment has been mostly planned and built by

the State, a corollary of the fascist political ideas of the *Nuevo Estado* was finally, in advantageous conditions, given to capitalist private initiative. The turn towards free market led also to an unprecedented growth in the country, and even if a new law that regulates real state (*Ley del Suelo*) was passed in 1956 and Planning was implemented in any major city, the tools showed the inadequacy to cope with the accelerated change of the 1960s. The result was a dull and overcrowded periphery mostly devoid of services and community cores. Team 10 formal findings also entered Spanish architecture, but for the intellectual debates with philosophical overtones it took a little bit more time to arrive. During the sixties Spanish architects mostly followed the tamed and very diverse modern vocabulary they discovered during the previous decade, from more strict International Style to overt organicism, brutalism and the beginning of contextualism. The architects that started to introduce modern ideas continue to develop them, and the new generations incorporated easily, following the opened path of their masters. And architecture, somehow, normalized.

Modernism came late to Spain, but this, paradoxically, allowed Spanish architects a much freer relation with the 'style', if we are to call it a style. The younger generation debates inside CIAM in the post-war time were not really significant in the Spanish context, basically because there wasn't an older modern generation to discuss with. This had been cut out with the Civil War. In that sense, they felt freer to adopt and adapt different approaches, and contribute with their own preoccupations to a debate that was, surely, held much more in the built than in the written form.

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