The tenth CIAM congress, held in Dubrovnik in the summer of 1956, was one of the key moments in the history of modern architecture and urbanism. It was the last official meeting of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne, a world organization of architects focused on influencing the theories and methods of urbanization across the globe. Planned from the outset as the end of a particular era and the beginning of something else, which was to be determined precisely at the Dubrovnik congress, this CIAM meeting is of particular historical importance. However, its real meaning, role, impact, and consequences need yet to be fully examined, as the Dubrovnik congress has not yet been thoroughly researched, certainly not as earlier CIAM meetings.

The goal of the Living CIAM X research project is therefore to launch a new investigation into this important event, researching not only what was discussed sixty years ago, but also how that discussion was itself structured, by an institution with an increasing awareness of its own history and modes of practice. Work on Living CIAM X will begin through a symposium, planned for October 26 to the 29, 2016, which will bring together a group of international scholars with expertise on the subject at the site of the congress, Dubrovnik's Umjetnička galerija (Art Gallery). The symposium will be accompanied by an exhibition, drawing on material from archives in Rotterdam, Zurich and Boston. This research will also evolve into a documentary film and a major publication on CIAM X. It plans to utilize the working methodologies used at the tenth congress. As a mature international institution, CIAM was undergoing a significant moment of self-reflection at this time. The structure and hierarchy of membership, the format of research and analysis (through CIAM's grids), as well as the methods of dissemination of ideas and the direct influence on policy, particularly at the international level, were all subjects of scrutiny in 1956. The very nature of the architectural debate and its ability to expand into new realms and roles, including the architect-as-urbanist, the architect-as-researcher, even the architect-as-politician, were hotly debated. A significant amount of time was also devoted to the related issues of pedagogy. While many of these methods and preoccupations were unique to this congress, the retrospective nature of these discussions provide a unique glimpse into what many of the members found successful in CIAM's approach since 1928.

In his seminal work on the history of CIAM, Eric Mumford characterizes the tenth congress in Dubrovnik as the 'end of CIAM for its national groups and most of its members. While initially planned along similar lines as the previous congresses around a central theme, the structure of the event ultimately differed from earlier meetings. CIAM X was at once more retrospective, seeking to critically assess the nearly three decades of CIAM's existence through the historicization of previous congresses, as well as more projective, through discussions of a series of problems linked to the central theme, that of Habitat, which nevertheless developed independently, as stand-alone themes, many of which would shape later discourses, ranging from a renewed interest in the vernacular to an examination of the potentials and pitfalls of new technologies for mobility.

These numerous discussions have often been overshadowed by the perceived conflicts between the founding members of CIAM and a new generation of architects which had begun well before Dubrovnik and would continue well after, as various accounts of the event were presented, in tandem, to the architectural press. The characterization of this meeting as a ‘crisis’ or an ‘evolution’ was itself a point of contention in 1956, as the event was unfolding. The character of this transition will be one of the topics of analysis.

The significance of the location of the site of this international meeting in Dubrovnik, a historical city center and growing tourism destination within Yugoslavia, a country experimenting with a particular variant of socialism, ‘workers’ self-management’, had yet been adequately addressed. CIAM had planned an earlier congress in Moscow but had ultimately held all nine of the previous congresses in Western Europe. After the initial location for the tenth congress of Algeria fell through, due to political turmoil, a number of other locations were considered, including Salazar’s Portugal, before settling on Dubrovnik relatively late in the planning process, due primarily to a series of meetings between Alfred Roth and Drago Ibić. In the correspondence, the choice of location was argued for various reasons, from the potential to influence the Soviet block to an unveiled nostalgia for the Mediterranean experiences of CIAM IV. Instead of searching for a singular reason for the location or a simple explanation of its impact, this issue will be explored through the multiple lenses of the various participants, who represented a myriad of political contexts, at a unique moment in the history of the Cold War, set between Nikita Khrushchev’s ‘Secret Speech,’ in the winter, and Soviet invasion of Hungary, in the fall of the same year.

In addition to the themes discussed and the significance of the geopolitical location, Living CIAM X will examine the working methodologies used at the tenth congress. As a mature international institution, CIAM was undergoing a significant moment of self-reflection at this time. The structure and hierarchy of membership, the format of research and analysis (through CIAM’s grids), as well as the methods of dissemination of ideas and the direct influence on policy, particularly at the international level, were all subjects of scrutiny in 1956. The very nature of the architectural debate and its ability to expand into new realms and roles, including the architect-as-urbanist, the architect-as-researcher, even the architect-as-politician, were hotly debated. A significant amount of time was also devoted to the related issues of pedagogy. While many of these methods and preoccupations were unique to this congress, the retrospective nature of these discussions provide a unique glimpse into what many of the members found successful in CIAM’s approach since 1928.

The project coordinators have collected and digitized materials related to CIAM X from three major archives: the GTA Archive at ETH in Zurich, Switzerland, the Bakema Study Center in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and Loeb Library Special Collections at Harvard University GSD, Boston, USA. In addition, materials related to the congress have also been gathered in Zagreb and Dubrovnik, Croatia. They have also identified a group of scholars already working on various topics related to CIAM X, with whom they have also shared the Living CIAM X digital archive. Portions of the shared archive will also be presented in Dubrovnik in October as part of an exhibition, pending approval from the archival sources.

The symposium in October will bring together a group of scholars working on CIAM X or on many of its participants at the site of the original congress, the Umjetnička galerija in Dubrovnik. The project coordinators have worked with the participating scholars to define particular areas for research. The scholars have been asked to draw upon the shared CIAM X archive as well as on their own existing research to prepare an abstract and symposium presentation. These presentations will then provide a platform for a series of moderated discussions in Dubrovnik. In addition, the project coordinators will frame the discussion through a series of presentations on the position of CIAM X within the broader history of CIAM, the fields’ current perception of its significance, as well as the relationship of CIAM to the Croatian context.

The symposium is intended to serve as workshop, which will evolve into two artifacts: a documentary and a publication. The documentary will consist of historical footage of the 1956 conference and of interviews of the scholars attending the symposium. The documentary will be aired on Croatian Radiotelevision after which it will be disseminated internationally. The publication will be a collected edited volume building upon the contributions of the participating scholars and project coordinators. Additional support for the publication will be acquired through various grant applications in the fall and winter of 2016 with submission deadlines for individual contributions planned for fall 2017.