

reinvented the legacy of that tradition as a subjective creative act. In other words, Boullée did not negate the effects of the tradition of French classicism on the architecture of the city of Paris; his work even recuperated French classicism's most salient traits, such as uniformity, the prevalence of horizontal lines, the concave spatiality of *hôtel* courtyards and royal squares, and the vast space of the emerging metropolitan city. But he developed these effects through the exceptional terms of subjective compositions that resulted in finite form-objects. Whereas the making of modern spatiality, as exemplified by the transformation of Paris during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, evolved toward the totalizing space of circulation—in which architecture was more and more dissolved within the infinite space of urbanization—Boullée critiqued this tendency with the enclosed space and finite form of his public monuments. And the architecture of these monuments was made by recapitulating, in exceptional terms, the forms and experiences of an urban tendency, not as a ubiquitous force but as a finite, and thus critical, form.

5 THE CITY WITHIN THE CITY

OSWALD MATHIAS UNGERS, OMA,
AND THE PROJECT OF THE CITY AS ARCHIPELAGO

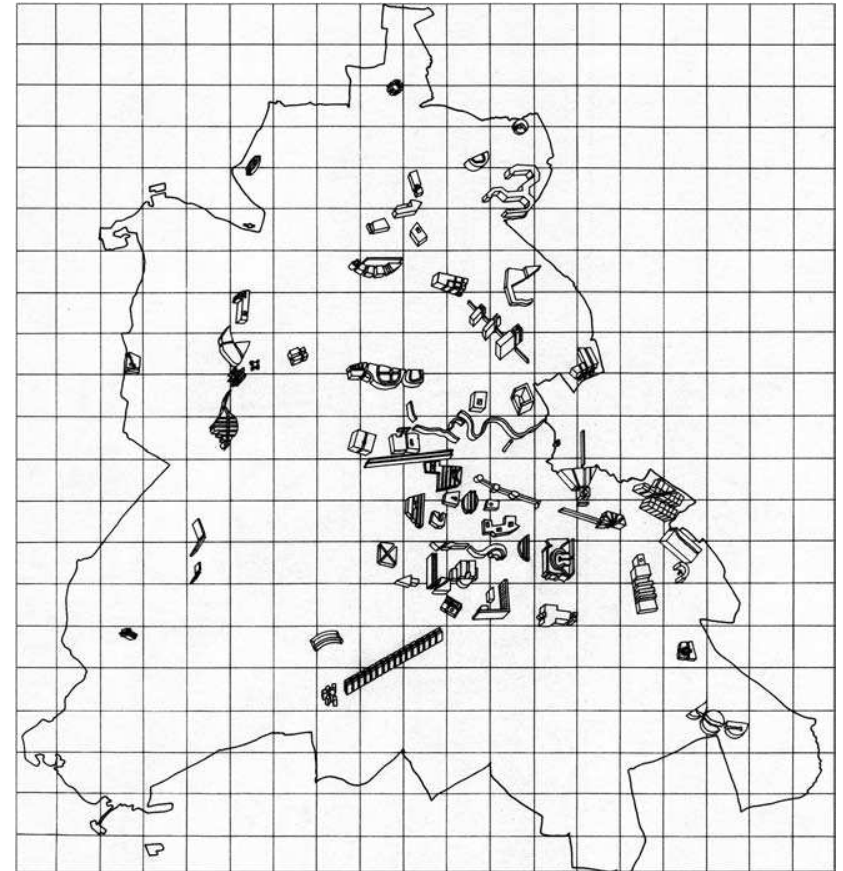
In the 1970s, West Berlin faced an ongoing urban crisis. Following the destruction of the Second World War, the division of Germany into two opposing blocks, and the partition of Berlin into two cities—East Berlin as the capital of the Democratic Republic of Germany, and West Berlin as the eleventh state of West Germany—West Berlin had become an island, a city-state enclosed by a perimeter wall and surrounded by a hostile territory. Because of this captivity, West Berlin had not recuperated from its postwar crisis. The city still contained vast tracts of empty space in which buildings seemed to be isolated islands and, in the 1970s, its population was declining.

In 1977 a group of architects launched a rescue project called Berlin as a Green Archipelago. Led by Oswald Mathias Ungers, the group included Rem Koolhaas, Peter Riemann, Hans Kollhoff, and Arthur Ovaska. To these architects, the problems of postwar West Berlin provided a potent model of “cities within the city,” or in Ungers’s terms, a “city made by islands.”¹ This approach reflected the driving concept of Ungers’s urban projects, which he and his students elaborated between 1964 and 1977, first when he was first teaching at the Technical University in Berlin (1963–1969) and then at Cornell University (1968–1986).² Ungers sought to turn Berlin’s idiosyncratic character as

a politically divided city in economic difficulty into a laboratory for a project of the city that countered the technocratic and romantic approaches popular at the time. Berlin as a Green Archipelago can also be understood as one of the earliest critiques of the Krier brothers' perimeter block restorations, which would have a decisive impact on the reconstruction of Berlin in the 1980s and 1990s.³

Berlin's fragmented reality—a city whose ruins registered the destruction of war, yet whose political intensity reflected its position as the “capital” of the Cold War—provided Ungers with a basis for interpreting the city as an entity no longer reliant on large-scale urban planning but rather composed of islands, each of which was conceived as a formally distinct micro-city. Ungers derived this approach from Karl Friedrich Schinkel, who was the city architect of Berlin during the first half of the nineteenth century. Schinkel had envisioned the capital of Prussia as a fabric punctuated by singular architectural interventions, rather than as a city planned along the principles of cohesive spatial design typical of the baroque period. For Ungers, this approach could overcome the fragmentation of postwar Berlin by turning the crisis itself (the impossibility of planning the city) into the very project of the *architecture of the city*. Following this line of thinking, Ungers developed his theory of the city as an archipelago, shrinking the city to points of urban density as a way to respond to the dramatic drop in West Berlin's population.

Berlin as a Green Archipelago is one of the very few projects in the history of city planning to address an urban crisis by radically shifting the focus from the problem of urbanization—the further growth of the city—to that of shrinking the city. Ungers's archipelago looked to frame and thus to form the existing city by accepting its process of depopulation. This acceptance was not projected as a “disurbanization” of the city, but as a way to



5.1
Oswald Mathias Ungers, Rem Koolhaas, Hans Kollhoff,
Arthur Ovaska, and Peter Riemann, *The City within the
City—Berlin as a Green Archipelago*, 1977. The city
as a “project of crisis,” shrinking the city to its significant
and irreducible parts.

reinforce its form by articulating the limits of each “island” in an archipelago of large-scale artifacts.

Countering the utopian visions of city dissolution or, conversely, the ideal of reducing the city to an overall system, or even of restoring the image of urban control by consolidating forms such as the perimeter block, Berlin as a Green Archipelago proposed a paradigm that went beyond modernist and postmodernist references and that even today is not fully appreciated for its provocative logic. This logic is revealed by tracing the development of Ungers’s project of the city through the series of proposals and studies he worked on in the 1960s and 1970s. This series can be seen as *one* project culminating in Berlin as a Green Archipelago, especially when one considers Ungers’s seminal urban design projects, his didactic research on Berlin, and then the link between his work and theories and OMA’s early attempt to define a “metropolitan architecture.” The intellectual exchange between Ungers and OMA was one of the most interesting lines of research about the city in the 1970s, even if it was not sufficiently developed. This exchange was based not only on the collaboration between Koolhaas and Ungers on key projects, but also on their mutual interest in the development of a “third way” to address the project of the city. Both sought to move beyond the impasse represented by modernist city planning and the incipient postmodern deconstruction of any project of the city.

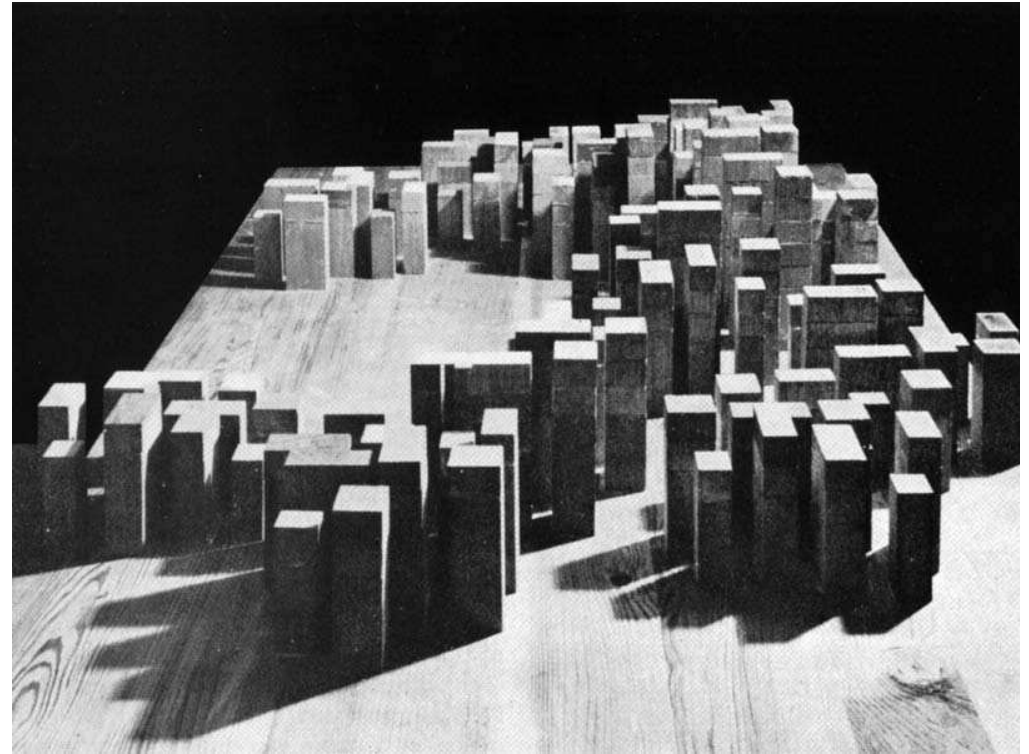
The central focus of this chapter is to reconstruct Ungers’s project as an attempt to define the architecture of the city as invested in architectural form. In his projects, Ungers articulated the limits and finitude of architectural form as possible “cities within the city,” as a recovery of defining traits of the city, such as its inherent collective dimension, its dialectical nature, its being made of separate parts, its being a composition of different and

at time opposing forms, within the urban crisis that was affecting many cities in the late 1960s and 1970s, of which Berlin was the most extreme and thus paradigmatic example.

Ungers’s formation as an architect coincided with one of the most difficult periods of German history. After the Second World War, Germans faced not only the task of rebuilding a country devastated by war, but also the tormented political, cultural, and moral reconstruction of a nation that for twelve years had succumbed to Nazism. Reconstruction was also difficult because Germany was the epicenter of Cold War politics. The ideological contraposition of East and West charged the reconstruction with ideological momentum, which produced on both sides, via a series of plans and competitions, exemplary urban projects whose forms and programs resonated as models for other cities throughout Germany and Europe.⁴ Two of the most exemplary flagship projects were the Stalinallee in the East, a monumental boulevard planned in 1952 by Hermann Henselmann and completed in 1960 as the new center of East Berlin, capital of East Germany, and the Hansa Viertel Interbau in the West, a residential district planned in 1957 and completed in 1961 as an international exhibition of housing projects designed by key figures in modern architecture, including Alvar Aalto, Walter Gropius, and Oscar Niemeyer. Besides emphasizing the dialectical nature of city, the formal and ideological contraposition of these projects also made explicit the impasse in defining new models for city reconstruction. If the Stalinallee recuperated, with monumental emphasis, the theme of the boulevard as the main image of the city, the Hansa Viertel produced the opposite extreme with an image of scattered housing types in a green landscape. It may have been the search for a third way, beyond these two directions, that motivated Ungers’s early attempts to outline his principles for the project of the city.

These principles were first formulated in a series of urban projects that Ungers developed in the early 1960s: housing proposals for Cologne Neue Stadt (1961–1964), Cologne Grünzug Süd (1962–1965), and Berlin Märkisches Viertel (1962–1967), and a competition entry for a student dormitory in Enschede, Holland (1964). Ungers's approach in these projects was explicitly polemical. Their rational, monumental form was intended as a critique of the late modernist praxis of designing the city through the generic application of given building standards, which reduced the role of the architect to the design of envelopes. In opposition to the traditional mandate given to urban projects, the main principle guiding these proposals was the conception of new housing complexes not as a generic extension of the city but as clearly formalized *city parts*, as finite artifacts that, in their internal formal composition, were evocative of an idea of the city.

The project for Cologne Neue Stadt, for example, was a direct critique of a typical late-modernist urban layout in which slabs and towers were scattered in green areas without producing a recognizable form. Ungers's complex was conceived as a series of residential towers of different heights, yet composed to form a single architectural entity. The typical plan of each apartment placed discrete rooms around the main living space. This composition gave form to the towers themselves, which were grouped vertical volumes that further articulated the spatial and formal composition of the entire complex. With this inventive composition, Ungers elevated the living room from just another room in the apartment to a sort of atrium (eliminating the corridor), while defining the exterior form of the housing blocks as a monumental composition of volumes. Alluding to the play of light and shadow produced by such an idiosyncratic formal composition, Ungers defined his Neue Stadt project as the archetype for a city of “negatives and positives”—that is, a city in which the



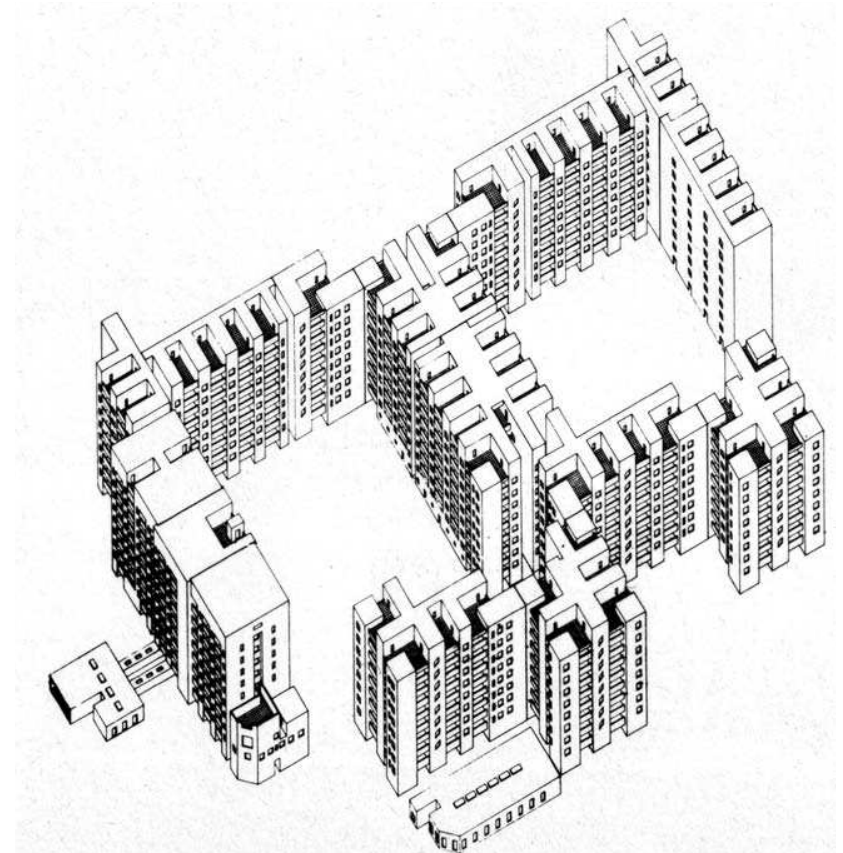
5.2

Oswald Mathias Ungers, proposal for Neue Stadt Housing Complex, Cologne, 1961–1964. The city as a composition of “positives and negatives.”

experience of form as a composition of built and void space became the main architectural motif.⁵

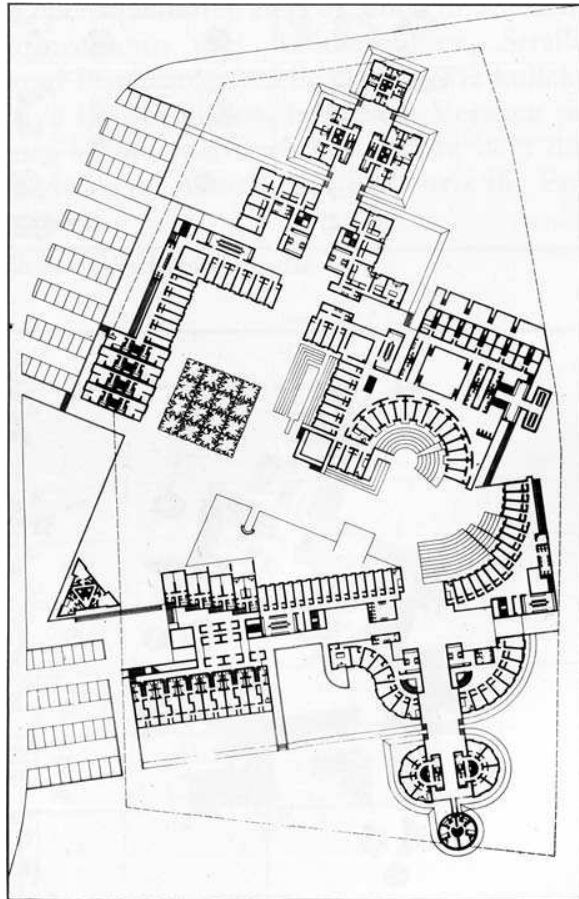
This solution was Ungers's first attempt to incorporate within an architectural complex the spatial phenomenology of the city. He applied the same approach, albeit less successfully, to the Märkisches Viertel complex in Berlin, grouping the given program of residential towers to form a sequence of open courts with irregular forms. As in *Neue Stadt*, he proposed to alter the given distribution of the apartments by changing the form or position of one or two rooms in each column of apartments. This procedure created a formal tension between the simplicity of each architectural part and the complexity of spatial arrangements created by their overall composition. This tension can be interpreted as an implicit critique of the spatial monotony of postwar urban settlements. In both *Neue Stadt* and Märkisches Viertel, Ungers accepted the building technology and typological standards that were given for these housing complexes, but he altered their formal composition in order to recuperate the possibility of monumental form within the peripheral spaces in which they were inserted.

Such a critique of postwar urbanism is explicit in Ungers's project for the Enschede student housing competition in Holland. He designed this complex as a catalog of formal compositions starting with the basic figures of geometry—the triangle, the square, and the circle. Similar to his previous schemes, the design method produced a complex space evocative of the city by using a very restricted formal vocabulary. In reaction to the site—on the outskirts of a provincial town—Ungers rejected the typical settlement logic of a campus of scattered pavilions in a green space and proposed to design the new campus addition in the form of a self-sufficient city, whose spatiality recalls the complex composition of spaces of Hadrian's villa, but whose



5.3

Oswald Mathias Ungers, Märkisches Viertel Housing Complex, Berlin, 1962–1967, axonometric. The project achieves a sense of monumentality through the use of raw, prefabricated architectural forms.



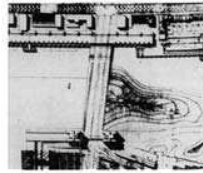
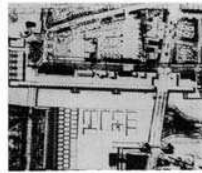
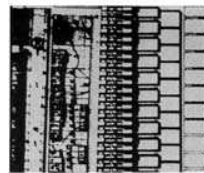
5.4
Oswald Mathias Ungers, competition entry for a student dormitory, Enschede, Holland, 1964. Plan of the complex. An example of *coincidentia oppositorum*: mixing Durand's normative architecture with the spatial complexity of Hadrian's villa.

building forms are reminiscent of Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand's austere architectural grammar.

The articulation of simple architectural volumes to compose and frame complex sequences of spaces assumes a radical form in what can be considered Ungers's canonical urban design project: Cologne Grünzug Süd. While the idiosyncratic composition of volumes for Neue Stadt, Märkisches Viertel, and Enschede critiqued the repetitive spatial patterns of modernist town planning, the proposal for a residential district at Grünzug Süd (which he presented at the Team Ten meeting in Berlin in 1966)⁶ can be seen as Ungers's critique of one of the most emblematic alternatives to late-modernist urban design: the megastructure.

At the time of the project, Grünzug Süd was a suburb with no outstanding urban or architectural features. The initial reason for remodeling the area was that the newly built Autobahn connected the city's ring road to Bonn. Instead of designing a new complex like Neue Stadt or Märkisches Viertel, Ungers conceived the project as a gradual transformation of the site based on a systematic morphological rereading of its somewhat ordinary form. Ungers took the direction of the area's main street as a section through which to analyze the morphology of the city. Following this analysis, he evolved the city's existing, heterogeneous collection of spaces and buildings into a linear composition of clearly defined, different architectural events made by different building typologies.⁷

This approach did not rely on mimetic contextualism, however, but adopted a vocabulary of abstract and austere architectural forms. What Ungers extrapolated from the existing city fabric were not its vernacular or iconographic elements, but rather the most abstract architectural elements found in the sequence of open and closed spaces, the rhythms of walls, the volumetric effects of firewalls, and the seriality of housing facades with their



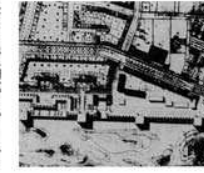
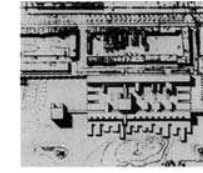
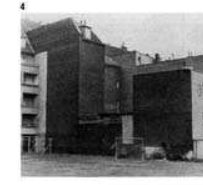
Spalte 1: Einfamilienhausreihe: Addition gleicher Elemente. Wechsel zwischen geschlossener, formalisierter und offener, informeller Zone.



Spalte 2: Durchgebildete, unterschiedliche Einzelkörper vor zusammenfassender Wand.



Spalte 3: Tor und Brücke



Spalte 4: Geschichtete Baukörper zwischen Wänden



Spalte 5: a) Straßenraum, b) horizontale Baukörper mit vertikaler Durchdringung



Spalte 6: Platz mit eingestellten Objekten

5.5

Oswald Mathias Ungers, competition entry for Grünzug Süd, 1962, as presented in *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 7 (1966). Against the megastructure: city form as a (linear) composition of parts. The intervention uncovers the latent formal themes of the existing city.

repetitive patterns of openings. These formal elements were transformed into austere compositions of new housing, through which the site's latent urban text was made explicit and legible: for example, the linear form of the fragmented existing row houses was recombined in the variegated rhythm of the new houses.

This strategy is illustrated in a presentation panel of the project in which the entire plan of Grünzug Süd is framed as a linear composition of six distinct parts.⁸ Each part is further illustrated not with a rendering of the new interventions, but with photographs of the existing elements. The photographs depict ordinary spatial situations—street views, interrupted rows of buildings, firewalls, passages, open fields—and render the spatial discontinuity of the city as the main architectural form of the project. The formal tension between the extant and the new suggests more than an acknowledgment of the existing situation as a starting point for the project; it also shows the constitutive formal tension of city form: the dialectic between the irreducible formal and spatial autonomy of each part and the possibility of conceiving the different parts as one coherent structure, as a *city part*. In Grünzug Süd this dialectical tension is deliberately radicalized.

While the formal coherence imposed by the megastructure subsumed the entire city within a single “structure” that could expand ad infinitum, the linear composition of Grünzug Süd not only presupposed the city as a dialectical composition of large, yet limited artifacts, but also considered the internal structure of these artifacts as separate and autonomous parts. This internal structure reflected the separateness that characterizes city form and became, in its limited dimension, a representation of the city. As the project's realism demonstrated, Ungers's “city within the city” was not the creation of an idyllic village as opposed to the fragmentation of the city, but an attempt to reflect the splintering form of the city from within the architectural artifact itself.

Grünzug Süd was not built, but it provided the ideas that became the basis of his studies on Berlin.

Between 1963 and 1969 Ungers taught at the Technical University of Berlin. Prior to his arrival, conventional student assignments were based on ideal programs such as “a house for an artist” or “a house near a lake,” and were devoid of any urban implication.⁹ To counter this clear separation of architecture and urban design, Ungers introduced design experiments based on a systematic reading of the city, and proposed to make West Berlin a laboratory for architectural speculation. The most critical conditions, such as the city's insularity, postwar fragmentation, uneven urban development, and the Berlin Wall, would be mapped and turned into a field of possibilities for radical architectural inventions.

This approach was a polemical stance against Hans Scharoun's influence on the culture of the school.¹⁰ During the 1950s Scharoun had worked on a planning idea for Berlin that culminated in his entry for the international Berlin Hauptstadt competition (1958). Scharoun proposed transforming the entire city into a vast green park served by an efficient web of motorways. The project opposed the monumentality of East Berlin's urban interventions, such as the Stalinallee, as well as the historical legacy of Prussian Berlin, which Scharoun identified as the progenitor of Nazi ideology. Working against these legacies, Scharoun projected the destruction of Berlin as the possibility of an anticity, a disurbanist plan in which the ruins of Berlin were turned into a utopian pastoral scene.

Opposing this interpretation of the city, Ungers saw Berlin in its most critical form—a divided city composed of irreducibly divergent parts and, because of the uncertainty of its reconstruction, in a state of permanent incompleteness. Ungers found an archetype for this situation in Schinkel's projects for the

so-called Havellandschaft (the landscape around the river Havel), a vast complex of pavilions, castles, and gardens that Schinkel, together with his collaborators and Peter Joseph Lenné, developed throughout the first half of the nineteenth century as a royal amenity for the Hohenzollern.¹¹ Commissioned by the royal family to design a sort of Hadrian's villa to be built along the Havel, Schinkel had proposed a landscape of architectural events that involved the entire area of the river without subsuming it within an overall geometrical composition. His interventions took the form of an archipelago in which architecture was juxtaposed with the natural setting. The paradigm for Ungers's later approach was one of the Havellandschaft sites: Schinkel's design for Klein Glienicke, a garden with pavilions designed between 1824 and 1837, which Ungers would use as a veritable guiding archetype for himself and his students on the essential nature of Berlin. In this complex, architectural objects such as a casino, villa, and pavilion are placed in the garden without any axial reference; rather, they establish unexpected relationships that are further multiplied by other, smaller architectural elements scattered within the park. What characterizes Klein Glienicke is the radical opposition between the richness of the spatial relationships and the elemental simplicity of the architecture made of primary forms, such as the pergola on the Havel. Moreover, these forms are not just fragments scattered in the park. Because of their different compositions, materials, and programs, they are all based on a formal grammar that establishes an archipelago of formal events. Schinkel used the same approach in his interventions in Berlin. The city's fabric, fragmented after the urban crisis of the Napoleonic war, was not corrected with attempts to produce overall plans but was simply assumed to be the landscape of the city. Schinkel developed his public works as point compositions

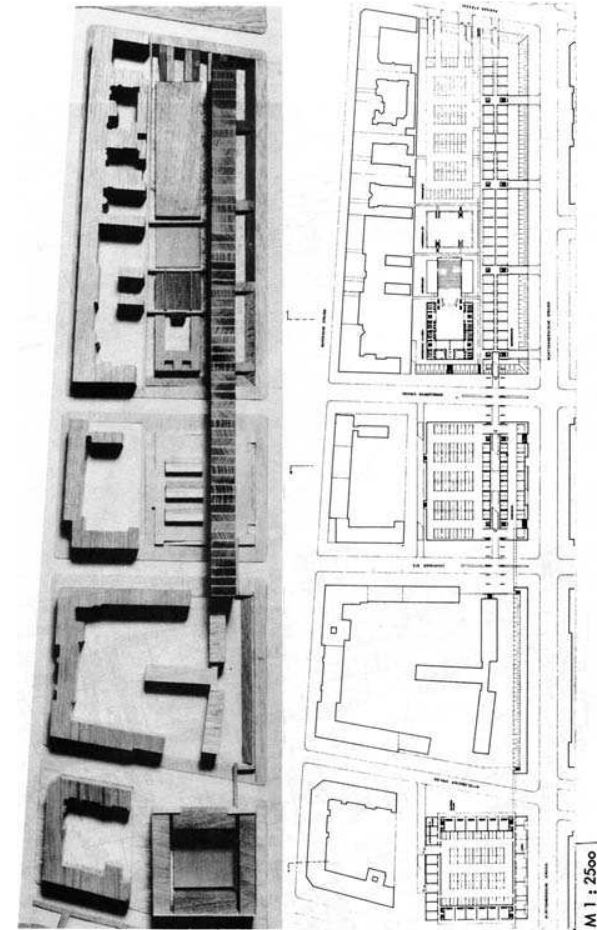
of autonomous blocks freely arranged within the space of the city, leaving the incompleteness of the urban fabric as the possibility for a new spatiality. Ungers adapted this conception of Berlin in order to address the effects of war on the city rather than tap into a romantic ideal. In this context, Schinkel's open compositions along the Havel and in Berlin were used to sublimate the fragmented landscape of contemporary Berlin.

Following this reading of the city and employing the method Ungers used for Grünzug Süd, his students produced systematic morphological and geographic surveys of Berlin in which they systematically analyzed the infrastructure of the city—the Autobahn, the parks, the canals, the river Spree, the U-Bahn network.¹² These layers of Berlin were viewed not only as urban data, but also in terms of their architectural consequences: as disruptive forms that divided the city into parts, obstructing any organic recovery of the city. The unpredictable way in which the river Spree cut through the city, for example, was assumed to be the logic for settlement interventions that would transform the disrupted sites into parts of a new linear city.¹³ Rather than trying to “solve” the crises of the city, the projects proposed with this method sought to exploit them as the thematic form of the project itself. Looking at the projects shown in Ungers's course booklets, one sees the contrast between the will to contextualize the project themes and interventions in the most critical points of the city and the will to confront these conditions with an austere repertoire of restrained forms. In one project, published in *Wohnen am Park* (Buildings in the park), four partially destroyed city blocks are superimposed on a sequence of three different residential structures (a mixed-use slab, a low-rise T-shaped building, and a mixed-use courtyard building), all held together in a linear composition by a public elevated street.¹⁴ While the elevated street unites the four blocks in one complex, the three

proposed freestanding buildings fill the blocks without completing their perimeters, thus maintaining the status of ruins in the “park” of the complex. The common basis for all of these projects was point interventions: instead of being made with an overall plan, the project for Berlin was made through the design of radical urban architectures that envisioned the development of the city as the eruption of radical forms of metropolitan living. In some cases the students simply mapped existing “ordinary” features of the city and idealized them not as default situations but as explicit projects. For example, the numerous firewalls made visible by the destruction of the war were systematically photographed and then compiled to create an architectural sequence of blind brick walls that also parodied the Berlin Wall.¹⁵

The best representation of this method came not from Berlin but from London. In the late 1960s, chafing against Archigram’s dominant pedagogy at the Architectural Association, Elia Zenghelis, a teacher at the AA, introduced the students in his unit, among them Rem Koolhaas, to Ungers’s work. In a conversation with Ungers in 2004, Koolhaas said that Grünzug Süd was his first contact with Ungers’s work.¹⁶

In 1971, Koolhaas decided to visit the Berlin Wall and document it as a work of architecture for his third-year project.¹⁷ Koolhaas’s description of the architecture of the wall is similar to Ungers’s compositional logic for Grünzug Süd. Koolhaas discusses his discovery that the linear structure of the wall was not just a single line cutting through the city, but a linear sequence of different architectural events held together by the political will to impose on the city a state of closure.¹⁸ In his description, Koolhaas strategically silences the political meaning of the wall to emphasize the way in which the political institution of closure, once made real within the form of the city, manifested itself not as the ideal form of a line, but in the ordinary forms



5.6
Ulrike Bangerter, multifunctional block, ground-floor plan and model, from *Wohnen am Park*, 1967, student project no. 5.

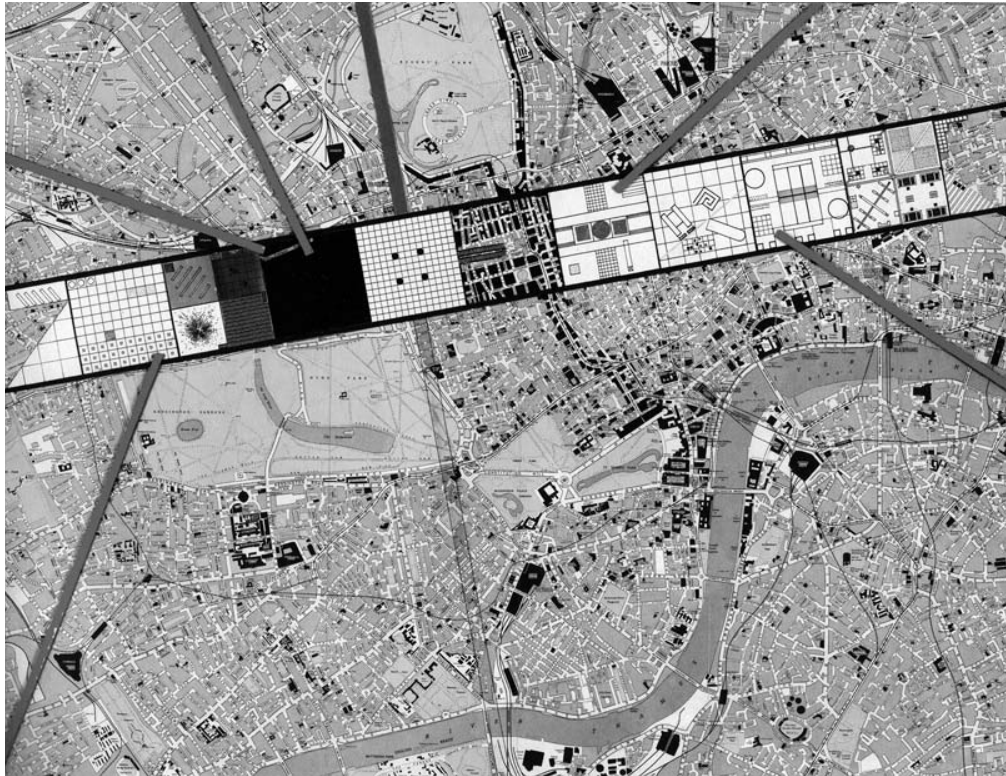
of houses, walls, fences, and other architectural means of the division of space.

It was precisely the “ordinary” architecture of the Berlin Wall that suggested to Koolhaas how even the most imposing artifact, once deployed in a real situation, loses its purity as a unitary form and becomes a sequence of very different situations. Following Ungers’s Grünzug Süd project and the “retroactive” rationalization of existing critical situations that Ungers and his students applied in their projects for Berlin, Koolhaas “elevated” the Berlin Wall as a representation of how architecture was more likely to provoke discontinuity than unity. This is evident in the pictures of the wall that Koolhaas used in order to construct his argument. In these photos, the linear form of the wall, like the strip of Grünzug Süd, becomes many different spatial events—open fields, rows of buildings, fences made of different materials, etc. As in the projects of Ungers’s students, the theme of the wall is represented through a series of radically different situations hardly conceivable as a coherent sequence or form of continuity, but instead revealing city form as a site of radical discontinuity.¹⁹

One can argue that such an approach to the city—an approach inspired by Ungers’s Grünzug Süd project—became the conceptual basis for Koolhaas’s *Delirious New York*, which uses the most critical urban conditions as the basis for a city project.²⁰ In following this link between Ungers and the early work of Koolhaas and Zenghelis, we can see the fundamental development of Ungers’s city-within-the-city concept as the germ of Koolhaas and Zenghelis’s Exodus, or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture (1972). As the subtitle suggests, the subject of this project is the inmate. Koolhaas and Zenghelis intended the “voluntary prisoner” to serve as a metaphor for the inhabitant of the metropolis in its most extreme condition, an exacerbated version of

communitarian citizenship based on self-imposed closure.²¹ The voluntary prisoner is a metaphor for a subject who deliberately accepts the reality of the city as made of separation and exclusion rather than unity and inclusion. Correspondingly, Exodus consists of two parallel walls cutting through London and dividing it into eight enclosed parts. Both the housing complex of Grünzug Süd and the Berlin Wall also cut through an existing city, encompassing and radicalizing the different city conditions. Exodus was not simply a line, like Superstudio’s Continuous Monument, or the repetition of an identical module, like Ivan Leonidov’s scheme for Magnitogorsk (although both projects were surely inspirations for Exodus); it was a linear composition made of radically different city parts. Each of these parts was meant to be a morphological and programmatic exaggeration of city parts (the suburb, the hospital, the museum, the park) in the form of social and architectural allegories of city life. Exodus deliberately assumed that conditions such as separation, aggression, and enmity were logical ingredients for the city. Thus, Exodus evolved from Ungers’s interpretation of Berlin as a city made of contrasting parts to a more explicit political scenario.

In a recent lecture, Zenghelis maintained that the different parts of Exodus were conceived in two ways: as arranged within a linear structure, and as autonomous city islands for independent metropolitan communities.²² As a project, Exodus—for which Ungers, after encountering Koolhaas, showed great admiration and interest—can be considered the link connecting the architectural principles introduced in Grünzug Süd and Ungers’s studies on Berlin with the more politically explicit project of Berlin as a Green Archipelago. For Exodus amplified a theme already emergent in Ungers’s work: the principle of turning the splintering forces of the metropolis into architectural form that addresses the collective dimension of the city.



5.7

Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis with Madelon Vriesendorp and Zoe Zenghelis, *Exodus*, or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture, 1972, plan. Architectural form as analogous to the splintering forms of the metropolis.

Ungers had already begun to elaborate a more overtly political approach in the research topics he initiated upon moving to the United States in 1969. (For one year, 1968–1969, he taught both in Berlin and at Cornell.) Living in upstate New York, he became interested in historical examples of communal life in America, and wrote a book on this topic with his wife, Liselotte, in the early 1970s.²³ It is easy to imagine that Ungers began to research these communities for possible social and political clues that would support his idea of the city as a field of delimited forms. Countering the traditional Marxist critique of experimental socialist communes as irrelevant in changing the general organization of society, Ungers argued that these American communities provided a viable urban paradigm.

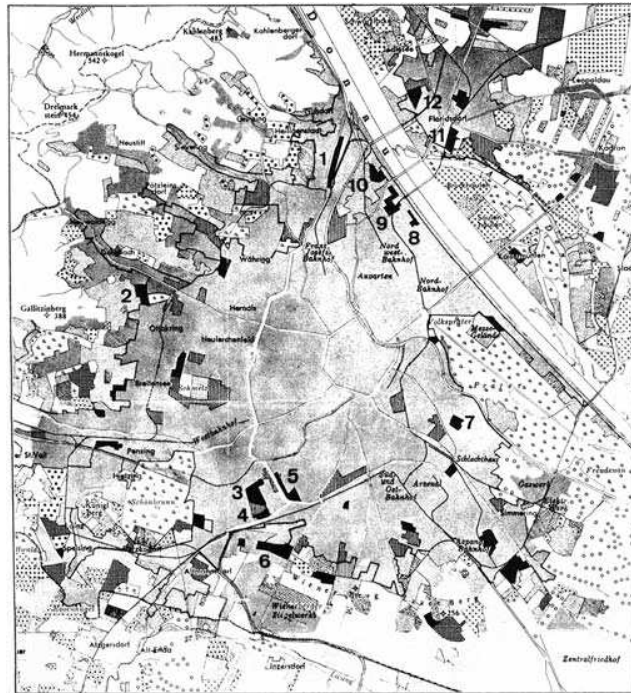
For example, in an essay summarizing his studies of religious communities, Ungers considered how radical social lifestyles were implemented not only as totalizing utopias imposed on the whole of society, but also as a set of communitarian principles voluntarily embraced by secessionist groups that built their villages as self-sufficient places, independent from existing urban centers.²⁴ According to Ungers, these “concrete utopias” were possible precisely because they were conceived as limited in terms of space and number of inhabitants. Religious communities such as the Shakers were characterized by a principle of communal life in which there was no private property; all facilities were for collective use. This resulted in settlements whose form was organized for a communal life, with an abundance of common spaces, and in clear contrast to cities, which are shaped by land ownership. Ungers observed that radical communality was possible only within limited settlements, where an increase in population did not result in the growth of individual settlements but in their multiplication. The limits of each settlement were self-imposed by the community itself according to the

possibility of self-management; thus their form was independent from any external urban order.

These villages were not the embodiment of economic segregation or other social management criteria, but of the ideological will of a community to separate itself from the rest of society by following a principle of collective life. This example led Ungers to believe that developing an idea of the city as an archipelago of limited parts was more feasible than attempting to realize overall projects like those of modernist architects; in addition, the concept of the archipelago opened up a new political conception of a city form in which groups of inhabitants could self-organize their independence through architectural artifacts that allowed them to claim space for their communitarian life.

A similar observation emerged in Ungers's research on the superblock. He especially focused on the Vienna superblock, the most prominent urban architectural project of the social-democratic government of the Austrian capital between 1919 and 1934. The so-called Red Vienna can be considered the clearest representation of what a "city within the city" means, and is thus one of the most important references for Berlin as a Green Archipelago. Over the course of a few years, and in spite of difficult economic circumstances, the government of Vienna had constructed 14,000 new apartments for the working class in the form of blocks located within the city. In one of his course booklets Ungers published a map of the Viennese superblocks, which showed that their locations were not based on an overall city plan but were point interventions.²⁵ The municipality proposed locating these new housing schemes within the city, counter to an initial idea of building them on the periphery as an extension of the city. In an introductory article to his research on the Vienna superblock, Ungers stressed how this typology was an alternative to the settlement logic of both the garden city and the

Siedlung; in those models, the working class was alienated from the rest of society within a fragmented and marginalized district on the periphery of industrial cities. Vienna's municipal government opted instead for a new social housing stock in the form of a very precise typology: the Hof, a superblock whose spatial and programmatic principle was based on monumental interior courtyards reminiscent of the monastic typology of the cloister. Ungers noted that the main goal of the Vienna government was to raise working-class consciousness and the communitarian spirit of its inhabitants rather than just to solve the problem of a housing shortage. For this reason, the Viennese superblocks did not expand the existing city, but were situated within the city as self-sufficient islands in pronounced contrast to their surroundings. As Ungers emphasized, the superblock's clear architectural identity and generosity of collective spaces were in opposition to the individualization of bourgeois metropolitan residences. Unlike many modernist city projects, the Viennese superblocks were not innovative in terms of style, newness of building components, or layout of the apartments; instead, their innovation lay in their radical redistribution of collective facilities within a radical and recognizable architectural form. Each superblock was equipped with basic community services such as a clinic, library, laundry, gym, restaurant, and kindergarten. These facilities were designed to provide the superblock with both self-sufficiency and a monumental character that was intended to convey the political image of these complexes through the use of their collective spaces. The result was the autonomy of the superblocks from the planning standards of the city, which led to an archipelago of places for communitarian life. The formal and typological theme of the courtyard was decisive in reinforcing the identity of this communitarian life.



DOKUMENTATION

1 Karl Marx - Hof

2 Sandsteine

3 Rebellhof

Liabenechhof

Lorenzshof

Frühlingshof

4 Fuchsenfeldhof

Am Fuchsenfeld

5 Metzkeinstaler - Hof

Reumannshof

Julius Popp - Hof

Herwegghof

Matteotti Hof

6 George Washington - Hof

7 Rebellhof

8 Beerhof

Janecekshof

9 Otto Haas - Hof

Winarskyhof

Gerihof

10 Engelsplatz

11 Paul Speiser - Hof

12 Karl Seitz - Hof

11

5.8

Map of Red Vienna, from Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Die Wiener Superblocks* (1969). The city as an archipelago of large-scale housing blocks.



5.9

Karl Ehn, Karl-Marx-Hof, Vienna, 1926–1931. View of the courtyard showing gardens, kindergarten, and arched pavilions.

This aspect was also decisive in Ungers's reevaluation of the superblock. He stressed that while modernist planning focused on refining architectural space with optimal living standards, the architects of the superblocks focused instead on the thematic performance of space, giving the architecture a precise ritual identity that would elevate social housing from the mere act of providing space for the social management of the working class to the bold gesture of a monumentality that gave the inhabitants dignity without masking their class identity. Ungers's fascination with both the communes of America and the idea of the superblock as a building type, which corresponded to his idea of the city as a composition of *Grossform* (big form), added a social and political dimension to the concept of designing a city through the kinds of point interventions that he took from Schinkel's Berlin.

This increasingly political understanding of the city as archipelago was triggered by two events: one, Ungers's encounter with Koolhaas and Zenghelis in 1972, and the other, his confrontation with Colin Rowe's "neoliberal" theory of urban design, which took form in the early 1970s as *Collage City*. For Ungers, the latter event was decisive in clarifying that his concept of the city as an archipelago was more than just the morphological collage of different architectural figures.

Rowe first invited Ungers to teach at Cornell in 1968. As his academic and professional position became increasingly controversial with the anti-architecture political protests in German universities in 1968, Ungers moved to Cornell in hope of finding a more sympathetic university environment.²⁶ At the time, Rowe was shifting his work from a close reading of architecture to the formulation of a comprehensive theory of urban design, which would later appear in his book *Collage City* (published in 1978, but completed in 1973).²⁷ Rowe countered the utopian *tabula rasa* method of modernist planning with an urbanism based

on a sophisticated bricolage of different historical architectural examples. Such an approach, he held, would lead to a city fit for a liberal democratic regime based on the cultural principles of inclusion and pluralism. For Rowe, the formal paradigm for such an ideal city was already realized in the Rome depicted by Giovanni Battista Nolli in his famous topographic survey.²⁸ Through the ideological lens of liberal politics, Rowe transformed Nolli's Rome into a "collage city," a city formed by the incremental adjustment of disparate architectural forms, yielding an intricate collage of elegant architectural "figures" coexisting, in spite of their differences, within the "ground" of the city fabric. By this move, Rowe compressed Rome's time-based evolution into the present tense, suppressing its heritage of conflict by collapsing its complexity into a single temporal layer. The potential for conflict was reduced to mere morphological variety contained within the informal framework of the topographic ground—the city's irregular fabric—which in Rowe's terms was meant to act as a *poché* between the different figures.

Rowe invited Ungers to Cornell because he assumed that Ungers's ideas in architecture and urban design were evolving in a direction similar to his bricolage approach. But it was precisely Ungers's recognition of the fundamental difference between Rowe's project and his own that helped him to further radicalize the theoretical premises of his approach, which he later characterized as the "dialectic city," as opposed to Rowe's "collage city."²⁹

Rowe's central thesis in *Collage City* revolves around understanding architecture as offering "set pieces" for building city spaces. Set pieces are architectural forms that can be reduced to relativistic devices freely extrapolated from any historical, political, or geographical context. The only context Rowe acknowledges is morphological collage: the possibility of combining radically different architectural figures in a pleasant composition.

According to him, any architectural figure can sustain multiple uses as long as it remains useful and convincing as a figure—namely, as a morphological datum. Rowe argues that its convincingness as a figure is merely based on the architect's personal sense of morphology. The criteria of composition, by implication, are subjective and separated from the broader cultural and political context, which Ungers placed at the center of his idea of the city of contrasting parts. In Rowe's idea of the city, difference is reduced to a mere morphological exercise: the incremental accumulation of differences. It was precisely against this idea of urban design that Ungers developed his own method. Ungers's rejection of this image of the city of accumulation, the concrete result of free-market politics, becomes evident in what can be considered the two most important projects he elaborated in the 1970s, during his American period: the urban design proposals for two areas of West Berlin—Tiergarten Viertel and Lichterfelde.

The project for Tiergarten Viertel was Ungers's competition entry for the area around West Berlin's cultural center, the Kulturforum, developed in the 1960s as the city's ideological counterpart to the East's Alexanderplatz.³⁰ The Kulturforum was already a place of conflicting ideologies, as it consisted of two radically different buildings: Scharoun's expressionist Philharmonic Concert Hall and Public Library, and Mies van der Rohe's classicist New National Gallery. The dialectic between Scharoun's and Mies's interventions was more than a stylistic one, as it summarized the two most important cultural directions that had animated Germany in the first half of the twentieth century: expressionism and rationalism. At the time of the competition, the area was in a fragmented state, and the resolutely insular form of Mies's National Gallery was perhaps the most appropriate comment.

The competition called for a densification and recomposition of the area's fragmented urban structure. Ungers rejected



5.10

Oswald Mathias Ungers, proposal for the Tiergarten Viertel, Berlin 1973, axonometric. Fusing architectural abstraction and urban realism.

the idea of recomposition, and instead highlighted the existing condition in order to transform fragmentation into a contrasting composition of forms. Instead of solving the project within one overall scheme, he articulated his plan in six different and autonomous architectural artifacts that responded to local situations. These artifacts were imagined as superblocks loosely gathered along the Landwehrkanal, the small river that framed the southern part of the Kulturforum. Each superblock contained a mixed-use program (housing, offices, shops, hotels, community facilities). Reminiscent of Durand's and Superstudio's gridded architectural compositions, the architecture was radically abstract and generic, made by extruding simple archetypes such as a square, a cruciform, and a perimeter block. The clear reference to Superstudio can be interpreted as reflecting Koolhaas's influence on this stage of Ungers's work.³¹ In the Tiergarten Viertel project, Superstudio's Continuous Monument was interpreted as a sequence of artifacts made from the same gridded volumes that the Florentine group called "histograms of architecture." According to Superstudio, the histograms were the expression of a radically generic and imageless architecture indifferent to program and context. Ungers appropriated Superstudio's histograms as the most suitable language vis-à-vis the programmatic instability that characterized the superblocks, yet he inflected their abstract form according to the conditions of the site. While Rowe's set pieces were quotations of the historical city, Ungers's city forms were generic yet responsive to existing situations, especially those that had no historical pedigree, such as traffic intersections, wastelands, and incomplete perimeter blocks. In the proposal, extremely repetitive eight-story courtyard buildings were inserted into existing fragmented perimeter blocks to create a contrast between the fragmented perimeter and the continuity of the new block. A wasteland is colonized with six equal

blocks clustered into one form in order not to completely spoil the empty area. An underground block is inserted within Mies's and Scharoun's civic monuments in the form of a "negative" block that functions as a metro station. Unlike Rowe's value-free figurative exuberance, these interventions were each spatially different yet made with the same formal grammar: simple orthogonal extrusions of built form. In this way, difference was not an ad hoc accumulation of architectures, but the dialectical tension between different city spaces—the courtyard, the block, the sunken plaza—produced by the juxtaposition of simple forms.

In this sense Ungers's approach is much closer to Peter and Alison Smithson's "as-found" method than to Rowe's collage. Since the 1950s, the Smithsons' as-found approach to the city consisted of fine-tuning modern architecture's formal achievements with the concrete conditions of the postwar contemporary city, such as fragmentation, mass culture, and the anonymity of the urban landscape. While many architects took inspiration from the ordinary and the everyday image of the city, what characterized the as-found was the Smithsons' commitment to the language of modern architecture. This approach was eloquently elaborated in their late 1970s book, *Without Rhetoric*, in which they attempt to rewrite modern architectural examples as pragmatic solutions to the city's most contemporary problems rather than as idealistic projections.³² Peter Smithson first presented this position at Ungers's seminars in Berlin in the late 1960s.³³ A "without rhetoric" approach is evident in Ungers's projects of that period, and especially in his competition entry for a housing district in Lichterfelde, which, together with Tiergarten Viertel, represented Ungers's most radical step toward the idea of the city that he would summarize in Berlin as a Green Archipelago.³⁴

Lichterfelde is an ordinary suburb comprising single-family houses and apartment blocks. In 1973, there was a proposal to

connect this suburb to other parts of the city with a new ring road, which gave rise to a competition for a new residential settlement. In his entry, Ungers proposed to articulate the new settlement in the form of a barcode organized perpendicularly to the proposed vehicular artery. Even though the barcode form was a clear re-visitation of the modernist *Siedlung* of parallel rows of buildings, the rows here were made not just of continuous buildings but of a heterogeneous sequence of typologies, especially unheroic types such as urban villas and low-rise row houses. Ungers chose these typologies because they were already present in the site. The project systematically cataloged existing ordinary features of the site, such as individual houses, small pathways, rows of trees, and semipublic gardens. Ungers proposed to reorganize and alter these “found” features according to the linear logic of the barcode, which strengthened the form of the settlement by organizing these features in strips.³⁵ In this way, the existing quasi-suburban condition of the city was gradually transformed into a coherent and abstract architectural composition without altering the attributes of the original situation. As in Tiergarten Viertel, the as-found conditions of the site are accepted and even assumed to be the guiding principle of the city, yet they are framed and organized by an abstract form—in the case of Lichterfelde, with the strips.

Ungers’s formal operations constituted another fundamental aspect of these projects, besides establishing a further crucial difference from Rowe’s *Collage City*. These operations on form were rooted in the analysis of the collective nature of the city: its common, ordinary, collective forms, rather than its individual architectural figures. In projects such as Tiergarten Viertel and Lichterfelde, the design intervention consists of the formation of city parts around contemporary forms of public and collective spaces. The spaces—like the kitchen gardens of Grünzug Süd



5.11

Oswald Mathias Ungers, Rem Koolhaas, and Karl Dietzch, competition entry for IV Ring, Berlin-Lichterfelde, Berlin, 1974, plan.

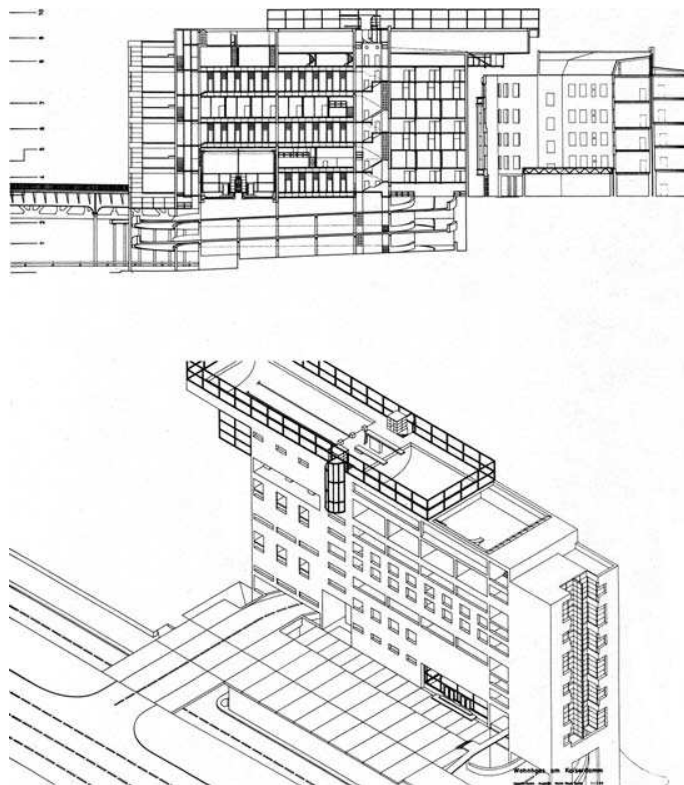
and Lichterfelde, the sunken metro station, or the sport center in Tiergarten Viertel—are not camouflaged with the traditional spatial and symbolic attributes of publicness such as plazas and monuments, but are rendered in all their metropolitan anonymity.

Like Schinkel's approach to Berlin, Ungers's urban design proposals deliberately accepted and made visible the effects of forces on the city such as the fragmentation of urban form, anonymity of architecture, and instability of program. Projects such as Tiergarten Viertel, Lichterfelde, and those made by Ungers's students all attempted to extract from these urban forces the seeds for the architectural reinvention of the city as a site of contrasting collective forms. It is in light of this attitude, which mixed urban realism and what one might call the "will to city form," that OMA's early work can be considered part of the development of ideas and projects that would lead Ungers toward Berlin as a Green Archipelago.

Koolhaas worked with Ungers on both the Tiergarten Viertel and Lichterfelde projects, and OMA's early projects were carried out in close dialog with Ungers, whose initials—OMU—were an inspiration for the name of Koolhaas and Zenghelis's office.³⁶ In 1972, after completing Exodus, Koolhaas moved to Ithaca, New York, to study at Cornell with Rowe and Ungers. He immediately realized there were differences between the two men's approaches, and that his own position had much more affinity with Ungers's explicit adherence to the reality of the city than with Rowe's nostalgic approach.³⁷ When Koolhaas met Ungers, the German architect was conducting research with his students on idiosyncratic urban forms of the American city as models for new urban design interventions. It was in this context that Koolhaas began his research for his book *Delirious New York*.³⁸ The narrative structure of *Delirious New York* is itself organized as a kind of "archipelago" in which New York is analyzed not through

the isotropic order of the grid but through the individuality of exemplary artifacts such as Rockefeller Center, the RCA Building, the Downtown Athletic Club, and the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. Koolhaas identified the potential of these architectures as "cities within cities,"³⁹ microcosms in which the metropolitan life of New York was contained and its social and ideological implications were made radically explicit. In contrast with his City of the Captive Globe, the project that was meant to be the blueprint for this book, the examples are not a collection of eclectic modern "souvenirs" optimized by the grid, but a reasoned composition of radically different buildings that elucidates in miniature the logic of Manhattan.

One of Koolhaas's obsessions in New York City was the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, which housed such a variety of services that the building itself was a veritable city.⁴⁰ Koolhaas's fixation with the typology of the metropolitan hotel—to which OMA devoted its early projects—resembled Ungers's focus on metropolitan superblocks like those he proposed for Tiergarten Viertel. For example, the superblock made of six towers placed atop a gigantic plinth, for which Koolhaas sketched an early proposal, was later recast in OMA's proposal for Welfare Island. In both cases, the metropolitan hotel becomes an assembly of programs and functions, to the point that the buildings themselves no longer have a specific program or function. Both Ungers's and OMA's projects were organized as two-part buildings: a plinth that contains public facilities and organizes access to the subway and trains, with towers for apartments and hotel rooms on top of the plinth. This composition was also tested in several projects done by Ungers's students (for example, Wolf Meyer-Christian's proposal for a multifunctional housing slab on Kaiserdamm, done in 1966), and has a precedent in the concept of the Hochhausstadt (vertical city) elaborated by Ludwig Hilberseimer in 1924. In his



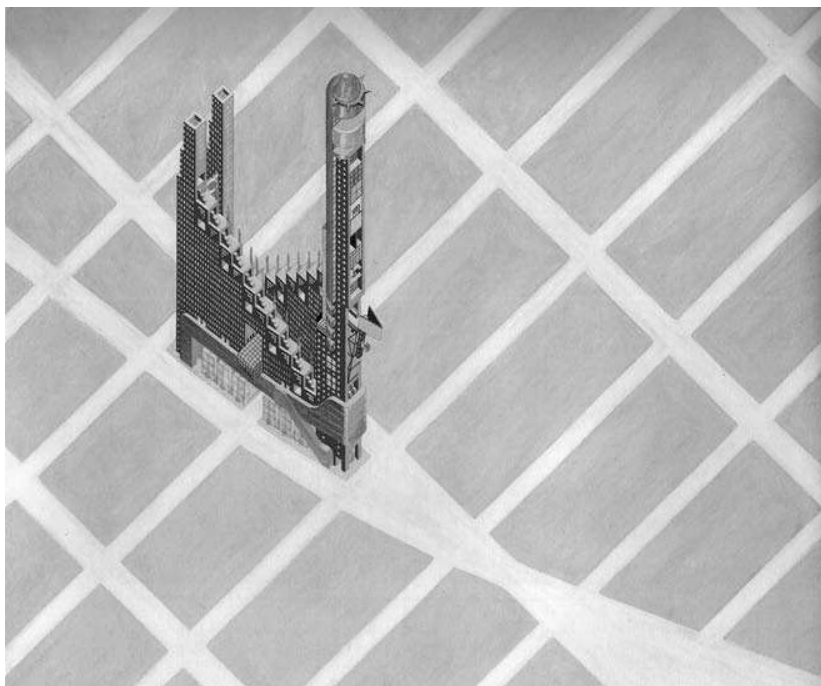
5.12

Wolf Meyer-Christian, student project for an apartment building in Kaiserdamm, Berlin, 1966 (from O. M. Ungers, *Schnellstrasse und Gebäude*, Berlin, 1966).

“ideal” project for a capitalist *Groszstadt*, Hilberseimer proposed to superimpose the main functions of the city within mixed-use city blocks rather than separating them in different zones of the city. The result was a city made by endlessly repeating a single building type consisting of vertically stacked programs. Hilberseimer’s proposal, with hotel rooms as the main metropolitan living cell and a grid of transportation systems, accommodated the main driver of the capitalist metropolis: the mobility of workers. For Hilberseimer, mobility was more than a functional problem: it also embodied the radical process of social and cultural uprooting that created anonymous and generic space. Consequently, the architecture of the *Hochhausstadt* was a generic form made by the endless repetition of the same elements.

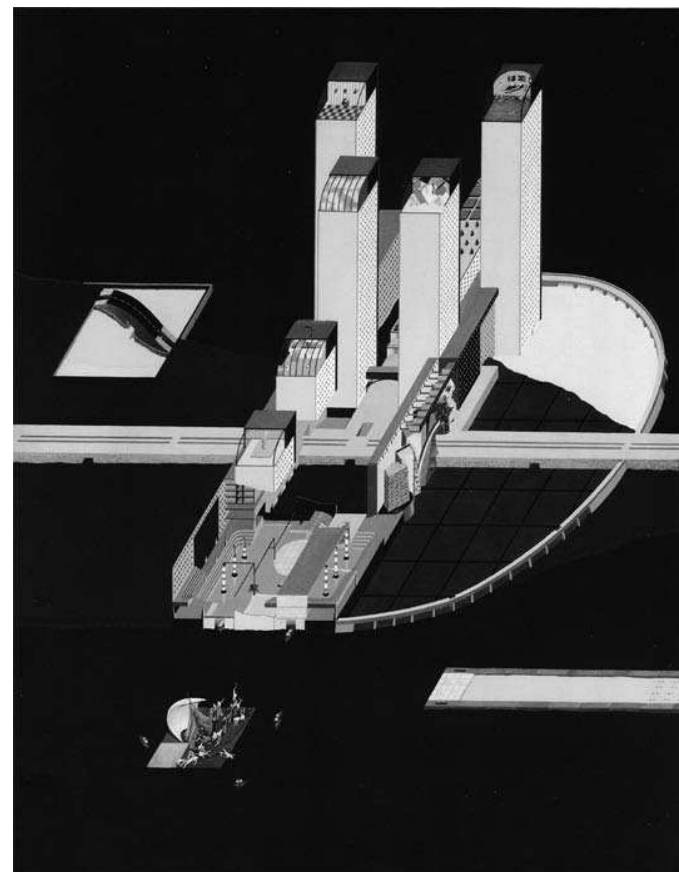
A similar formal and programmatic vocabulary is present in many of Ungers’s own projects and in those done by his students in Berlin, including the proposals presented in his 1968 course, “Berlin 1995.”⁴¹ Yet for Ungers, and later for OMA, the concept of the “vertical city” was conveyed not by the horizontally extensive and repeatable system of Hilberseimer’s *Hochhausstadt*, but rather by islands of intensity—collective forms of living—that pierced the endlessness of the individualized metropolis. The tension between the uprooting forces of the metropolis and an architecture that accommodates these forces characterizes both Ungers’s and early OMA urban design. This theme is expressed in two OMA projects that, while they can be interpreted as an outgrowth of Ungers’s architecture, are the starting point of Koolhaas and Zenghelis’s “metropolitan architecture”: Zenghelis’s *Hotel Sphinx* (1975) and Koolhaas’s *Welfare Palace Hotel* (1976).⁴²

Both of these projects developed the typology of the hotel as the ultimate carrier of “cityness” within the agonized urbanity of 1970s New York. In both cases the building consists of a two-part composition: a base containing collective facilities, and towers



5.13

Elia Zenghelis, Hotel Sphinx in Times Square, New York, 1975, axonometric view (painting by Zoe Zenghelis). The hotel block as the ideal form for social housing.



5.14

Rem Koolhaas, Welfare Palace Hotel, Roosevelt Island, New York, 1976, cutaway axonometric (painting by Madelon Vriesendorp). Architecture as the life raft of the (decaying) city.

containing hotel rooms and more private shared facilities. For OMA, this composition was meant to replicate, at a “miniature” scale, the form of New York City with its repetition of towers and their endless fenestration. Following Ungers’s method, in which the most controversial aspects of a site are idealized as the main drivers for a project, both the Hotel Sphinx, a social housing project proposed for the then-derelict Times Square, and the Welfare Palace Hotel, a social housing hotel proposed within a larger competition entry for the renewal of Welfare Island (now called Roosevelt Island), addressed New York’s period of crisis by exaggerating and compressing into finite architectural projects the two faces of the capitalist city: extreme individual anonymity and a seemingly limitless potential for encounter.

Following in Ungers’s steps, these two projects embraced the city even in its most wild and dangerous manifestations. Reacting against Rowe’s skepticism toward modernist urban design, the OMA projects, like Ungers’s Tiergarten Viertel and Lichterfelde, took on the modernist project’s optimism at the prospect of designing the city, yet departed from modernism’s comprehensive planning to propose a strategic retreat into a composition of finite, limited forms. The artifacts that dominate the derelict landscapes of the Tiergarten Viertel, Times Square, and Welfare Island predate Koolhaas’s summary of this approach, which is contained in his most important theoretical manifesto, “Bigness” (1994).⁴³

In “Bigness,” Koolhaas makes explicit the principles that were embryonic in the earlier OMA projects. The architecture of bigness artificially reconstructs the city just as the city is under the assault of urbanization. “Bigness” refers to the scale of gigantic architectural forms—not those that develop horizontally, as in the case of megastructures or suburban sprawl, the two primary options for the American postwar city, but rather those that develop

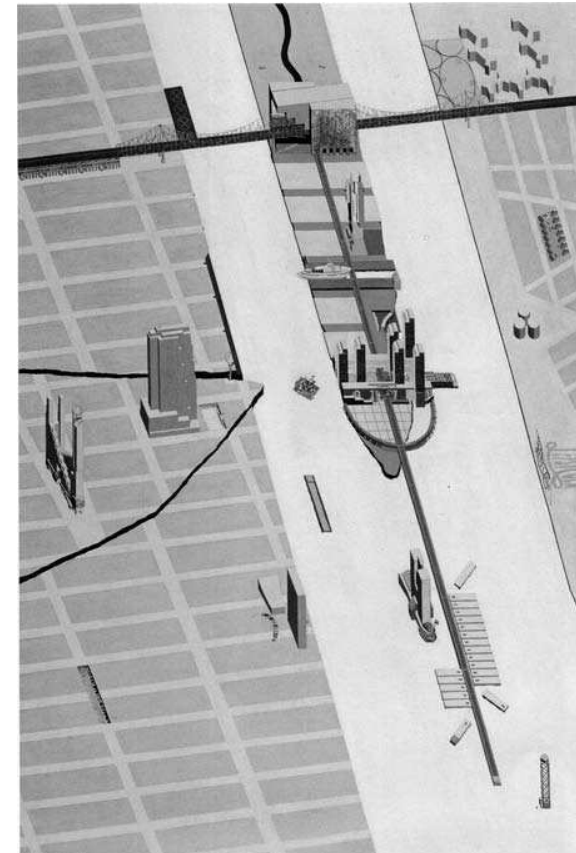
vertically as finite architectural forms. Due to their massive scale, these forms cannot be controlled by a single architect. For this reason, the architecture of bigness, as Ungers’s work and OMA’s early forms demonstrated, could only be anonymous simple forms, the scale of which schematizes authorship to the most generic architectural components. Here, authorless architecture is not simply the effect of scale and quantity; it is also the prerequisite for an architecture that is finite in its envelope, yet that allows maximum flexibility and indeterminacy in its interior.

Ungers anticipated this position in “Planning Criteria,” a short text he published in 1976. He affirmed that a fundamental aspect of buildings that aspire to be “cities within the city” is their disposable form vis-à-vis further development and change, and that such a possibility is more feasible with a finite form, which, by being straightforward in its function, allows for its appropriation by the inhabitants.⁴⁴

The most powerful representation of a city landscape produced by such an approach is an axonometric view of New York that includes Koolhaas’s Welfare Island project. The proposal for Welfare Island (1975–1976) is rendered together with other Manhattan examples of “cities within the city” whose stories are narrated in *Delirious New York*: the RCA Building, the Hotel Sphinx, and the United Nations. These are depicted as islands in a tabula rasa Manhattan reduced to an empty grid. The Manhattan grid is also replicated on Welfare Island to create eight new blocks on the small island, in a way making it a miniature version of Manhattan. Ungers would apply the same strategy in his entry for the Roosevelt Island competition one year later, but with a difference: whereas OMA replicated a fragment of the grid at the same size as the original, Ungers introduced a miniature version of Central Park, which required him to reduce the size of the Manhattan blocks on the small island. Koolhaas conceived

the grid as delineating “parking lots” for formally, program-matically, and ideologically competing architectures that would essentially confront one another from their identical “parking spaces.”⁴⁵ His proposal, however, fills only four blocks. These blocks are a colossal “roadblock” straddling the Queensboro Bridge and containing a convention center, sport and entertainment facilities, and office space; a Kazimir Malevich suprematist Architecton (an architecture without program “to be conquered programmatically by a future civilization that deserves it”); a harbor carved out of rock that receives floating structures such as Norman Bel Geddes’s “special streamlined yacht”; a park with a Chinese swimming pool; and at the tip of the island, the Welfare Palace Hotel.⁴⁶ The blocks are connected by a “travelator” that organizes the island in a linear sequence of different parts and then continues over the water to a “counter U-N building” sited across the river from the original in Manhattan. The composition is reminiscent of Exodus, and its logic can be traced back to Ungers’s Grünzug Süd. In this case, it can be interpreted as a reading of a New York no longer seen as constituted by endless rows of skyscrapers but envisioned as a dialectical city of contrasting singular forms. Welfare Island becomes a sort of idealized version of Manhattan.

OMA’s Welfare Island can be considered a radical development of Ungers’s dialectical approach and an anti-*Collage City* project. As such, it radicalized the formal logic already present in Ungers’s projects and anticipated Berlin as a Green Archipelago. Welfare Island’s archipelago-like composition of exemplary architectures reconstructs the ideal integrity of the city, not as totalizing and pervasive urbanization nor as a conglomerate of fragments, but as a dialectical field made up of forces such as separation and contrast. For both Ungers and OMA, the potential of the city is generated by its most critical urban forces.



5.15
Rem Koolhaas, New Welfare Island,
Roosevelt Island, New York, 1976,
axonometric view facing Manhattan.

In the OMA project, as in Ungers's Tiergarten Viertel, the illusion of an architectural project that "improves" the city is replaced by an architecture that reifies in the most radical way the splintering forces of the metropolis that might otherwise remain ungraspable. From this perspective, Welfare Island can be interpreted as an extreme consequence of a scenario of decline in which New York—once the paradigm of congestion and density—survives a radical process of depopulation. Beyond being simply examples of New York's culture of congestion, the artifacts floating within the empty grid are also the last bastions of "cityness" left in this scenario of urban decadence. Architecture is thus projected as an *island*, the last opportunity for the city to become something and survive its decline.

The starting point for Berlin as a Green Archipelago was the urban crisis of Berlin in the 1970s. If urbanization fundamentally implies the capacity of the city to expand, to accommodate and even to trigger growth (both economic and demographic), one of the most crucial manifestations of urban crisis is the process of a city's depopulation. Depopulation has an immediate impact on the economy of a city because it undermines an essential factor of the urban economy: profit from land speculation. Moreover, the decreasing number of inhabitants in a city is connected with a fundamental problem of the social and economic management of cities: the idea of population as the link between demography, economy, and governance.⁴⁷ Since the seventeenth century, population has been the *deus ex machina* of the power politics that govern the city and the state, and depopulation has been considered the unequivocal sign of "bad" government.⁴⁸ As discussed in the first chapter, the discipline of urbanism is quintessentially linked with the maintenance of population; urbanization can be considered the material and organizational embodiment of the principle of population. In the history of population theories,

urban growth has been the fundamental goal of government. For this reason, the possibility of growth has historically been the mission of any modernizing city project. Berlin as a Green Archipelago is the first project to break with this tradition and propose an opposite goal: the "undesirable" scenario of city *depopulation*.

Berlin as a Green Archipelago was based on the prediction, made at the end of the 1970s, that the next decade would see West Berlin's population drop dramatically.⁴⁹ What was unique in this scenario, even apocalyptic, was the city's status as a closed island within a hostile territory, making any flight to the suburbs impossible. Following his criteria of urban design, Ungers and his collaborators considered the crisis of a declining population not as a problem to solve but rather as the very engine of the project. This mechanism consisted in the reduction of the city's size to concentrated points, or city islands. As its main thesis, Berlin as a Green Archipelago promoted the demolition of zones of the city that had been abandoned or that were in a state of unstoppable decline, so that the project could focus only on the few selected parts of the city where residents were staying. Finally liberated from the impasse of urbanity, these parts of the city, in the form of islands, would compose a green archipelago in a natural "lagoon." The islands were conceived not as *ex novo* settlements but as a restructuring of existing situations. Following the strategy of Lichterfelde, Ungers proposed to insert typologies such as urban villas in order to densify these islands without filling the incomplete perimeter blocks of the city.

The selection of these "island zones" of the city was critical. Rather than being based on economic criteria, this selection was based on the possibility of discerning what had developed over time as cornerstones of the symbolic geography of the city. Another criterion for selection was the possibility of a dialectical complementarity between the selected parts of the city; each part

that was chosen would be formally antithetical to one or two other parts. This criterion is fundamental to the logic of the archipelago, because it avoids the simple and ad hoc incremental addition of parts that is typical of urban sprawl. Accordingly, Ungers proposed to save and consolidate the southern part of Friedrichstadt Süd, Gorlitz station, the area around Schlosstrasse, and twentieth-century districts such as Märkisches Viertel, Gropiusstadt, and Onkel Toms Hütte, among other areas. These settlements were characteristically the products of precise ideological intentions about living and the city; thus each part was the embodiment of an idea of the city different from the others.

In order to heighten the distinctions of each form, Ungers associated each part with other city project paradigms, such as Friedrich Weinbrenner's plan for Karlsruhe, the Manhattan grid, or Leonidov's plan for the linear city of Magnitogorsk, using plans that were proposed for entire cities as paradigms for parts of the city. This process of association provided a nonterministic means for the formal definition of city parts. Form in this case was not the imposition of one particular figure or image onto each of these city parts; here, form was understood as the possibility of association between existing situations and city paradigms. Thus, city form is not one particular image of the city but the possibility of forming moments within the city on the basis of architectural examples. In order to explain this strategy, Ungers referred to Schinkel's and Lenné's works at the Havellandschaft.⁵⁰ For Ungers, the approach of this particular project—a monumental complex developed as a territorial archipelago of radically different artifacts merged with the landscape of the Havel River—provided the most powerful paradigm through which to conceptualize Berlin itself as an archipelago city. Such an association between a monumental complex and a city avoids literal quotation of the reference and uses it only as a conceptual

device through which to heighten the idea of existing situations and extract from them their latent form. Unlike Rowe's *Collage City*, where examples from the past are quoted literally, the system of associations presented by Ungers was meant to provide a field of references through which the architecture of the islands could be identified.

Another important aspect of the project was the “sea” in between the islands. While the islands were to be consolidated and eventually densified, the areas between the islands were to be left to the “informal” metabolism of a vast green area. These areas were imagined as forests, agricultural fields, gardens, and space for any sort of self-organized activity of the islands' inhabitants or of those who chose to live in this more informal and temporary habitat. In this sense, the “green” between the islands serves as an antithesis to the “cityness” of the islands. While the islands were imagined as the city, the area in between was intended to be the opposite: a world in which any idea or form of the city was deliberately left to its dissolution. In other words, the dialectical logic of the project implied that the more the islands were meant to heighten the logic of the city, the more the “sea” was supposed to “develop” as a mix of opposing tendencies: self-management, extreme suburbanization, and dark forest.

Ungers provided two opposing references for these green areas: on the one hand, the practice of what today would be called “zero-mile” agriculture—fields in which the inhabitants of the islands could manage their own food supply and thus make the economy of their settlement independent from larger systems; and on the other, the urban studies that Hilberseimer developed in Chicago between the 1940s and 1950s, in which he proposed to radically decentralize the city in the form of settlements immersed in a green landscape and served by motorways. This twofold, contradictory explanation for the “green” sea of the

archipelago provoked the imagination and challenged assumptions about ecological urbanism, then on the rise, by showing how the notion of “green” could host such opposing scenarios as collective self-organization and absolute individualism. Ungers identified “green,” or the void, as something permanently ambiguous that accommodates both extreme scenarios: withdrawn from urbanity and equally embracing it. These references created an opposition between the island and the sea as a dialog between something with intelligible borders and something unstable and in permanent flux. Moreover, the limit, or “shoreline,” between the sea and the islands was crucial. In this way, the project implied that the more the form of certain city parts was clearly defined, the more other parts would be released from definition, and vice versa. This idea was rehearsed and radicalized by Koolhaas in his 1985 text “Imagining Nothingness,” where he proposed to think the project of the city by starting from what Berlin as a Green Archipelago indicated as the green sea.⁵¹

Ungers’s architectural islands in Berlin as a Green Archipelago can be considered both as self-referential entities and as city parts that, through their position and insular form, frame what escapes legibility: the inescapable sea of urbanization. In this way, architectural form becomes the index of its opposite: that which escapes the stability of architecture. Berlin as a Green Archipelago postulates a city form that, in order to be defined, requires confrontation with its opposite—urbanization—and with the city’s most controversial aspects, such as division, conflict, and even destruction. At the same time, such an idea of the city postulates a form in which even the most disruptive forces can be framed by the possibility of giving them a form—that is, the possibility of establishing criteria of knowledge and reification of these disruptive forces in the form of architectural examples. *The city within the city* is thus not only the literal staging of the

city’s lost form within the limits of architectural artifacts; it is also, and especially, the possibility of considering architectural form as a *point of entry* toward the project of the city. In this sense, architecture is not only a physical object; architecture is also what survives the idea of the city.