

Silvia Balzan

University of Basel,
PhD Candidate

The Team 10 on Pancho Guedes – An energy from the New World that has European roots





The Team 10 collective eludes any possible exhaustive description, stimulating a conversation which always remains open, never conclusive, very much alike their dedicated quest for an open-ended project of architecture and urban design.

Similarly, Pancho Guedes' work escapes any homogeneous stylistic identification, with his apparently unconscious overrun of the concept of *style* in architecture.



In this article, I will attempt to contribute to the understanding of the relation between Team 10 and Guedes by focusing on their shared concerns, and the exchange of ideas during their meetings. Although working in locations geographically distant from each other, both Guedes and Team 10 possessed common outlooks towards the political and socio-anthropological contexts in which they operated.

The Team 10



Team 10 was a group of young architects willing to open the discussion around the modern movement lessons within the post-war socio-political condition. They started holding their meetings while never really declaring a formal organization. The composition of the group varied through the years in the absence of an official existence. The group was composed by an inner circle which was complemented by invited participants for each meeting. Team 10 participants interacted most intensively during the period between 1956 and 1981, year marked by the death of Bakema, who was a fundamental driving force in the "family" – as they liked to consider themselves during their last years of activity.



Team 10 considered modernism single methodology as no longer viable, and they underlined the necessity to address topics such as regionalism, anthropology, social science, urban and economic growth. The debate they initiated, aimed to cover the common concern present within post-war architecture on the current fragmentation of the modern movement.



Team 10's discourse situates itself between two significant paradigm shifts: the rupture with CIAM and the advent of postmodernism in the 1970s. Although this has been taken as a convenient simplification, as Dirk van der Heuvel and Max Risselada (2005, p. 13) argued, "a much subtler reading lurks behind the myth of the break with CIAM and the clash with the postmodern." The radical break with CIAM is, in fact, a myth. Team 10 continued to speak the language of modernism even after 1962 in spite of a harsh critique toward the eco-socio, and anthropological conditions of modernism (the welfare state and the rising of the consumer society). This critique led to a deeper awareness of the importance of residents' participation in the design process behind architecture. Postmodernism, on the other hand, tended to absorb (appropriate) some of the achievements elaborated within Team 10, concerning topics as regionalism, the establishment of a new relationship between architect and resident and issues about identity and historical context.



Frontispiece and Fig. 1 Team 10 in Spoleto, Italy, 1976. From left to right: De Carlo, Peter Smithson, Van Eyck, Richards, Guedes, Alison Smithson, Coderch. (Sandra Lousada, 1976, retrieved from www.team10online.org)

Team 10 challenged the reconceptualization of the utopian dimension of the modern movement reframing it within the everyday life: “the interlocking cultural, political, and social dimensions that together constitute the foundation of modernism in architecture.” (Goldhagen & Legault, 2001). This everydayness is seen as something far from an idyllic dimension; it becomes a “utopia of the present” as they defined it. This attitude explains the group’s fascination with the street life of London, spontaneous non-Western lifestyles, the urban tissue and the architecture of *bidonville* of North Africa which became central in their research.

Pancho Guedes in colonial Mozambique

It is precisely in one of the above mentioned “other spaces” of Foucauldian memory that Pancho Guedes worked. As a Portuguese émigré in Mozambique, he lived the experience of being perceived as a colonizer of a colonized land where he took a radical dissident position regarding the colonial regime through a hybrid creative expression at the crossroad of art, poetry, and architecture.

Guedes arrived in Mozambique because of family reasons in 1933, when his father was appointed doctor in rural areas of the country. He attended uniquely local education institutions starting from the primary school in Manjacaze. Subsequently, he received his high school education in Lourenço Marques, now Maputo, where he spent most of his professional life. Guedes completed his university studies in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1945, where he moved back again in the late 1960s due to Mozambique’s unstable conditions to teach at the University of Witwatersrand. His biographical experience is therefore profoundly dissimilar from most Portuguese architects who were in charge of the construction of the so-called *Estado Novo*¹ in colonial Mozambique.

During the *Estado Novo* dictatorship (1926/33-1974), particularly after 1938, urban planning played a key role in the construction of the colonial narrative of the Portuguese empire and often it had been used as a tool of control and dominance. The colonial urban planning was an extremely centralized system based in Lisbon, the empire’s capital. Indicative of this attitude is the establishment of 1944 *Colonial Urbanization Office* by Marcelo Caetano. The group, entirely based in Lisbon and composed of architects and engineers, concentrated under a single public entity all projects of architecture and urbanism dealing with African colonial development. As a result, all the plans that were being developed in Lisbon suffered from a distinct lack of knowledge of colonial territories. Mainly active in Mozambique were architects José Bernardino Ramalhete and Paulo de Melo Sampaio, who developed plans for the northern part of the country.

A progressive renewed attention to the African context grew through the years, until the 1970s, when Mozambique obtained the

independence from Portugal. Awareness of links between the formal and the informal city begin to arise together with a more in-depth reflection on spatial segregation's issues.

It is with the emergence of the notion of *habitat* (elaborated by Team 10 during CIAM) that most colonial architects recognized their European biased attitude, after directly facing different ways of life previously unaddressed by the modernist utopia of "civilization."

Within this context, Guedes occupies an outsider position since he was "emotionally invested in Africa" (Sadler, 2009, pp. 268-274) if confronted with other Portuguese architects in Mozambique.

Ana Vaz Milheiro defines his work as "the opposite of Portuguese architecture" (2015) in a commemorative article after his death which occurred in 2015. She writes that with his loss, Portugal misses part of its 20th-century architecture culture which is the most unorthodox, antirational, plastic and exuberant. Vaz Milheiro shows how Guedes' commitment was to negotiating culture. In this respect, he differentiates himself from the so-called "Tropical Architecture" dedicated to solving technical issues and design with climate.

Guedes' peculiar attitude shows through his extensive built works and the choice of his clientele.

Pancho Guedes travels to Europe

It was 1962 when Reyner Bahnam, the renowned architectural historian, entertained himself with Amancio Guedes, also called Pancho, in a pub of the *Architectural Review's* office basement in London. Guedes came in contact with the Smithsons and the European architecture milieu, through Theo Crosby, a South African technical editor of *Architectural Design*. It was thanks to the Smithson that he was later invited to Team 10's meetings. The first of these meeting was the one in Royaumont in 1962. Successively he made a regular appearance and participated at the meetings in Toulouse Le Mirail (1971), Berlin (1973), Spoleto (1976), Bonnieux (1977), until the last meeting he had with only the Smithsons and Jullian de la Fuente in Lisbon in 1981, after the death of Bakema. He joined the team during some conflictual reunions like the one in Spoleto, for example (Figure 1). The formal-informal characterization of the group led them to some intense discussions over the years primarily concerned with what should have been the potential concrete output of these gatherings. The group ultimately defined itself as a "family" therefore marking an apparent discrepancy from CIAM more pretentious and formal intents.

Pancho Guedes' works appeared for the first time in an article written by Julian Beinart for the *Architectural Review* in 1961 (Beinart, 1961). Beinart depicted Guedes as someone disillusioned by most of the contemporary architecture in the 1950s and dissatisfied with the modern movement. He brought to international attention the work of Guedes, an architect not easy to label and without any group

affiliations; an architect that possessed an “energy from the new world that has European roots” in Alison Smithson’s words (Guedes, 2009, p. 11). The author described Guedes’ architecture as a kind of expansive art where social commitment includes a commitment to inner irrationalities and fantasies which are an essential part of life and art. Alison Smithson explains the relevance of Guedes’ participation in Team 10’s discussion with these words:

“He shows Team 10 how a good architect can operate at many levels, and that it is possible without changing one’s innermost standards or losing one’s integrity or morality, to ‘put-over’ ideas, anywhere, anyhow, any time; even if all you have is stick and a patch of sand. His improvisation energy-courage offers a reminder of innocent, happy hopefulness.” (Guedes, 2009, p. 11)

Guedes showed the potential of a free rebel expression; “an attitude of defiance of the formality of the establishment” as put by José Forjaz, Portuguese architect in Mozambique (Guedes, 2007, p. 35). His architecture can be considered as a statement towards the colonial political situation and the stylistic hegemony of the modern movement.

With a degree of irony and lightness, Guedes performed an alternative modernism or an alternative to modernism (?) by enriching Team 10 discussions, which were solely dedicated to “updating” the legacy of the masters.

Pancho Guedes and the Team 10: a recorded exchange

As previously described the outputs of Team 10 meetings were not always accurately recorded and transcribed, especially during the third phase when they took the character of informal gatherings. *AD Architectural Design* magazine played a crucial role in facilitating the spreading of Team 10 reflections. The magazine worked as a platform where Alison Smithson published several articles fostering Team 10 message. In the issue of November 1975, Alison transcribed the recordings of the meeting that took place in Royaumont in 1962. (Figure 2)

The Royaumont meeting hosted the presence of Pancho Guedes, for the first time formally invited by the Smithson. The topic of discussion was focused around the definition of urban infrastructure. Upon a draft set up by the Smithsons, participants were asked to contribute to the forum with a project. Participants proposed two possible models of development of what they called “urban infrastructure, building-group concept.” The first model revolved around the extension of the idea of infrastructure into building-groups, to generate a system with a growth potential, which is unforeseeable by the designer. The second model concerned the concept of designing a buildings group’s form directed toward a preconceived, designed final form from the beginning.



Fig. 2 AD *Architectural Design* Issue 1975:11.
(Risselada, 2005)



Fig. 3 Students and locals working in
the construction yard of the school.
(Unknown author, Pancho Guedes' archives)

Fig. 4 Railway Training College: drawings and pictures of buildings during the 1950s, Pancho Guedes (Risselada, 2005)

The meeting discussed several illustrative projects of building-groups' design concepts. The topic was profoundly connected to the problem of the growth of the cities in terms of the number of inhabitants. Team 10 architects debated how to maintain or create an identity within the growing urban conditions and how to change, regulate, and plan a sustainable expansion.

The Royaumont meeting hosted international guest from all over the world, leading to animated confrontations on the selected theme. Bakema presented his project for the University of Bochum, Candilis and Woods large scale plans for Toulouse and Bilbao and De Carlo for Milan. These projects brought up the question of how the architect can retain control over a project of such a big scale, and where the architect should concentrate his expressive energy. The question of the evolution of a building in time resulted in being central in the conversation. Under examination were the practices of appropriation by the inhabitants along a building's life span. The Smithsons illustrated their studies for London, Oxford, and Berlin, where they attempted to make minimal interventions to inject "air and space" into the cities to facilitate future developments. The subject of integration collected a diversity of approaches to reconcile with the demand for urban quality of the post-war modernization programs of national governments.

Within this thematic framework, Guedes participated to the meeting with his project for the Waterford School in Swaziland, former Rhodesia, among some examples of what he called *Learning Machines* buildings (a series of school in Inhambane, 400 km north of Maputo). Most of these projects presented a modular logic, and they were devised to be built in different phases according to financial resources and needs.

Guedes came closer to the idea of building a school in Swaziland when he was in search of a school for his sons. He came to know about a group of people who wished to create a multi-racial school. The political context of South Africa Apartheid and colonial Mozambique suggested the fact that the project was extraordinarily innovative and brave. Thus, Guedes ended up designing the school for free becoming the honorary architect.

"The buildings are well built but badly finished because we were in a hurry and always running short of money. (...) We got rid of the builder, and they are building for a much better figure" (Guedes, 1964). In this quote, Guedes refers to local people and future students (Figure 3). He taught them construction techniques he developed explicitly for buildings to be easily understandable and immediately transferable on site.

The relatively unregulated African context authorized Guedes to experiment one of the first real forms of participation, such participation was even more radical than the consulting gatherings with the future inhabitants led by De Carlo in Terni, Italy. Guedes managed to transform the building process into a large handicraft workshop.

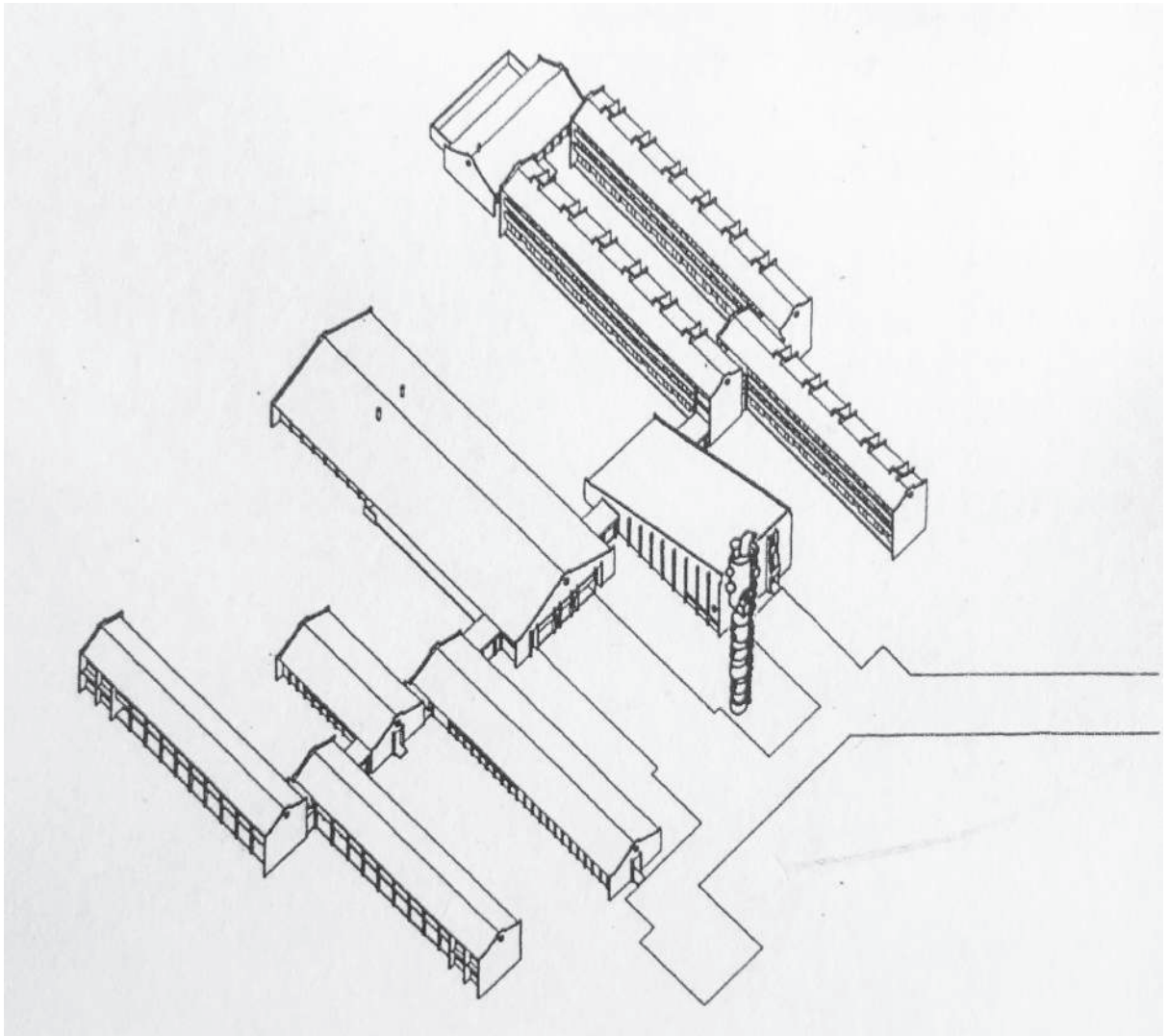


Fig. 5 Smiling Lions Apartments, Maputo, Pancho Guedes (Unknown author, 1956, retrieved from <http://www.guedes.info/>)

The commission for the Railway Training College (Figure 4) consisted of a series of semi-autonomous pavilions linked together by a “covered street.” This configuration made it possible for the construction to be carried out in different phases, taking into consideration the scarcity of funding for educational projects. Train components were integrated into the passage linking the separate pavilions of the Railway Training College. The covered street became a covered railway track.

Guedes’ contribution to the Royamount meeting is important and outlines a series of shared concerns with Team 10. It can be argued that he conceived his *Learning Machine* buildings as a series of growing infrastructures in the same understanding of most of Team 10 members. Moreover, the attention to the social aspect of architecture is a crucial point for Guedes in his attempt to “invent an architecture to the size of life” (Guedes, 2009, p.11).

The three subsequent meetings of Toulouse Le Mirail in 1971, Berlin in 1973 and Spoleto in 1976 are not adequately documented in any magazine or recording a part of some pictures taken during the event. Nevertheless, it is possible to track the main themes treated during the intensive exchange.

Toulouse Le Mirail concentrated on questioning welfare state, the connection between industrial repetition, living quality, and participation “open-design.” A harsh critique is posted on the responsibility of the architect by the 1968 protest movements. Guedes took part in the meeting not actively presenting any of his projects, but mainly testifying an outsider position justified by the colonial context in which he was practicing.

Berlin’s meeting was focused on critically discussing the matrix of the grid as the organizational principle. The conversation took its premises from the recently completed project for the Free University in Berlin by Candilis, Josic, Woods, and Schiedhelm. De Carlo advanced the argument of the grid as an abstract layout rather than a rigid structural system. Guedes contributed to the conversation presenting one of his most famous project, the Smiling Lions residential complex in Maputo. Apparently, the project had a loose connection with the topic of the meeting. The building dated back to the 1950s. While possessing an organizational principle in a plan based on a relatively simple grid, the façade and the section exceed any standardized tenets of modern design. The project heralded the oneiric, intimate freedom that Guedes reclaimed for architecture and for the other visual arts as well (Figure 5). Team 10 members looked at this freedom, which was only possible within the unregulated African environment, with “admiration and a bit of envy”, as stated by Alison Smithson (Guedes, 2009, p. 11).

Bonniex’s meeting, which took place in the guise of a get together at the holiday house of Candilis, is recorded and made known through the publication on the pages of the *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 1979, November issue (Figure 6).

Fig. 6 *Deutsche Bauzeitung*, 1978:11, (Risselada, 2005)



Peter Smithson wrote a report titled *A proposition at Bonnieux* where he urged for the creation of alternative urbanism based on a European social idealism. The issue examined ideas behind the invention and intervention in the existing urban fabric. Guedes participated in this meeting, but his contribution is not registered.

The last contacts between the member of Team 10 and Pancho Guedes happened on two occasions at the beginning of the 1980s. In the opening of a small exhibition, he set up at the Architectural Association in London in 1980 and during an informal visit of the Smithson and Jullian de la Fuente in Lisbon in 1981 (Figure 7), where Guedes moved back after the Mozambican independence from Portugal.

During the opening of the exhibition in London, Alison Smithson gave a talk to introduce Guedes' work. The transcripts of this talk were made available to the son of Guedes, Pedro, curator and designer of the exhibition, at a later time.

In Alison Smithson's words emerges the value given by Team 10 to Guedes' work while approaching the end of the Team 10 experience in the early 1980s after Bakema's death.





Fig. 7 Alison Smithson and Pancho Guedes during the last meeting in Lisbon in 1981 (Guedes, 2007)

“What more could society want from their architects but places thought of and made with ebullience? Places in which to make ones very own home through the family’s sense of history carried by their possessions. Places to learn in, to work in, that in entering, in doing, in leaving the fabric can perhaps help the individual on his way by emanating a little of that pulsating life Guedes injected into his work.” (Guedes, 2009, p.11)

Conclusions

The work of Team 10 and Pancho Guedes shaded light on the anthropological, contextual conditions of the built environment, together with the consequences on a social and political level of the construction of space (within a top-down model of growth), what Lefebvre (1991) would have called the *espace conçu* – the representation of space – the space created by planners (also referred by De Certeau as *voyer gods*). Team 10 and Guedes anticipated the importance, highlighted later by Lefebvre, of the so-called representational space – the *espace vécu* (the lived space literally); the space experienced by multiple actors in their personal life, childhood memories, and dreams; the social space.

At stake, in the restless atmosphere of post-war Europe, was the “critical assessment of modernism occurring in the culture at large” (Pedret, 2005, p. 275). This assessment was actuated by Team 10 by “addressing third world conditions and problems [which] they ended up producing an architectural discourse that was implicitly engaged in politics” (Çelik, 2010, p. 276). Guedes, although from a more ironic and ludic position than Team 10, challenged modernism by conceiving a series of provocative buildings amid the complex colonial and post-colonial dynamics which characterized the Portuguese colony of Mozambique. As stated by Pedro Gadanho (Guedes, 2007, p. 73), Guedes deludes the consensus over a unique *style* which seeks to represent the unity and imposition of Western modernity, alluding to a post-modern attitude the author calls *alter-modern*.

Jorge Figueira in his book “Reescrever o Pós-Moderno” (2012) attempts to propose Portuguese architecture as postmodern architecture. He argues that Portuguese architecture has been profoundly defined by decentralized peripheral architecture: the African and Asian colonial experiences. “In Macau and in “Portuguese Africa”, modern architecture is a worn architecture, in a good sense, polluted, contaminated, the virus is already there” (2012).

In this sense Figueira asserts that Guedes’ architecture negotiates continents and can be claimed as postmodern architecture *avant la lettre*.

On the other hand, Team 10 never managed to re-write CIAM principles opting for ongoing, informal discussions rather than providing irremovable formulas of *good* architecture as their predecessors.

It is precisely the uneasy passage from modern to post-modern thinking that both Team 10 architects and Guedes witnessed. They

testified the shift that drastically changed CIAM, modern architecture and the European relationship with former colonies (decolonization), initiating a discourse around a more self-reflexive practice of architecture.

1 → During the first years of the dictatorship in Portugal, the colonies did not cover central importance. It was only in 1930 when Salazar became Minister of the Colonies that they turned into strategic locations for the new government of Lisbon. Little later in 1930, the Acto Colonial was emanated which stated that the colonies did not have any more financial autonomy: colonialism is transformed into a vocation and a historical claim. On 11 April 1933 the new Constitution of the Estado Novo was approved, and following this, powerful propaganda based on images and symbols started to be employed by the central state to increase the white population in the colonies.

References

Baptista L.S. & Melaneo P. (2012, Jan–Feb) *Reescrever o Pós-Moderno. Devo dizer que prefiro viajar em comboios com gente!*. Arqa Magazine, pp. 140–143.

Beinart, J. (1961) *Amancio Guedes, architect of Lourenço Marques*, Architectural Review, vol. 129, 1961

Çelik, Z. (2005). In Risselada, M. (Ed.). *Team 10, 1953–1981: in search of a utopia of the present*. Rotterdam: Nai Publishers.

Guedes, P. (2009). Alison Smithson's opening address at Pancho Guedes' exhibition at the Architectural Association. (1980). In Guedes, Pedro (Ed.). *Pancho Guedes Vitruvius Mozambicanus. Readings* [Exhibition catalogue] Lisbon: Museu Coleção Berardo.

Guedes, P. (2007). *Pancho Guedes: An Alternative Modernist*. [Exhibition catalogue] S AM Schweizerisches Architekturmuseum. Basel: Christoph Merian Verlag.

Guedes, P. (1964, June). *The Practice of Architecture*. ISAA 6 Conference of the Institute of South African Architects, Cape Town, 1964, May 1. Cape Town: South African Architectural Record.

Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Pedret, A. (2005). Dismantling the CIAM Grid: new values for modern architecture. In Risselada, M. (Ed.). *Team 10, 1953–1981: in search of a utopia of the present*. Rotterdam: Nai Publishers.

Sadler, S. (2009) One Modernism? One History? One World? One Guedes? In Guedes, Pedro (Ed.). *Pancho Guedes Vitruvius Mozambicanus*. (pp. 268–274, pp. 272) [Exhibition catalogue] Lisbon: Museu Coleção Berardo.

Risselada, M. (Ed.). (2005). *Team 10, 1953–1981: in search of a utopia of the present*. Rotterdam: Nai Publishers.

Vaz Milheiro, A. (2015, Nov 7) *Pancho Guedes, um arquitecto heterodoxo e desconcertante*. Retrieved from <https://www.publico.pt/2015/11/07/culturaipilon/noticia/pancho-1713710>

Williams Goldhagen S. & Legault, R. (Ed.). (2001). *Anxious Modernisms Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press