



Delft University of Technology

The elusive bigness of Bakema

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Publication date

2018

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Jaap Bakema and the Open Society

Citation (APA)

van den Heuvel, D. (2018). The elusive bigness of Bakema. In D. van den Heuvel (Ed.), *Jaap Bakema and the Open Society* (pp. 16-23). Archis.

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Throughout the post-World War II decades, the Dutch architect Jaap Bakema (1914–1981) was inspired to build for a democratic and open society. His body of work, his teaching and writing, and his international presence are testimony to the vicissitudes of the welfare state and the roles played by architecture and planning in its construction.

In the midst of today's neo-liberal crisis and its conservative cultural fallout, these ideas on the open society have regained relevancy, in particular in light of current debates on how to involve citizens in city building and how to create alternatives for our crumbling welfare states. Bakema's legacy reminds us of the radical potential of architectural conceptualization in its commitment to societal questions.

A key figure in the circles of CIAM, Team 10 and Dutch Forum, Bakema bridged the gap between avant-garde discourse and mainstream culture, most notably with his TV lecture series 'From chair to city'. Famed projects by his firm Van den Broek and Bakema include the Rotterdam Lijnbaan shopping centre and Sporthuis Centrum holiday resorts.

This publication highlights internationally acclaimed and lesser known work through texts and English translations, accompanied by rich visual documentation from the archives. This material is put into perspective in interviews with contemporaries, and essays that critically probe the socially engaged aspects of Bakema's work and the context in which it came into being.

Compiled and edited by Dirk van den Heuvel, *Jaap Bakema and the open society* features contributions by Brita Bakema, Christine Boyer, Lard Buurman, Dick van Gameren, John Habraken, Carola Hein, Herman Hertzberger, Frans Hooykaas, Arnold Reijndorp, Izak Salomons, Johannes Schwartz, Jorrit Sipkes, and Carel Weeber. Graphic design by Jaap van Triest.

Dirk van den Heuvel (ed.)

Jaap Bakema and the open society

Jaap Bakema and the open society

- 2 Lard Buurman photographs **Patterns of use**
- 14 Guus Beumer **Preface**
- 16 Dirk van den Heuvel **The elusive bigness of Bakema**

A man with a mission

- 26 M. Christine Boyer **Total space and the open society**
- 38 Jaap Bakema inaugural lecture **Towards an architecture of society** 1964
 - 50 **Research projects for CIAM** 1949–59
- 66 Jaap Bakema newsletters **PostBox for the development of the Habitat** 1959–71
- 76 Jaap Bakema **The humane core – a civic centre for St. Louis** 1959–60
 - 82 **Hauptstadt Berlin competition** 1957–58
- 88 Carola Hein **Architecture and cold war – the case of the Hauptstadt Berlin competition 1957–58**
 - 100 **Skopje reconstruction competition** 1964
 - 104 **Tel Aviv-Jaffa town planning competition** 1962
 - 106 **Pampus, Amsterdam** 1964–65
- 114 Jaap Bakema television lectures **From chair to city – a story about people and space** 1964
- 122 interview with Brita Bakema **An idealist**
- 125 interview with Herman Hertzberger **In one word: Energy**

Building social relations

- 130 Arnold Reijndorp **The aspirations of an open society, then and now**
 - 144 **Construction supervisor's office, Rotterdam** 1946
 - 150 **Social-cultural centre Zuidplein, Rotterdam** 1948
 - 156 **Lantaarn 't Venster, Rotterdam** 1947–52
 - 162 **Lijnbaan shopping centre, Rotterdam** first phase 1948–53
- 170 Jaap Bakema **Relationship between men and things** 1952
 - 172 **Housing 't Hool, Eindhoven** 1961–72
 - 180 **Tower block Hansaviertel, Berlin** 1957–60
 - 186 **Town hall, Marl** 1957–67
- 192 Jaap Bakema **The free form** 1941
 - 194 **Reformed church, Nagele** 1958–60
- 200 Dick van Gameren **Bakema in Nagele – empty polders and stark details**
 - 208 **Shopping centre and housing, Bergen** 1959–61
 - 212 **Town hall, Terneuzen** 1962–72
 - 218 **Dutch pavilion for Expo '70, Osaka** 1968–70
- 224 Jorrit Sipkes **Communication machine**
- 232 interview with Carel Weeber **Working with/against Bakema**
- 234 interview with Frans Hooykaas **Inside the office**

Growth and change

- 240 Dirk van den Heuvel **Architecture and democracy – contestations in and of the open society**
 - 258 **Lijnbaan shopping centre, Rotterdam** second phase 1960–70
 - 264 **Cityplan, Eindhoven** 1966–69
 - 270 **Mümmelmansberg, Hamburg** 1968–73
 - 274 **Siemens research centre and offices, Munich Perlach** 1971–79
- 280 Jaap Bakema **The era of total urbanization (64 points)** 1971
 - 282 **Tanthof, Delft** 1969–81
 - 288 **Growing houses, Wulfen and Eindhoven** 1961–72
 - 292 **Sporthuis Centrum holiday resorts** 1966–80
- 298 interview with John Habraken **The lure of bigness**
- 301 interview with Izak Salomons **Father figure**

- 24, 128, 238, 304 Johannes Schwartz photographs **Verticals and horizontals**
- 306 **Biographical notes**
- 308 **Bibliography**
- 314 **Index**
- 318 Credits \ Contributors

The elusive bigness of Bakema

Dirk van den Heuvel

Shortly after the Second World War, CIAM, the ultimate platform for modern architecture and planning, came under fire from within. Founded in 1928 by such illustrious figures as H.P. Berlage, Le Corbusier, Ernst May, Hannes Meyer and Mart Stam, it began to be criticized by ambitious younger members. They sought a new approach to the urgencies of housing and city planning, beyond what they perceived as a too materialist approach embodied by the pre-war CIAM dogma of the Functional City. To this end, the ecological idea of habitat was introduced as the more comprehensive and synthetic concept to replace the separations of urban functions as a method of urban planning. As is wellknown, CIAM did not survive these debates, and the likes of Jaap Bakema, Aldo van Eyck, Alison and Peter Smithson, Georges Candilis and Shadrach Woods would reconvene under the name Team 10.¹ Among the historical documents that testify to the fights between CIAM and Team 10 over the future direction of modern architecture, there is one wonderfully funny movie fragment. It lasts less than a minute, and depicts some of the members of the group when they were together in Otterlo, a tiny village in the middle of the Netherlands where the last CIAM conference was held in September 1959. The conference venue was the Kröller-Müller museum, a few kilometres outside the village, and surrounded by forest. Outside the museum building, designed by Henry van de Velde, the relatively young members of Team 10 stage the burial of CIAM in order to underline the ending of the organization they had decidedly dismantled. In front of the big blue sign that read 'C.I.A.M.', under which someone (Van Eyck?) had sketched a little cross wrapped in a wreath, they perform a quasi-solemn procession, as if carrying the dead body of modern architecture to its grave. In front, Aldo van Eyck and Daniel van Ginkel lead the way. They pull the cart, on which we see Alison and Peter Smithson, John Voelcker and Blanche Lemco, immediately followed by Georges Candilis, one unidentified mourner, and finally, Charles Polonyi. Jaap Bakema does not appear in the film clip, not because he is not there, but because he is holding the camera.²

1 For a history of CIAM see: Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000; for a history of Team 10 see: Max Risselada, Dirk van den Heuvel (eds.), *Team 10. In Search of a Utopia of the Present 1953-1981*, Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2005.

2 Jaap Bakema carried a 16mm camera on most of his trips. His personal archive holds dozens of collections of film fragments. Collection Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam. There is an additional private family collection. His presence is also evidenced by the photos of the performance that shows the members of Team 10 posing around the death sign of CIAM. Jan Stokla also appears briefly in the film, and one unidentified person sits on the cart with his back to the camera before the proper procession starts.

3 Over the years, various books have been published on Van den Broek, Van Eyck and Hertzberger. Books on the students of Dutch structuralism have also come out, among them Piet Blom, Joop van Stigt and Gert Boon, as well as monographs on John Habraken, Hugh Maaskant, Frans van Gool, Ernest Groosman and the Kraaijvanger brothers, but as stated, hardly anything on Bakema. To be sure there have been attempts to produce a book, by Evelien van Es and Joosje van Geest in particular, but until now to no avail.

4 *Forum*, no. 3, 1990, which was published as a posthumous homage by Dick Apon, architect and professor in Eindhoven, who served together with Bakema on the renowned board of the same journal during its heyday from 1959 to 1963.

5 Cor Wagenaar, 'Jaap Bakema and the Fight for Freedom', in: Sarah Williams Goldhagen and Réjean Legault (eds.), *Anxious Modernisms. Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture*, Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2000, pp. 261-278.

6 Between 1959 and 1971 Bakema sent out 18 newsletters to his professional network based on the correspondence he received through the so-called Post Box for the Development of the Habitat; Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam holds the whole series and part of the surviving correspondence in its collections.

7 Alison Smithson (ed.), *Team 10 meetings 1953-1984*, New York: Rizzoli, 1991, p. 34.

8 Risselada, Van den Heuvel (eds.), 2005; Clelia Tuscano, 'You Need Sixty Years', interview with Alison and Peter Smithson, p. 338.

Bakema's invisibility, resulting from his role as director and cameraman of this snippet of avant-gardist history as performance, exemplifies his particular position in the historiography of Team 10 and post-war modern





architecture. On the one hand there is an overbearing omnipresence, and on the other an elusiveness as to his exact contribution. Bakema's active involvement in the post-war CIAM conferences and Team 10 is generally acknowledged in the key histories of the period, yet research and publications exclusively dedicated to his individual contribution are very rare, up to the point of non-existent.³ There is one special issue of the journal *Forum* from 1990, which is devoted to his achievements;⁴ and one essay from 2000 by the historian Cor Wagenaar portrays Bakema as a 'freedom fighter' caught between high hopes for a better society and the post-war economic reality.⁵

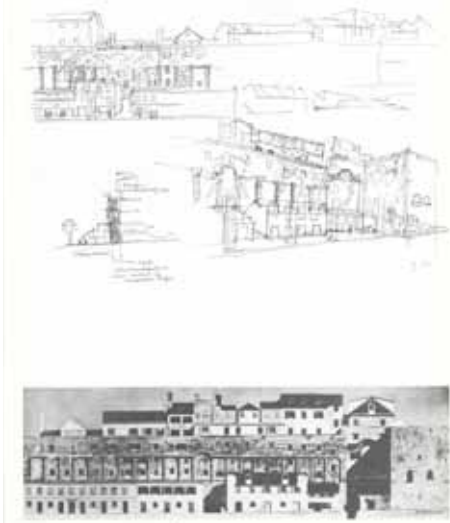
In view of both Bakema's major impact on Dutch post-war modern architecture and culture, and his profound influence on the international architectural discourse of the period, how should such an omission be understood? After all, Bakema himself was hardly invisible in his own time. In fact, quite the opposite. From the moment he attended the first post-war CIAM conference in Bridgwater in 1947, he became one of its most active and vocal members. From 1953 on, when CIAM had pledged to renew its organization, Bakema was one of the central figures actively involved in the transformation process. He was eventually responsible for the organization of the last CIAM conference in Otterlo in his capacity as CIAM secretary. For the new Team 10 platform too, he would take up a coordinating role in organizing the meetings and communications, among others through his newsletter for the 'Post Box for the Development of the Habitat'.⁶ His crucial role is ultimately evidenced by the fact that when he died prematurely in 1981, Team 10

stopped gathering.⁷ For keeping Team 10 together all those years, Peter Smithson half-jokingly, half-seriously compared Bakema's role as a leader to that of Marshal Tito in former Yugoslavia.⁸

Also in the Netherlands, the CIAM network helped jump-start Bakema's career. He graduated under Mart Stam in 1941; before and after his education at the Amsterdam Academy of Architecture, he worked for the Rotterdam office of Van Tijen and Maaskant; he also briefly worked for the Amsterdam town planning department in 1937, where he met its director and CIAM chairman Cornelis van Eesteren. After the war Bakema started working for the Rotterdam department of housing. Together with the Rotterdam CIAM group *Opbouw* and the department of city planning, where Lotte Stam-Beese was chief designer, he worked on the groundbreaking urban studies for the new districts of Pendrecht and Alexanderpolder, the development of which he would consistently present at the various CIAM conferences from 1949 up to 1959. Bakema also actively dedicated himself to serving the profession and society at large as a member of juries and boards of cultural organizations. Crucially, he sat on the board of 'Architectura et Amicitia', the Amsterdam-based architects' society which published the journal *Forum*. At his instigation its editorial board was renewed in 1959, putting himself and Aldo van Eyck at the helm of the Dutch platform for modern architecture, together with Dick Apon, Joop Hardy, Herman Hertzberger and Gert Boon, and Jurriaan Schrofer as its new designer. *Forum*, also referred to as the *Forum*-group, represented the Dutch branch of Team 10 and its first groundbreaking issue 'The Story of Another Idea', compiled by Van Eyck,



The Death of CIAM, stills from the 16mm film by Jaap Bakema



Spread from *Forum*, no. 2, 1962, special issue on Split, sketches and photos by Jaap Bakema

9 For more on the history of *Forum*: Francis Strauven, *The Shape of Relativity*, Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura, 1998, chapter 8 'Forum 1959-63'.

10 *Forum*, no. 2, 1962, with the two contributions 'Een huis van een keizer werd stad voor 3000 mensen (te Split)' and 'Bouwen voor de anonieme opdrachtgever'; contributions also involved a presentation of the work of Schindler and his concept of space (no. 8, 1960-61), a special issue on the Spangen housing block in Rotterdam designed by Michiel Brinkman (no. 5, 1960-61), an exhibition of Dutch architecture curated by Bakema himself for the Akademie der Künste in Berlin (no. 4, 1962), a documentation of the competition entry for Bochum university and the essay 'Architecture as an instrument of man's self-realization' (no. 2, 1963).

11 Jaap Bakema, *Van Staal tot Stad. Een verhaal over mensen en ruimte*, Zeist: Uitgeversmaatschappij W. de Haan, 1964.

12 M.J. Granpré Molière, 'Delft en het Nieuwe Bouwen', in: *Katholiek Bouwblad*, no. 13, 1947, pp. 146-156.

13 See esp. Bakema's text 'Die Revolte der Masse', in: Jürgen Joedicke (ed.), *Architektur und Städtebau. Das Werk van den Broek und Bakema*, Stuttgart: Karl Krämer-Verlag, 1963, pp. 82-83.

14 As noted by various authors, among others Tom Avermaete and Annie Pedret.

15 Jaap Bakema, statement for CIAM 6, published in: Jaap Bakema with Otto Das, et al (eds.), *Woning en Woonomgeving, Voordrachtenreeks prof. J.B. Bakema*, Delft: TH Delft, 1977, p. 45.

16 Jaap Bakema, '1960-2000', in Jaap Bakema (ed.), 'Post Box for the development of the Habitat (B.P.H.)', nr. 5, 27-1-1961, p. 4, collection Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam.

17 Gerrit Oorthuys (signed as g.o.), 'Een kleinigheid', in *Delftse School*, nr. 5, 1961, p. 124. The magazine was the first independent platform in Delft and was published under the auspices of Jo van den Broek.

18 See for instance Wouter Vanstiphout, 'De schoolmeester en de dominee: functie en vorm in het oeuvre van Van den Broek en Bakema 1974-1978', in: *De Architect*, no. 2, 1993, pp. 50-69.

was handed out to the attendees of the last CIAM conference in Otterlo.⁹ Bakema contributed various issues on mass housing and planning, among others an issue on the topic of 'architecture as an instrument of man's self-realization' and an analysis of Diocletian's palace in Split as an example of megastructure and appropriation by its inhabitants, followed by an essay on 'building for the anonymous client'.¹⁰

The open society

In the Dutch context, Bakema's centrality was also built on another feature of his personality: his unique capacity to combine mainstream culture with the post-war avant-gardist discourse of Team 10 and Dutch *Forum*. Bakema was a great communicator, capable of reaching out to very different audiences. In the Netherlands he became a national figure in 1962, when he presented a lecture series on modern architecture and planning for Dutch television on Sunday evenings. There was only one channel available at the time, so these broadcasts were very hard to miss. Broadsheets ran reviews of the television show and the lectures were published in 1964 as *Van stael tot stad* (from chair to city). It contained Bakema's declaration to build for an open society, in which every citizen would be able to shape his or her way of life according to one's individual beliefs within the larger framework of a modern welfare state system.¹¹ For Bakema, this idea to accommodate social difference was intrinsically linked to his idea of democracy. It was primed by his wartime experiences, among others as a prisoner in a German camp in France. It was equally motivated by the dominance of the more Catholic inspired, traditionalist approach in urban planning during the late 1940s, which left little room for modern

architecture and its practitioners, and which by word of its spokesman Marinus Granpré Molière expressly dismissed humanism and secular democracy as a starting point for spatial planning and social modernization, or culture in general.¹² Proposing this explicit connection between democracy and architecture, and investigating its consequences, constitutes one of the most important contributions made by Bakema.

This proposition implied a moral obligation: the idea that architecture should be democratic and inclusive, aimed at creating social fairness, that architecture is part of a larger historical movement of the masses towards individual and collective emancipation and away from dehumanizing anonymity.¹³ Part and parcel of this proposition was the acceptance that contestation, debate and friction are a natural part of the architectural process, before, during and after the act of designing. Architecture, therefore, was also viewed as a matter of communication, from developing new ways to engage citizens, users, decision makers and builders in the making of the built environment, to the very straightforward problem-solving matters of orientation and wayfinding. Architecturally speaking, this notion of communication also touched on architecture as a formal language of its own, through space and materials; such a notion equally involved the nature of the discourse itself, including a never-ending conversation about the possible relationships between architecture and individual and collective identities, and their development.

The latter aspect brings out the shift towards the social within post-war modern architecture that one can observe with the emergence of Team 10 inside CIAM and the discussions on the theme of habitat.¹⁴ Also, among the propositions that Bakema put on the table, we find that architecture as habitat was intrinsically interconnected with the social, and that its production techniques should recognize and accommodate this. A logical conclusion from these propositions was that architecture and planning are profoundly relational, rather than object-bound. To Bakema, this belonged to the core of the modern tradition in architecture and the artistic avant-gardes as a whole. To him it also implied that architecture and planning are processual phenomena, that architects needed to embrace growth and change and hence to rethink the basic principles of the discipline: in terms of formal language and the role of form in design; in terms of structure, matter and space; and in terms of how to operate as an architect together with other experts. It would lead to a continuous scrutinizing and reconceptualizing of architectural principles. Besides housing and planning, movement and mass mobility were considered a special new field of investigation for architecture; it led to an intense interest in architecture

as the organization of flows, both streamlining and connecting them, with diagrams and conceptual sketches as important tools.

This was the bold ambition that Bakema brought to architecture, and which he aimed to capture with his call to build for an open society, a democratic society of change and development, of 'spiritual growth' for each and everyone.¹⁵ Without much explanation, this idea was made a central part of his core beliefs in the early 1960s. In 1961 Bakema defined the open society most explicitly as the 'hidden potential of our new social structure of society' while relating it to the issues of technology, mass production and democracy.¹⁶ According to him, the decades until the new millennium would bring a new post-war condition of global interconnectedness, in which decolonization and modernization would eventually lead to a situation of 'total urbanization'. Architecture as 'total space' was to serve the necessary movement towards environmental awareness that included an obligation to the larger, even cosmological whole, as well as to democracy and the accommodation of individual difference.

Preacher

Paradoxically, Bakema's dominant presence in the 1960s and 1970s might partially account for the lack of proper research into his work. Together with his urge to constantly confess his adherence to a morally grounded, holistic approach to architecture and planning, new generations of students turned their attention to other sources of inspiration. As early as 1961, in the student magazine *Delftse School*, a critical one-page comment appeared by Gerrit Oorthuys. He commented on Bakema's desire to testify to his audience on the 'religious' aspects of his interest in 'total space', which he considered annoying 'drivel' that hurt Bakema's otherwise interesting position.¹⁷ Others, too, characterized Bakema as an idealist preacher.¹⁸ The morality of Bakema was also the morality of the Dutch *Forum* group, and overlapped with the positions of Van Eyck and Hertzberger who, like Bakema, were also dominantly present as professors in Delft.¹⁹ Their largely left-wing, social democratically inspired attitude was fiercely attacked during the 1970s by neo-Marxists as too timid, but most of all as insincere and ineffective as a critique of the predominantly late-capitalist situation, as elitist and complicit in what the Italian theorist and historian Manfredo Tafuri had introduced to architecture as 'the plan of capital'.²⁰

One of the reactions in Delft was that students and younger staff proposed a more theoretically based approach to architecture that did away with the humanist ideology that went hand in hand with the planning system of the welfare state, which they viewed as patronizing,

and which at the time was in any case in the process of being derailed by the various economic crises of the 1970s. Italian neo-rationalism with a link to communism was particularly popular, while a special ally was found in a young Rem Koolhaas, who was a guest teacher in Delft from the mid-1970s onward. Educated as an architect at the AA school in London and having worked at the IAUS in New York and Cornell University, he was a relative outsider to the Dutch context who indeed took it upon himself to castigate the *Forum* group for their moralistic, politically naive approach to architecture, instead of embracing the radical, dangerous adventure of the proper avant-gardes of Italian futurism and Russian constructivism, or even surrealism.²¹

However, the polemics of the time hardly focused on Bakema as a person. Aldo van Eyck and the much lesser-known but influential Joop Hardy, who was a professor of cultural history in Delft and not unimportantly, a former editor of the *Forum* journal as well, were usually targeted in the attempts to move away from the *Forum* group legacy.²² As a person, Bakema was also a hard target for oppositional rhetoric, since he would tirelessly seek dialogue with opponents, with older and younger generations. Instead, a respectful yet very critical exchange developed between the opponents of *Forum* and Bakema.²³ It was also a quality that made him fit to oversee the final, transitional phase of CIAM, and a key figure throughout the intense democratization revolt at the Delft Faculty of Architecture after the events of 1969 when the school and its education system were radically transformed.

Authorship

Yet another reason why there is no proper study on Bakema's achievements available might be the elusive nature of his authorship. Although Bakema was one of the dominant voices, his work was almost always realized in a context of collaboration: from his early work for the Rotterdam CIAM chapter of Opbouw and CIAM's international organization to his many contributions to the Team 10 discourse. Most of his teaching abroad was also organized as collaborative workshops focused on urgent, contemporary urban issues, in which he himself would gladly participate, by co-designing, sketching and discussion. Also, the way his office was organized did not allow for clear, individual handwriting. After Bakema joined his elder office partner Jo van den Broek in 1948, their firm would rise to international fame because of its groundbreaking project for the Lijnbaan shopping centre in Rotterdam (1948-53). In the following years, the firm would quickly grow into one of the bigger, if not biggest, offices of the Netherlands with an impressive international portfolio ranging from massive housing schemes and urban planning to university and

19 *Forum* had a very strong presence at the Delft Faculty of Architecture. Next to Jaap Bakema, Aldo van Eyck and Herman Hertzberger, Joop Hardy was an important voice as professor of history and cultural theory; other kindred spirits included Jan Rietveld and Har Oudejans.

20 *De elite, deel 1, een analyse van de afdeling bouwkunde van de technische hogeschool te delft*, Delft: 'Stielos', 1970.

21 See especially the interview by Hans van Dijk, 'Rem Koolhaas. Interview', in: *Wonen-TA/BK*, nr. 11, 1978, pp. 17-20.

22 In *De Elite* Bakema is also targeted but only briefly. Van Eyck and Piet Blom are the main targets of the student authors as the representatives of the 'architect-artist', see pp. 80 and onward. Hardy would be fiercely attacked during the second half of the 1970s as part of the debates on the future direction of research and history in Delft; Rem Koolhaas completely ignored Bakema in his various attacks on Dutch modern architecture.

23 The best example being a most illuminating conversation between Cees Boekraad and Bakema, published in 1972 in the magazine *Wonen*, and republished as: 'Van Stam tot Team X. Een gesprek met J. Bakema naar aanleiding van "Bouwen 20-40"', in Umberto Barbieri and Cees Boekraad, *Kritiek en ontwerp. Proeven van architectuurkritiek*, Nijmegen: SUN, 1982, pp. 86-101.

24 Jaap Bakema with Otto Das, et al (eds.), *Woning en Woonomgeving, Voordrachtenreeks prof. J.B. Bakema*, Delft: TH Delft, 1977, p. 197.

25 Jaap Bakema, *Thoughts about Architecture*, London: Academy Editions, 1981, p. 149.

26 'Team 10 + 20', special issue of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, nr. 177, Janvier / Février 1975.

27 Bakema, Das (eds.), 1977, p. 197.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 202.

government buildings and a broad range of commercial and industrial facilities. To handle the sheer workload, the office pioneered new organization models, among others by introducing the figure of the project architect who was also credited in publications.

Naturally, within the context of the office production and the Team 10 and *Forum* discourse, there were a few moments when Bakema clearly and unambiguously moved into the foreground as fully his own, at his most authentic. In the first place, this would be through his inexhaustible sketching, which would almost invariably accompany his lectures and teaching. His television appearances for 'Van stoel tot stad' saw him characteristically standing in front of a blackboard, holding a piece of chalk. Notably too, many of the sketches in the archive are apocryphal, made after the projects were realized in order to explain the basic design concept and how it fit his larger view on the discipline as a whole and architecture's role in society.

Bakema's writings are a natural second medium to present himself and his ideas. Yet, again characteristically, he would present his own voice together with others, in unison or contrast, or simply to bring in another point or an additional argument. The most comprehensive reader of his teachings from 1977 illustrates this point.²⁴ Bakema's own writings are laid out next to texts and documents by like-minded authors such as the Smithsons. More surprisingly though, contributions by opponents are also included, among others Granpré Molière. It is an editorial method that was also applied by *Forum* in the years that Bakema was on its board, incorporating discussion, even dissent.

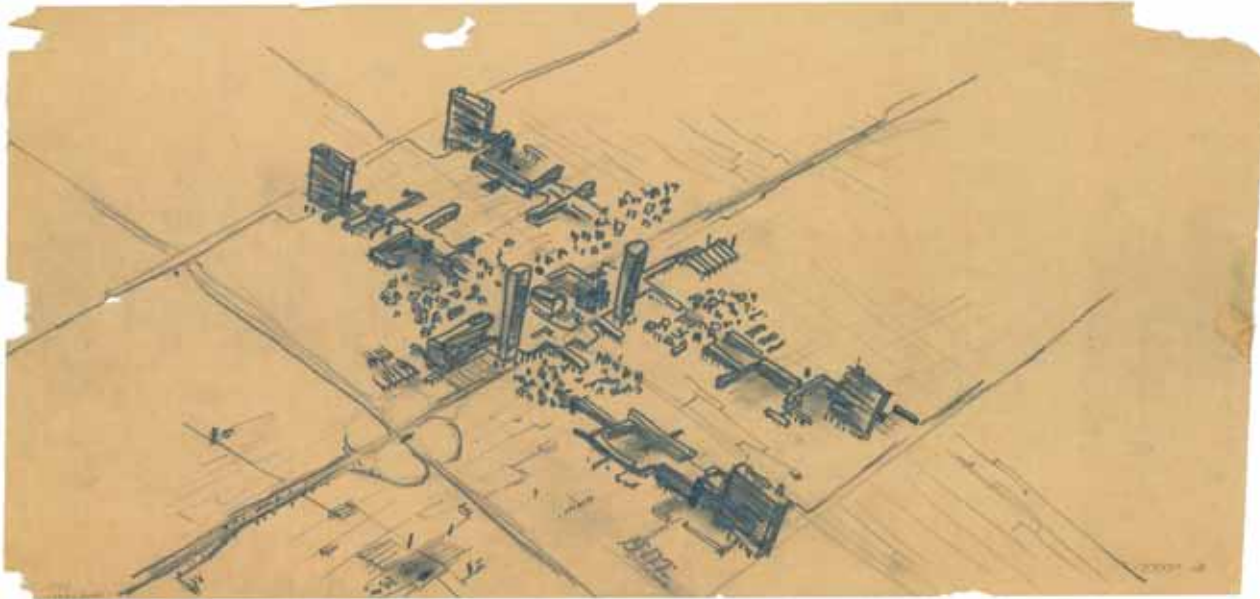
If Bakema as an architect cannot be defined as a unified, clearly identifiable subject but rather as a collaborative author who prefers to publicly appear in the company of others, where then to situate Bakema's authorship exactly and his specific contribution? It implies a very different notion of what an author really is and can. To use popular terms from current theory, one might speak of an architect as an 'embedded' or 'dependent' agent (Schneider and Till), a 'tentacular' creature (Haraway) or a 'rhizomatic' entity (Deleuze and Guattari). In Team 10 language, one could think of an author like Bakema as a node of exchange and transmission within a larger network. At any rate, by focusing on Bakema and his work, we see a demonstration of how architectural design and discourse are profoundly collective and collaborative practices, in which authors cannot be identified as unambiguous, unified subjects. At the same time, one can observe moments within these practices when actors maintain or recuperate their integrity and autonomy.

At Bakema's funeral in 1981, he was remembered by Peter Smithson in almost ecological or environmental terms. Smithson described Bakema as a 'force of nature', like a river flooding its banks, knocking down trees, before receding again, effecting the creation of new channels, with former barren places coming to fruition long after the actual flood.²⁵ Bakema himself had only rarely claimed his exclusive right to authorship as an architect. His writings, lectures and presentations were generally aimed at expanding the field, opening up horizons when talking about the necessity to become aware of the way individual identities and human existence can only be understood as part of a larger whole. There is just one moment, in the mid-1970s, when he claimed his right to authorship of the so-called 'doorstep-idea'. We find it in Bakema's response to the special issue of *l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* devoted to the work of Team 10 and some of its followers.²⁶ Referring to his early works built in 1946 and 1948 in Rotterdam in the immediate aftermath of the war, he posited that these were the first realizations in which the core idea from the Team 10 discourse of the doorstep was realized as a concept of interrelationship.²⁷ Apocryphal or not, as an act of appropriation by Bakema it seems so rare it is worth mentioning here. But then again, for Bakema this short reminder of original beginnings just marked the start of a few more pages devoted to a discussion of the real needs of modern society and architecture's special contribution to it as he saw it then and there in 1975, to finally start thinking in terms of global solidarity, to help out with 'research and actions' in order to avoid the 'destruction of the total energy system', because it would bring the 'destruction of man'.²⁸

Today

Bakema died from heart failure in 1981 at the age of 66. He had barely survived a heart attack in 1975 when on the plane flying back to the Netherlands from a visit to Israel. Postmodernism was on the rise, but not quite established as the new paradigm. Clearly, historically speaking Bakema belongs to the period before postmodernism. His work and lifetime coincided with the heyday of the welfare state. The nation state and its government bodies played a very different role in the planning and production of the built environment than they do today under the predominantly neo-liberal regime of privatization and free market ideology, which came into being after the elections that brought Margaret Thatcher to power in the UK in 1979 and Ronald Reagan in the USA in 1980.

The success of postmodernism in architecture was partly built on the assumption that we – in Western Europe and the USA – could safely remain within a nostalgic, stabilized image of the European city of healed urban spaces, free from the disruptive forces of 'growth



Jaap Bakema, sketch of low- and high-rise units combined into 'visual groups,' Rotterdam, Alexanderpolder, 1953

and change', free from such inventions as megastructures or the kasbahs of well-intended structuralism. Postmodernism promised, or so it seemed, to deliver a conservative status quo based on typo-morphological convention. This was before the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 and the USSR vanished, before the 'sleeping giant' of Communist China awoke and opened its borders to world trade. As we know now, this engendered a new, intensified condition of global interconnectedness, including the concomitant crises of ecological and urban 'destruction'. 'Total urbanization' has been back with us for at least two decades, yet under a mix of authoritarian, state-led capitalism and neo-liberal free market ideologies. Clearly, the current situation brings about a most vehement contestation of the general idea of an open society and what it might stand for: open borders, open economies, social mobility and fluid identities. New walls are literally built, to fence off the refugee flows inside Europe, to stop migrants between Mexico and the USA, for territorial control in Israel and in many other places. In the midst of the European refugee crisis of 2015, the *Daily Mail* tabloid ran an item on how no fewer than 65 countries were building or had built new walls, in contrast with the 16 borderwalls that existed when the Berlin Wall fell.²⁹ In the face of such overwhelming world events, how can one remain optimistic? With the demise of the welfare state, did the project of an inclusive, egalitarian, open society also come to an end? How to recapture the energy of someone like Bakema?

29 Simon Tomlinson, 'World of Walls', 21 August 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3205724/How-65-countries-erected-security-walls-borders.html>

30 Dirk van den Heuvel with *Volume*, Arjen Oosterman and Brendan Cormier (eds.) 'Open: A Bakema Celebration', insert to *Volume*, no. 41, 2014; see also the website: open.jaapbakemastudycentre.nl

To approach these questions, this book builds on the 2014 exhibition 'Open: A Bakema Celebration', which was presented at the Venice Architecture Biennale in response to the question from its curator Rem Koolhaas

to reflect upon a century of modernity against the background of changing national identities.³⁰ To present Bakema and his work as the embodiment of the Dutch welfare state in architecture and planning as a response to this question seemed only natural. It also somehow filled the historiographical omission described above, paying an overdue homage to one of the most important figures in post-war Dutch architecture.

For this book, Bakema's idea of building for an open society is once again taken as a common thread.

The story of its vicissitudes unfolds in three stages.

The first part, 'A Man with a Mission', presents Bakema's classic projects for the post-war welfare state, which are of a most immodest, monumental scale, and by which he envisioned a new kind of spatial condition that would comprehensively integrate the qualities of cities, modern infrastructure systems and natural landscapes. These projects propose a new post-national society, embracing a global, post-colonial condition, while in fact they are simultaneously limited by the late-capitalist production conditions and Cold War politics of the period.

The second part, 'Building Social Relations', focuses on a selection from the built projects to demonstrate the various approaches to Bakema's idea of democracy and society and how architecture might embody such lofty values of democratic representation and modern community. The third part, 'Growth and Change', represents the post-1968 moment of crisis as a moment of catharsis, in which claims for radical democracy and participation lead to a contestation of any attempt at top-down urban planning and architectural conception. Such contestation necessitated further exploration of the interrelations between democracy and planning and its consequences for architectural conception.

One might locate the demise of Bakema's project for an open society here in the early 1970s, yet at the same time it can also be viewed as a rigorous call to order inciting further radicalization of the idea.

Ultimately, this is the question the book wants to pose: after postmodernism, and after the neo-liberal crisis, how can this investigation into the interrelations between democracy and architecture restart? How can difference and diversity, growth and change be accommodated in a socially just way in the face of the unsettling questions of today? These are hardly historiographical questions, of course, or purely architectural. Still, these questions remain unresolved, and are in desperate need of further scrutiny and debate. Easy answers are not for grabs, while the complex nature of the connections between social practices and the built environment resist simplification. A first clue lies in Bakema's reference to the open society as a 'hidden potential'. Bakema would be the first to acknowledge that the open society entails a project, by its very definition a process through time, from

generation to generation, from one place and culture to another, and as such it is never finished. The open society and its values cannot be taken for granted. The open society needs bold visions, just as much as it needs small yet effective beginnings, be it as modest as a chair or a doorstep. First and foremost though, it can only be a meaningful condition through critique and contestation. Architectural history and theory, the historical production and the archive are not just witnesses or mementos of the past, they are crucial agents in such a project of actualization.

A book like this is a collective effort, especially so since it started with the adventure of the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2014 with the Dutch national presentation 'Open: A Bakema Celebration' at the Rietveld pavilion: open.jaapbakemastudycentre.nl

For their support and sharing their knowledge special thanks go out to Brita Bakema and the Bakema family, Barry Bergdoll, Hetty Berens, Guus Beumer, Meindert Booi, Lilet Breddels, BroekBakema, Pi de Bruijn, Jean-Louis Cohen, Mieke Dings, Experimental Jetset, Dick van Gameren, Genootschap Architectura et Amicitia, John Habraken, Herman Hertzberger, Frans Hooykaas, Behrang Mousavi, Eric Mumford, Joan Ockman, Arjen Oosterman, Max Risselada, Izak Salomons, Johannes Schwartz, Jörg Stollmann, Herman Verkerk, Piet Vollaard, Aldo Vos, and Carel Weeber.

Editor: Dirk van den Heuvel

Image editing and graphic design: Jaap van Triest

Copy editor: Billy Nolan

Translations: Robyn De Jong-Dalziel

Research: Victor Muñoz Sanz, Gianluca Ferriero, Arthur Schoonenberg, Soscha Monteiro de Jesus, and Heritage department Het Nieuwe Instituut, Christel Leenen, Alfred Marks

Publishing and production: Archis Publishers, Lilet Breddels, Arjen Oosterman

Printing: Die Keure, Bruges

Paper: Magno Volume

Distribution: Idea Books, Amsterdam

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isbn 978 90 77966 570

The Jaap Bakema Study Centre

is a research collaboration between Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam and TU Delft, Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment and was established in 2013. The research programme of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre finds its starting point with the vast collections of the State Archive for Dutch Architecture and Urban Planning which is part of Het Nieuwe Instituut. It investigates the intersections of history and theory of architectural design and planning, and contemporary issues in society and culture.

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Financial support

This publication was made possible with the generous support from Creative Industries Fund NL, Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, TU Delft, and Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam.

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In the photo montages of Lard Buurman the architecture of Van den Broek and Bakema appears as the modern, urban backdrop for the staging of everyday performances, routines and rituals. Bergen, Lijnbaan Rotterdam, 't Hooft Eindhoven, Koningswei Tilburg



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Lard Buurman studied photography at the Royal Academy of Arts in The Hague. His photography focuses on the narratives and lives of people that encounter each other in the public realm. He developed a visual idiom by reconstructing images from several documentary pictures taken from one spot to create a hybrid of documentary photography and film. In 2004, he travelled to China because he was fascinated by the speed with which this country's urban landscape had developed. In 2014, Hatje Cantz Verlag published his book on African public space, *Africa Junctions: Capturing the City*. In the second half of 2016 he took part in an art residency programme at the Institute For Provocation in Beijing. He is now working on several projects, from the Bijlmer in Amsterdam to Yekaterinburg in Russia and Shenzhen in China.

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Archive of Architectenbureau BroekBakema: 56 (top/centre/bottom left), 83 (bottom), 86 (top), 87 (top), 88 (bottom left), 104 (all but middle row), 105 (all but two images middle left), 106, 107 (centre/bottom), 108, 109, 110 (centre), 111 (centre/bottom), 112 (top/bottom), 113 (bottom), 130 (left), 142-143 (all), 150 (top), 151 (centre left/bottom), 152-155 (all), 160 (bottom), 162 (top right), 165 (bottom right), 168-169 (all), 172 (bottom), 175 (all), 176 (bottom), 177 (top/bottom), 178 (bottom), 179 (all), 181 (bottom), 182-185 (all), 186 (third row, left/bottom), 187 (second row, right/third row/bottom), 188-191 (all), 195 (top/centre), 196-199 (all), 204 (bottom centre/bottom right), 208-211 (all), 212 (bottom), 214 (top/bottom), 215 (top/bottom), 216-217 (all), 218 (bottom), 219 (top right/bottom), 221 (centre left), 222 (top right/bottom left), 223 (centre right/bottom right), 226 (top/bottom left), 228 (centre right), 250, 256 (top right/centre left/centre right/bottom), 257 (all), 258-261 (all), 260-261 (all), 268 (all), 269 (top three rows/bottom centre right/bottom right), 270-273 (all), 278 (top/bottom left), 279 (bottom right), 282 (all), 283 (top), 284 (top/centre left), 285 (top left/top centre), 286 (centre/bottom), 287 (bottom), 288 (top), 289 (bottom), 290 (centre), 291 (centre/bottom), 292 (all), 293 (top left/bottom three rows), 292-293 (all), 296 (top/centre/bottom right), 297 (all)
Aviodrome: 162-163 (bottom)
Brita Bakema family archive: 17-18 (bottom), 66 (centre left/bottom left), 67 (bottom right), 124, 166 (all), 167 (top/centre/bottom right), 186 (third row, right), 237 (bottom), 242 (all)
[Bakema J.B.], *The Humane Core: a Civic Center for St. Louis* (St. Louis, 1960): 76 (top), 81 (all)
Bakema, J.B., *Van stoel tot stad: een verhaal over mensen en ruimte* (Antwerpen and Zeist, 1964): 30, 114-121, 204 (top)
Bakema, J.B., *Thoughts about Architecture* (London, 1981): 229 (right), 274 (bottom right), 282 (bottom left), 282 (bottom left)
Sia Bakema: 194 (top)
Bode, P., *Kinos: Filmtheater and Filmvorführäume* (Munich: 1957): 161 (bottom)
Bos, A. and Oud, P.J., *De stad der toekomst, de toekomst der stad: een stedenbouwkundige en sociaal-culturele studie over de groeiende stadsgemeenschap* (Rotterdam 1946): 136 (right)
Risselada, M. (ed.), *Funktionalisme 1927-1961: Hans Scharoun versus de Opbouw: Mart Stam, Willem van Tijen, Johannes van den Broek, Jacob Bakema*, (Delft, 1997): 138, 240

Brinkman & Van den Broek and Van Tijen & Maaskant, *Woonmogelijkheden in het nieuwe Rotterdam: een studie uitgewerkt door Van Tijen & Maaskant en Brinkman & Van den Broek* (Rotterdam, 1941): 136 (left)

Lard Buurman: 2-9

Cals, J.L.M.Th., Bakema, J.B., *Orandakan* ('s-Gravenhage, 1971): 220 (centre right/bottom), 221 (bottom), 222 (top left/bottom right), 223 (top left/centre left/bottom left), 224 (all), 227 (all)

Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), *The Heart of the City: Towards the Humanisation of Urban Life* (London, 1952): 50 (bottom), 62 (top), 170-171 (all)

Deutsches Bundesarchiv, Allgemeiner Deutscher Nachrichtendienst – Zentralbild (Bild 183) \ Wikimedia Commons: 89 (right)
Le Carré Bleu 1962: 4, 27 (all)

Le Carré Bleu 1970: 1: 36-37 (all)

Daniel van Houten: 122, 125, 232, 234, 298, 301

Der Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, Abteilung Landes- und Stadtplanung, Berlin, *Hauptstadt Berlin: Ergebnis des Internationalen Städtebaulichen Ideenwettbewerbs* (Stuttgart 1960): 94 (left)

Havenbedrijf Rotterdam, Dienst Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam, Dienst Gemeentewerken Rotterdam, *Ontwikkeling Noordelijke Delta: Plan 2000+* (Rotterdam 1969): 140

Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam, *Tentoonstelling 'Carel Weeber, architect – radicaal en rationeel'*, in het NAI, 1990 \ Collection WEEK: 220 (top), 221 (top)
Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam, Weeber, C. \ Archive WEEB: 220 (centre left), 221 (centre right), 213 (top/centre/top right), 226 (bottom right)

Frans Hooykaas: 236 (top), 237 (top)

Joeedicke, J., *Architectuur en Stedebouw: das Werk van den Broek und Bakema* (Stuttgart 1963): 65 (centre left), 98, 200, 202 (bottom)

de 8 en Opbouw 1941, 8 (photos by Nico Jesse): 192-193
Faculty of Architecture and The Built Environment, TU Delft: 38-48 (all)

Forum 1960-61: 2, 76 (bottom), 77 (all), 80 (all)

Forum 1960-61, 8: 180 (top/centre right), 181 (top)

Forum 1962: 2, 18

Forum 1962: 4, 32

Forum 1965: 3, 110 (bottom), 113 (top)

Geyl, W.F. and Bakema - van Borssum Waalkes, S. (illustr.), *Wij en de Wijkgedachte* (Utrecht, 1948): 139

Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, *Bouwen voor een open samenleving: Brinkman Van der Vlugt Van den Broek Bakema* (Rotterdam, 1962): 130

Newman, O., *CIAM '59 in Otterlo* (Stuttgart 1961): 66-67, 67 (bottom left, centre centre)

NRC Media, n.a., 26-01-1972 (photograph:

Architectenbureau BroekBakema): 278 (bottom left)

Openbare Werken Gemeente Rotterdam:

144-145 (all), 146 (all), 147 (bottom), 148-149 (all),

150 (centre/bottom), 151 (top/centre right),

163 (top), 164 (top/centre), 165 (top/centre)

Perkins, L.B., *After Total War Can Come Total Living* (New York 1943): 136 (centre)

Het Parool, 23-05-1970 (photograph: Architecten-

bureau BroekBakema): 253

Rijksvoorlichtingsdienst (RVD), National

Archives of the Netherlands \ Fotocollectie

Rijksvoorlichtingsdienst Eigen, CO: 222 (centre)

Johannes Schwartz: 24-25, 128-129, 238-239, 304-305

Simon Smithson: 306

Special Collections, Harvard Graduate School

of Design: 95 (right)

Spectrum Film: 201 (all), 202 (top right), 296 (top)

Collection Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven: 263

(bottom)

Jan Vrijhof: 156 (centre/bottom), 157 (centre/

bottom), 158-159 (all), 160 (top/centre), 161 (top/

centre), 167 (bottom left), 269 (bottom left/bottom

centre left)

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