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Jaap Bakema Study Centre

**NETWORKS
OF (EX)CHANGE**
*Global Disseminations
of Architectural
Knowledge*

Twelfth Annual Conference
November 2025

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Global Disseminations
of Architectural Knowledge

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Actant Archives, Networking Knowledge

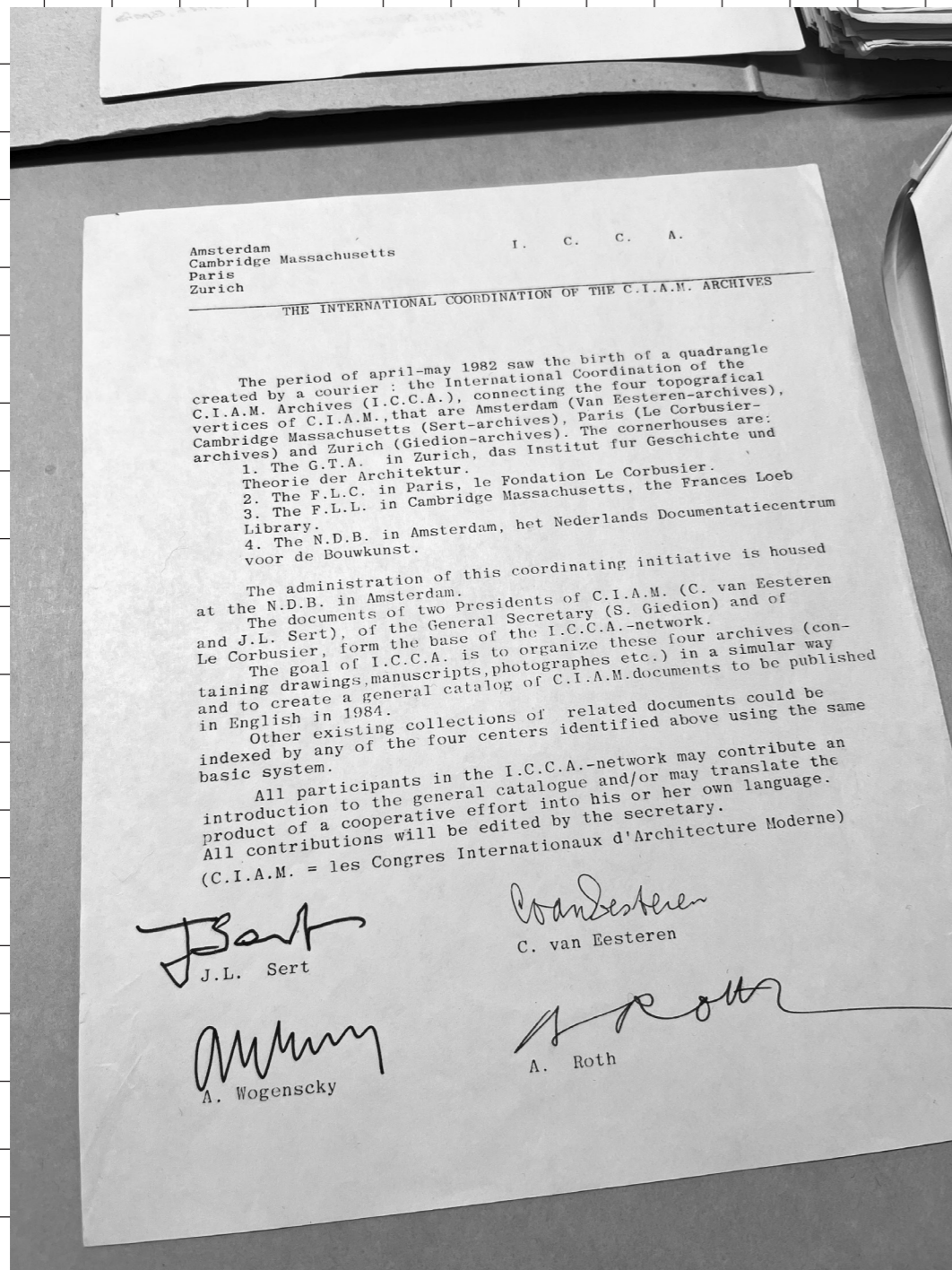
What are architecture archives today? Digital technologies are causing a commotion. In entirely new and unexpected ways, they open the proverbial vaults of the collections, where drawings and models collect dust. The virtual archive goes outside and becomes mobile, even nomadic, it connects with other places and new actors. With a few clicks, the archive can be accessed and downloaded, on your phone, your laptop. Scholars can compare and analyse sources from their home offices, or while travelling. Still a patchwork, the contours of a new sort of meta-archive are becoming visible, by connecting and networking between institutions. Such is the motivational drive behind this twelfth annual conference of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre devoted to the topic of 'Networks of (Ex)change, Global Disseminations of Architectural Knowledge', organised in partnership with the ETH Zurich and gta Archives.

CONNECTING ARCHIVE INSTITUTIONS

This collaboration has been prompted by a collective archival project related to the archives of the *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM), held at the gta Archives and at the Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam. These archives belong to the core of both institutions' collection as some of the most consulted holdings. As a network of exchange CIAM can be considered the most important association of architects during the twentieth century, and its archives a major entry point to studying the international debates on the modernisation and urbanisation of our societies. It's hard to overestimate CIAM's global impact on avant-garde architecture and urban planning, influencing post-war reconstruction in Europe and new urban developments around the world, including the post-colonial realities.

In view of the forthcoming centenary of the founding of CIAM in June 2028, the two institutions have teamed up as main project partners for a digital archive and research platform, tentatively called CIAM Collections Online (CCO). To be launched in the centenary year, the CCO will make accessible online CIAM-related materials from archives worldwide. The intention is to build a wider network with other important collections on the history of CIAM that are scattered around the world, including at the Frances Loeb Library at Harvard University, the CIAM Belgium archive at the Getty Research Institute, the Fondation Le Corbusier in Paris, and the Bauhaus Archive in Berlin.

The project does not intend to neutrally spread the modernist gospel and amplify canonical historiography. On the contrary, new digital technologies enable us to reflect on and reconceptualise the history of CIAM. Thus we start



'The International Coordination of the C.I.A.M. Archives', Statement of intent for the establishment of a CIAM archival platform by J.L. Sert, C. van Eesteren, A. Wogensky and A. Roth, 1982. Courtesy of gta Archive.

with the proposition of CIAM as a network, not so much a coming together of individual geniuses, but rather a collective thinking together producing and disseminating new architectural knowledge. Such revisions will bring out overlooked voices and marginalised positions. Intersectional feminist and ecological perspectives are key to our aim of bringing to light female actors and (post)colonial histories previously sidelined and often untold.

Furthermore, this inter-institutional and inter-archival project wants to question the nature of the archive itself, as an institution which produces and validates knowledge, cultural values and identities. In reference to Bruno Latour we'd like to rethink the archive as a so-called *actant*, the non-human actor with its own kind of agency in a web of interrelations that enables research and historiography. Selections, classifications and metadata are just a few examples of the powerful ordering agency of archives, producing historical facts that render some actors visible, yet leave many others unnoticed.

To better understand its agency, its positive and negative impacts, to navigate the pitfalls of history research and writing, we advocate reading against or along the grain by once again re-reading the multiple archival sources as stored and classified – which together form quite another collection of actants themselves, the actual letters, drawings, manifestoes and so forth and so on, weaving another net of interrelations. It is up to the researcher to engage to remap those interrelations, and identify the biases that often exist in archive formation. Most of all we aim to throw light on those in-between spaces – a very different, yet crucial category of institutional knowledge – the interstices, the gaps and dark spots, where the archive remains silent.

CONFERENCE QUESTIONS

In the 21st century, globalisation seems like an almost natural condition, inescapable in everything from planetary communication technologies and energy infrastructures to the threat of pandemics and climate crises. The transformation of architectural discourse and exchange has followed suit. Current geopolitical upheavals are a stark reminder of the importance of such networks of collaboration and knowledge exchange.

CIAM played a central role in facilitating a transnational shift in architectural discourse and practice following World War I and the multiple crises that followed. Crucially, design issues were seen as inextricably linked to pressing social and environmental concerns, with mass housing and universal health care at the forefront. CIAM became a place for the exchange of design strategies to both accommodate and counter the relentless modernisation of cities, countries and even entire continents.

Albeit arguably the best known, CIAM was neither the first nor the only international platform for architects to network and share knowledge.

From the early international congresses on housing and urban planning, to a host of avant-garde groups, professional organisations such as the UIA, and international agencies such as UN Habitat, multiple networks facilitated international exchanges and professional alignments across ideological and political boundaries. Whatever their scope, agendas or lifespans, these networks were and are almost invariably transdisciplinary, recognizing the benefits of including expertise and voices from outside architecture, especially from government representatives, societal stakeholders, and benefactors.

When we put out our call for papers, we asked for exploratory contributions that map and identify the formative moments and multiple actors within these global networks and their modes of operation. The conference aims the following:

To define and investigate which kinds of conditions prompted network exchanges;

To reflect on the actual means by which these networks are enacted, from architectural competitions to knowledge exchanges, government policies and industry programmes;

To critically probe the role of institution building—from archives to schools of architecture – in the development and maintenance of such networks of exchange;

To question the role of architectural media in these exchanges and how they themselves were transformed by such exchanges;

To reveal how industrial and economic interests, as well as local political and professional organisations, intersect with these networks of exchange.

The response to the call presents a broad and rich range of ongoing research work from all around the world, bringing new perspectives and a reversed gazes onto the canonical histories of the twentieth century. Together, the papers collected in this volume are proof that work on this wider topic has only just begun. They illuminate the emergence of global exchanges and their networks – not just as historical phenomena, but also touching on pressing questions of today, from a socio-ecological point of view to the need to pluralise histories, as demonstration these are collectively produced by a multitude of actors.

To make this all possible, a special thank you goes out to the Van Eesteren & Fluck-Van Lohuizen foundation, which generously supported the travels of some of our conference participants.

CONFERENCE

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(Coordinator of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre)

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