



Delft University of Technology

## Looking Back, Looking Ahead Ten Years Jaap Bakema Study Centre

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Jaap Bakema Study Centre

ARCHITECTURE

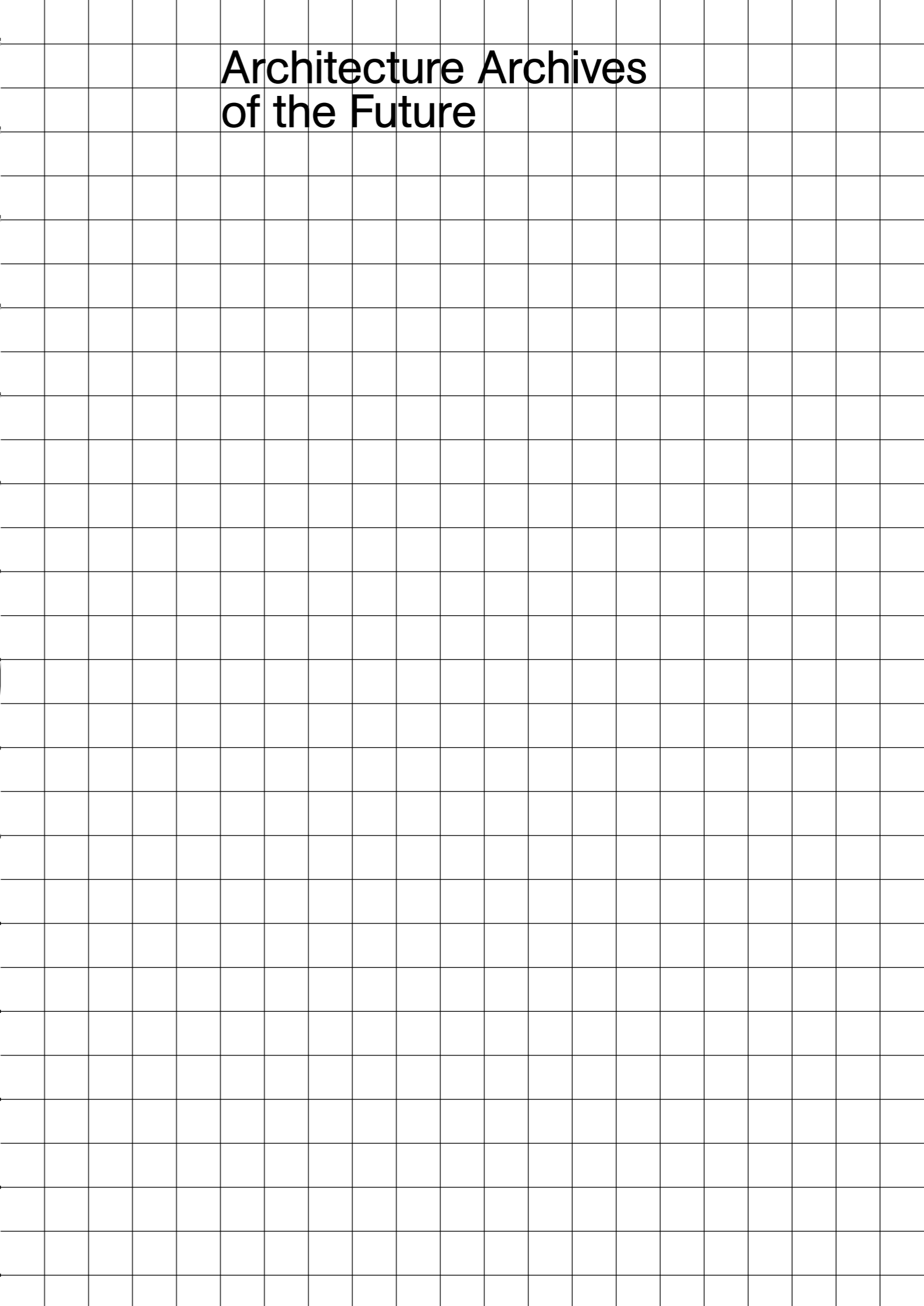
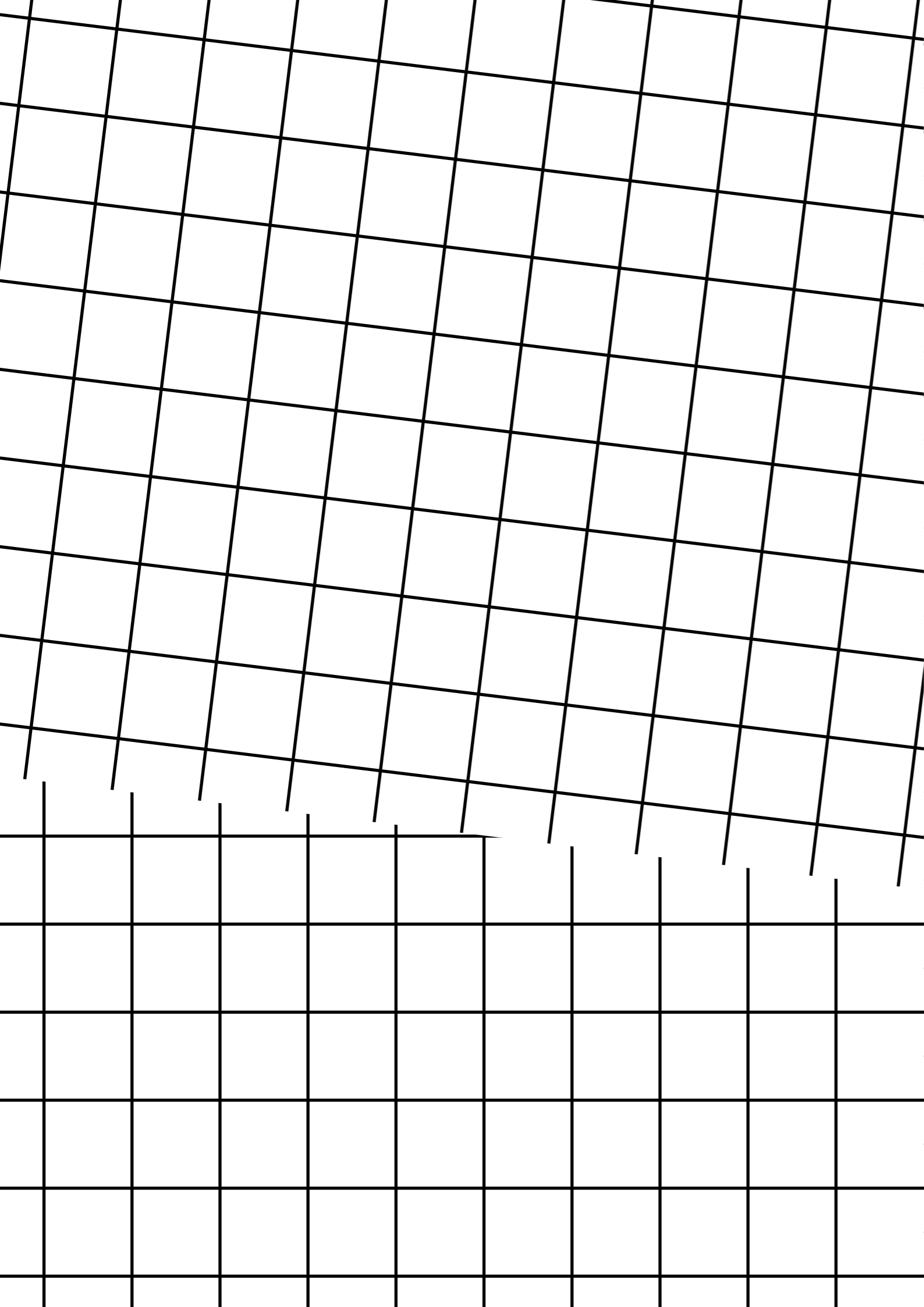
ARCHIVES

OF THE FUTURE

Tenth Annual Conference

November 2023

# Architecture Archives of the Future





Nederlands Documentatiecentrum voor de Bouwkunst ("Netherlands Documentation Center for Architecture") in Amsterdam, one of the predecessors of Nieuwe Instituut. Collection Nieuwe Instituut, Archive NDBK

Dirk van den Heuvel (Head of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre)

## Looking Back, Looking Ahead: Ten Years Jaap Bakema Study Centre

This year's annual conference marks the tenth anniversary of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre, the special research collaboration between the Nieuwe Instituut and the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of TU Delft. Looking back to 2013 this seems like another era, and yet at the same time it also feels as if we've only just started. In the early Spring of 2013, I was approached by Guus Beumer, the then freshly appointed director of the Nieuwe Instituut. The Nieuwe Instituut itself was a wholly new creature, the result of a merger between the Netherlands Architecture Institute, the Premisela design institute and Virtual Plaform, the digital culture institute. It was the outcome of a new right-wing cultural policy in the Netherlands, and much contested as such. One of Beumer's ambitions was to embed the Nieuwe Instituut in larger, multidisciplinary networks to try and fend off future reorganisations motivated by ideological agendas. Among others, he was interested to bring academic research and design expertise as represented by the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment at TU Delft to the Nieuwe Instituut. Together we came up with the idea for the collaboration through the Jaap Bakema Study Centre, a versatile and small unit situated between Delft and Rotterdam, to facilitate exchange, and to combine research and the national collection of architecture and urban planning at the Nieuwe Instituut to create a programme of public activities focused on urgent societal questions.

To name the collaboration after Jaap Bakema (1914-1981) was a logical choice for many reasons. The archive of the Van den Broek & Bakema office and its equally famed predecessor of Brinkman & Van der Vlugt is the largest archive in the collection and holds some of the prime architectural projects of Dutch architectural history, among others the Lijnbaan shopping street in the rebuilt centre of the war devastated city of Rotterdam. As a professor in Delft, and an architect in Rotterdam, Bakema also embodies the combination of both places. More importantly, Bakema represents an approach to architecture, which had gone lost under the impact of postmodernism and neo-liberalism in architecture. For Bakema architecture as a discipline exists only in the middle of society and its messy state of ongoing 'growth and change', one of the key mottos for modern architecture in the post-war decades. Architecture was to address society's needs and desires, or it should not exist at all. Architecture as autonomy was never an option for Bakema. He proposed to think of architecture as fundamentally relational, already in 1951 at the CIAM conference in Hoddesdon, which is quite different from promoting cultural or ethical relativism it must be added. Social questions belong to the question

of architecture. Bakema's proposition to build towards an open society, in which people are enabled to live by their own convictions and aspirations was founded on this believe. The notion of an open society, as a question rather than a fixed agenda, turned out to be also an excellent guideline for the development of the public activities of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre.

## EXHIBITIONS AND RESEARCH

Initially, the focus was on the creation of exhibitions as output of research as well as a vehicle for ongoing investigations. In 2014, the Jaap Bakema Study Centre curated the Dutch Rietveld pavilion at the Venice architecture biennale and restaged Bakema's contributions around the question of an open society as a guide line for architectural design and urban planning today, two years before authoritarianism ad populism regained new momentum with the election of Donald Trump as president of the USA, and the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom. In Rotterdam at the institute we co-curated the Structuralism show, together with Herman Hertzberger and the colleagues of the Nieuwe Instituut, especially Suzanne Mulder and Ellen Smit. It focused among others on the relevancy of architectural design regarding social interactions for today. Other exhibitions were produced with young emerging architects, such as the Belgium office of Rotor based on a research studio at TU Delft around re-use and Dutch architectural icons like Hertzberger's Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment which will be demolished, and with Studio Ossidiana on notions of ecology, biodiversity and more-than-human design, especially birds. A very special exhibition was developed together with the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon, at the invitation of its director Penelope Curtis, to look into the specifics of exhibition design and museology of the mid-twentieth century. Selected designers we restaged included Franco Albini, Lina Bo Bardi, and Aldo van Eyck. Parallel activities involved research by students of the Berlage, including a master class on museum and exhibition design with Barry Bergdoll. While in Lisbon Rita Albergaria sought to develop carefully designed reconstructions of the selected displays, for the Rotterdam edition Jo Taillieu chose instead to approach the question of scenography as a question of translation of the original displays, which resulted in a constellation of fragments that together built up into a most poetic and contemporary experience for the visitors.

All exhibitions were research driven and also instigated new research. They were archive based, and often linked to new archival acquisitions for the national collection. Students were actively involved, as well as designers, all in order to bring out the archival materials, to make public the ideas and traditions which they carry, and to confront these with the questions of today. This research dimension of the programme of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre resulted in a shifting focus from exhibition making toward accommodating guest researchers, postdoc fellows and PhD candidates, even complete PhD networks. Around the question of an open society the ongoing PhD programme Architecture and Democracy was initiated, together with TU Delft

colleague Jorge Mejía. Burcu Köken works on architectural media in the Cold War decades, and Íñigo Cornago Bonal is looking into housing design, user agency, and the concept of Open Building. A second, national PhD programme with parallel work packages concerns The Critical Visitor project for 2020-25; it's NWO sponsored, and initiated by Eliza Steinbock, together with Hester Dibbits and myself. A consortium of circa 15 cultural and academic institutions looks into questions of intersectional diversity and inclusion in the world of heritage, especially museums and archives. A third PhD programme with a consortium of ten universities, and various cultural institutions and architectural firms has been completed last summer: Communities of Tacit Knowledge: Architecture and its Ways of Knowing (TACK), led by Tom Avermaete, ETH Zürich, and Janina Gosseye, TU Delft. It's EU funded, and brought together ten PhD candidates who also visited Delft and Rotterdam for seminars and a two week summer school, while four of them were hosted for research secondments.

## DIGITAL TURN

While PhD research and hosting postdoc fellows and visiting scholars will remain crucial to bring the archival materials out for new research and new audiences, another dimension of the activities of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre emerged quite prominently during the last decade as crucial to future architectural research and knowledge: that is the ubiquitous new digital technologies, their histories and entanglement with architectural design, as well as their almost autonomous impetus toward new and unexpected developments in archival studies and curatorial practices. This 'digital turn' can be easily retraced from the themes addressed by the series of annual Bakema conferences organised in the last years: three out of ten conferences were exclusively focused on the digital turn in architecture and archival studies, while also this tenth edition of the Bakema conference will be dominated by questions of digital technologies and their evolving uses. In 2016, we devoted the conference Between Paper and Pixels to the topic of transmedial traffic in architectural drawing, with a pop-up exhibition of all sorts traces of the digital in the archives of the national collection, from the first plotted drawing for the Siemens research centre by Van den Broek and Bakema to the black box of so many terabytes of the digital archive of MVRDV. The conference was concluded with a wonderful keynote by the late Will Alsop. In 2020, we looked at prehistories of the digital again, under the heading of Repositioning Architecture in the Digital, organised together with Georg Vrachliotis. And in 2022, also with Vrachliotis, we focused on Building Data: Architecture, Memory and New Imaginaries.

This focus on the digital was not anticipated at the start of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre. Yet, various parallel developments made this a natural outcome and new direction. First of all, there was the Covid-19 pandemic, which forced us to move the institute's public programme to the realm of on-line events and presentations. An early test with 3D photography of the Habitat exhibition, to create a hybrid platform that could integrate archival documents with

research and online exhibition visits, was now made public for instance. It accelerated the idea to explore the possibilities a global, multi-institutional platform for a Virtual CIAM Museum, to bring together the dispersed CIAM archives in a new medium that would allow new ways of doing research and new ways of knowledge production and dissemination. Together with PhD candidates from the TACK network, who also had to be most inventive due to the limitations of the pandemic, we tested various prototypes: a remote field work exercise with Jhono Bennett with the Lijnbaan as an example, a test for a interactive visualisation of Jaap Bakema's correspondence network with Claudia Mainardi, and a VR installation as a reconstruction of the work room and archive of Alison Smithson, proposed and designed by Paula Strunden.

## PROTOTYPES

Working with prototypes allowed for a controlled development of potentially very big projects, and a learning experience for the team and for the institute, in terms of working with the technology, the necessary time planning and funds, related archival work (digitisation, curation of data sets, etc.), but also in terms of testing new audiences and new narratives. Especially Paula Strunden's VR installation Alison's Room: An Extended Reality Archive turned out to be most succesful. Not only could everyone themselves literally experience the new possibilities, which made the conversation about VR and its possibilities much more concrete, but it also brought quite surprisingly new audiences due to the selection for the Gouden Kalf awards of the Dutch film festival in the category of digital culture, which meant the installation travelled to Utrecht, and to the Rotterdam Architecture Film Festival, too.

The prototypes were presented in November 2022 at the conference of Disclosing Architecture (Architectuur Dichterbij) at the Nieuwe Instituut, which was the platform for a bigger multi-million euro project, sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, that aims at new ways of preserving our archives, and new ways of disclosing them, in particular through digital technologies. Ever since the start of the Nieuwe Instituut, the digital had become a natural field of exploration, since one of the original institutions behind the merger was Virtual Platform. Hence, a range of experiments with visualisations in particular were consistently produced. For instance, in the context of the Structuralism exhibition, artist and designer Richard Vijgen proposed new archival interpretations based on metadata software (Adlib) to rethink interfaces and relations within the collection holdings. Thus, the Nieuwe Instituut, as an interdisciplinary organisation by definition, provides the natural context to further expand the experiments with the digital turn in architectural archives and curation. It is the ambition of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre, together with the Nieuwe Instituut and TU Delft, to further develop the Virtual CIAM Museum as an umbrella project in the coming years, together with other international partners, starting with the GTA institute of the ETH Zürich, and the Getty Research Institute.

## A NEW GROUP

To better support the work of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre in the coming years, a new group has been formed within the Department of Architecture at TU Delft, which I proudly present here: Architecture Archives of the Future to further focus the research and innovative work in the field of digital technologies, architectural archives and curatorial practices. The new group will work within a newly formed section Building Knowledge which also hosts the groups of Kees Kaan, professor of architecture and leader of the Complex Projects group, and Georg Vrachliotis, professor of digital culture and leader of the group Data, Design and Society. This tenth edition of the annual Bakema conference of the same name is the informal kick-off of the group, which was latently already active under the wings of the group of Architecture and Dwelling, which I led in the last years as well. The new group will be much more prominently visible and able to develop its own programme, and also its own courses, starting with a MSc studio devoted to the design of a Virtual Architecture Museum, in which students will engage in new ways in architectural design research, presentation and experience.

The group already consists of eight people in total, I'm very happy to announce, all of who I highly respect for their dedication to architectural research and education. Alejandro Campos Uribe was initially a Marie Curie postdoc researcher, but has now a position as lecturer and researcher. Our group benefits from the Spanish Margarita Salas foundation, which funded two postdoc fellowships held by Paula Lacomba Montes and Elena Martínez Millana. Burcu Köken and Íñigo Cornago Bonal are PhD researchers as part of the Architecture and Democracy programme. Winnie van de Sande is our most excellent student assistant, while Fatma Tanış is the crucial hinge point for the Jaap Bakema Study Centre, working between the Nieuwe Instituut and the Architecture Department.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This introduction to the proceedings has been different from earlier ones due to the anniversary of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre. Needless to say this special collaboration between TU Delft and Nieuwe Instituut was only possible due to many supporters and enablers, a few of those I would like to mention here in gratitude for their help and inspiration. First of all, Guus Beumer, as first director of the Nieuwe Instituut who held his ground despite all the headwind he had to endure. Together with him, Floor van Spaendonck and Behrang Mousavi worked from the side of the Nieuwe Instituut to make the Jaap Bakema Study Centre a success from the very first start. I feel privileged this support of the early years is continued by the current Board of Directors, Aric Chen and Josien Paulides. In Delft, the collaboration found the unwavering support of Dick van Gameren, first in his capacity as Chair of the Department of Architecture, today as Dean of our Faculty. Karin Laglas, Dean of the Faculty in 2013 was wholly supportive to make this adventure possible. The current Chair of our Department of

Architecture Kees Kaan has proven to be an excellent sparring partner to secure the future of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre. The advisory board members deserve a special mention: Tom Avermaete, Hetty Berens, Maristella Casciato, Carola Hein, Laurent Stalder, and Georg Vrachliotis. Last but not least, the various coordinators of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre, without whom all our activities would not be possible: in the past Victor Muñoz Sanz, Soscha Monteiro de Jesus, Janno Martens, and today, Fatma Tanış. As a final mention I'd like to thank and honour Max Risselada, with whom I collaborated on the Team 10 exhibition, as long ago as the early 2000s, for the then Netherlands Architecture Institute, together with Suzanne Mulder and Tom Avermaete. Already then we were discussing the possibility of a research institute situated between Delft and Rotterdam as part of our shared fascination and love for archives, and how they form exciting, almost boundless resources for new stories, design practices and future imaginaries. This conference and its proceedings with its rich range of archival research practices by the participants are proof that many share this fascination and love, and that archival research is taking us now in wholly new directions, which are just a taste of things to come.