

The Possibility of an Island: Cold War Berlin as Charged Void, Landscape, and Mirage

Fragments, Genealogy, Historicity, Palimpsest, Urban

/Abstract

This paper is an attempt to provide an alternative and enriched genealogy of the utopian masterplan for Cold War era Berlin titled “The City in the City: Berlin, the Green Archipelago,” which the German architect Oswald Mathias Ungers developed in the latter half of the 1970s. This highly speculative project concerned with Berlin’s charged voids is dissected through a series of micro-histories relative to the precedents that inform its fragmentary nature. Rather than a singularity or the product of a mastermind aided by disciples, as it has thus far been approached in the historiography of architecture, I shall position it as a centerpiece in a series of projects that unveil a shared repertory of formal operations and intellectual concerns. In tandem, the paper provides a lexicon for the term fragment as it has been perceived, theorized, and deployed in this sociopolitical and historical context, namely six distinct definitions, effects, and states of the fragment - fractures, ruins, debris, lacunae, elements, and the notion of the unfinished. Through this scope, I consider the preoccupation with formal disjunction between parts and whole in architectural discourse during the second half of the twentieth century, particularly as it relates to the experience and design of the city. The latter, I argue, is informed by a critical stance to the technophilic and abstractionist tendencies of Modern architecture and a swerve towards a renewed interest in history and the palimpsestic quality of the urban tissue in the aftermath of World War II.

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In 1992, shortly after Germany's reunification, Berlin's Chamber of Deputies established a committee that was to determine the luck of various statues, memorials, and insignia. Upon an invitation from the gallerist Matthias Arndt, the artist Sophie Calle visited the city in 1996 in order to photograph the sites where the removed monuments were once located and investigate their trace in collective memory through interviews with passersby. In 2012 she returned to conduct a similar oral history project on the demolition of the Palast der Republik.¹ She eventually documented her quest for a series of political symbols that vanished from the former Eastern sector of Berlin in a book titled *Detachment*.

In *Detachment* Calle initially presents the evidence, the current state of the sites she visited alongside the responses she collected. Subsequently, she unveils photographs of the monuments prior to their detachment that immediately render the responses surprising and even contradictory. A particularly bewildering example is a concrete building, representative of Iron Curtain brutalist architecture, which bears a blue advertisement banner. What might have this replaced? "There was an inscription. I can't remember exactly what was written, though I used to walk by the place often. But I'm sure it wasn't anything decent,"² one of the interviewees responds. A few pages later, the answer is revealed; an image of a bronze sculpture cast by the sculptor Gerhard Thieme after a lithograph of a flying dove by Picasso with the city's name above it and below it the phrase "Stadt des Friedens" (City of Peace).³

Of Fragments and Charged Voids

The project that is the focus of this essay and bears the intricate title *Die Stadt in der Stadt; Berlin, das Grüne Stadtarchipel* (The City in the City: Berlin, the Green Archipelago) was actually designed for West Berlin in the late 1970s. However, two reasons make it imperative to start the analysis from the East and what then was the capital city of the German Democratic Republic. The first is relevant to particularities in chronology; the second, to shifts in perception regarding architecture's entwinement with history and urban space made manifest on both sides of the Wall, albeit in different ways. The date in question is 1979, which is the year that the World Peace Council awarded East Berlin the honorary

1 The Palast der Republik was completed in 1976 and went into disuse after the re-unification in 1990. When demolished in 2008, its steel frame was sold to contractors in Dubai for the construction of the Burj Khalifa tower, whereas the site where it stood was given over to the construction of a replica of the Berliner Stadtschloss, which the Palast der Republik had, in turn, replaced upon its demolition in 1950 as the damages it had incurred during World War II were deemed irreparable. See: "Berlin's Socialist Palace Revived in Dubai," Deutsche Welle, 11 August 2008, <https://www.dw.com/en/berlins-demolished-socialist-palace-is-revived-in-dubai/a-3554502>. See also: Daniela Sandler, *Counterpreservation: Architectural Decay in Berlin Since 1989* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016)

2 Sophie Calle, *Detachment* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2013), 55

3 Thieme drew inspiration for the bronze dove sculpture he cast in 1986 after Picasso's Dove of Peace, one of the many the artist drew upon encouragement from his close friend, the poet Louis Aragon. The latter, who was a fervent supporter of the Communist Party, had chosen a different iteration of Picasso's dove, titled La Colombe, for the poster of the first World Congress of the Peace Partisans, hosted by Paris and Prague in 1949. The dove image Thieme employed was depicted in a series of postal stamps issued that year by Czechoslovakia in order to commemorate the same event

status of "City of Peace."⁴ On this occasion, the East German state inaugurated an ambitious reconstruction program in preparation for the city's 750th anniversary, which was to be celebrated in 1987. In a radical departure from previous building programs that focused on housing and employed a functionalist architectural vocabulary, this one marked a turn towards the preservation of cultural heritage in an effort to signify that Berlin's heart was beating where its history lay.

The program included the reconstruction of Nikolaiviertel, a field of multiple corrections, absences, and renewed presence representative of many tropes of fragmentation. First and foremost, Nikolaikirche, the thirteenth century cathedral that was destroyed during the air raids of 1944 and left in a ruinous state until its reconstruction in the 1980s. Around the corner, Ephraim Palais was built anew five decades after its prior demolition in 1936 to accommodate the expansion of Mühlendamm. Between 1982 and 1983 spolia of the dismembered building until then stored in West Berlin, were transported back to the East and reassembled on a site northwest to its original location. Upon reconstruction, this area stood apart from its concrete, steel, and glass surroundings of nearby Alexanderplatz, a historical fragment in the midst of the modern urbanscape constructed after the Second World War in order to shape the collective identity of a nation divided from its other half by ideology. In that sense, it also stands as evidence that the fragment is not merely a part of a whole but also entails spatial, temporal, and cultural connotations.

The sociopolitical context of the preservationist interventions in Berlin's urban environment draw significant connections between the two parts of the city in this particular moment in history, merely a decade before they would once again merge into one. It is precisely that context that informs a project that came to be considered as the most representative work of Oswald Mathias Ungers. This highly speculative urban project, developed by Ungers over the latter half of the 1970s and eventually submitted to the Berlin Senate and the Social Democratic Party of the Federal Republic, was a masterplan with intentions similar to those that catalyzed the reconstructions and restorations in anticipation of the city's 750th anniversary on behalf of the German Democratic Republic.⁵

For Ungers, it was an attempt to re-energize the charged void of Cold War Berlin through history and imagination. In effect, it was a design experiment that involved various degrees of fragmentation. Hereby I will attempt to unearth

4 The status of "City of Peace" was awarded to East Berlin in February 1979 during a special session of the World Peace Council, an international anti-imperialist, democratic movement of mass action founded in 1949. The Chairman of the Council of State of the German Democratic Republic, Erich Honecker, presented the welcoming address. See: *Special session of the World Peace Council in Berlin, 2-5 February 1979* (Dresden: Verlag Zeit im Bild, 1979)

5 The interest that Ungers maintained in the connotations of this anniversary in relation to the shape and architecture of the city is further signified by a book published in 1977 by Studioverlag für Architektur, the publishing house maintained by Ungers with his wife, the editor Liselotte Ungers. The book contained examples of Berlin's historical architecture selected by the art historian Helmut Engel. Engel had been appointed first Landeskonservator (State Conservator) responsible for built heritage in 1972 and successfully advocated for a Monument Protection Law for Berlin, which passed in 1977. See: Helmut Engel, K. Weber, Werner Düttmann, eds., *1776 - 1976: 200 Jahre Berlin, Beispiele der Berliner Baugeschichte. Ausgewählt vom Landeskonservator* (Cologne; Berlin: Studioverlag für Architektur, 1977)

this project's intellectual references and trace an alternative genealogy thereof, primarily concerned with the architectural precedents that inform its fragmentary nature. In order to do so, I will rely on six definitions, effects, and states of the fragment, namely the fractures born of divisions, the ruins resulting from destructions, the debris incorporated in acts of spoliation, the lacunae left over by detachments and demolitions, the elements in orders of things, and the sense of the unfinished when sequences - be those historical or spatial - are interrupted.

The City as Metaphor

In an inspiring lecture from 1978 titled "Architecture of Collective Memory," Ungers mentions Italo Calvino's book *Invisible Cities*, which narrates an imaginary dialogue between the Venetian seafarer Marco Polo and the Eastern emperor Kublai Khan. The two eventually discover that they have composed a mental construction of a city, made of incongruities and contradictions that blur the boundaries among past, present, and future.⁶ Ungers notes:

The city is a history of formation and transformation, from one type into another, a morphological continuum; a textbook of events representing ideas and thoughts, decisions and accidents, realities and disasters. It is not a uniform picture but a vivid ensemble of pieces and fragments.⁷

He then proceeds to unpack the sequence of design workshops on the city he organized between 1976 and 1978, a series of three summer courses on respective urban typologies, namely the Urban Block, the Urban Villa, and the Urban Garden. Ungers parallels this tripartite typological study with the "discovery" of a place, a city of unresolved contradictions, which resembles a constellation of islands floating in an urban archipelago.⁸

Upon closer observation of the visual material from an exhibition that concluded the trilogy of workshops on the city, one encounters a tripartite system of notation consistent with respective design operations. These three layers of information are a series of analytical maps of West Berlin indicating urban elements of interest; an inventory of paradigmatic architectural projects whose formal and programmatic characteristics classified them as "social condensers"; and finally, a set of diagrams that scrutinized the intensification of the former through the latter. Hence, for example, an uncharacteristically elongated urban strip in the area of Unter den Eichen would be combined with a utopian project like Ivan Leonidov's Magnitogorsk into a miniature Linear City. Shortly after the exhibition, Ungers compiled this material into the proposal he submitted to Berlin's Office of City Planning. This "City in the City" or else, the conception of

⁶ Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt, 1974), 69. First Italian edition: Italo Calvino, *Le città invisibili* (Torino: Einaudi, 1972)

⁷ Oswald Mathias Ungers, "L'architettura della memoria collectiva: L'infinito catalogo delle forme urbane," *Lotus International* 24 (1979): 9

⁸ Ungers, "L'architettura della memoria collectiva: L'infinito catalogo delle forme urbane," 9

Berlin as a Green Archipelago,⁹ resembled an urban park infested with micro-cities that, like islands, floated in a sea of urban greenery. [Fig. 1]

Fractions: A Dispersed City



1

The proposal was articulated in eleven distinct points published in an illustrated booklet. The first four theses focused on Berlin's population decline after the Second World War and the construction of the Wall (Thesis 1), criticized planning theories advocating for historically faithful reconstruction of damaged districts (Thesis 2), observed how the population gravitated towards green areas in the outskirts rather than the city's voided center (Thesis 3), and reviewed the particularities of Berlin's urban tissue as results of zoning and modernization (Thesis 4).

Thesis 5 put forth the concept of "The City in the City" and was accompanied by maps depicting the gradual transformation of Berlin's "urban islands" into mini-cities. Thesis 6 laid out the selection criteria for these areas based on formal association.

Thesis 7 argued that the urban islands-cum-social condensers should remain

9 The genuine authorship of the title remains somewhat obscure as the first rough draft, which remained unpublished, additionally bears the touch of Rem Koolhaas, former collaborator and a student of Ungers at Cornell University until 1975. However, this text underwent heavy editing by Ungers, who immediately added "The City in the City" to the original "Berlin, a Green Archipelago." Leon Krier, who moved in the same intellectual circles, around that time also published an article titled "Cities within the City." See: Leon Krier, "Cities Within the City," *Architecture + Urbanism* 83 (1977): 69-152; see also: O.M. Ungers, Rem Koolhaas, Peter Riemann, Hans Kollhoff, and Arthur Ovaska, "La città nella città. Proposte della Sommer Akademie per Berlino," *Lotus International* 19 (1978): 82-97

Fig. 1

Peter Riemann, plan of "The City in the City," stencil and colored ink on xerography drawing, originally made for the Cornell Summer Academy in Berlin organized by Oswald Mathias Ungers in 1977. Image Courtesy of Peter Riemann and Berlinische Galerie - Landesmuseum für moderne Kunst, Fotografie und Architektur Archiv.

detached with intermediate zones cleared in order to emphasize their autonomy. Berlin was re-envisioned as a vast park with ruins, monuments, infrastructure, and programmatically enriched mini-cities dispersed in an Arcadian landscape, “thus defining the framework of the city in the city and thereby explaining the metaphor of the city as a green archipelago.”¹⁰

Thesis 8 was dedicated to material from the Urban Villa workshop, an extensive typological inventory with student-designed permutations that creatively informed the combinatorial concept for the *Archipelago*.

Thesis 9 made direct reference to the park at Schloss Glienicke, designed by Karl Friedrich Schinkel alongside Peter Joseph Lenné in the early nineteenth century and admired by Ungers for its imaginative use of architectural spolia. Finally, Theses 10 and 11 concentrated on the potential of the proposal and outlined a schedule for its realization.

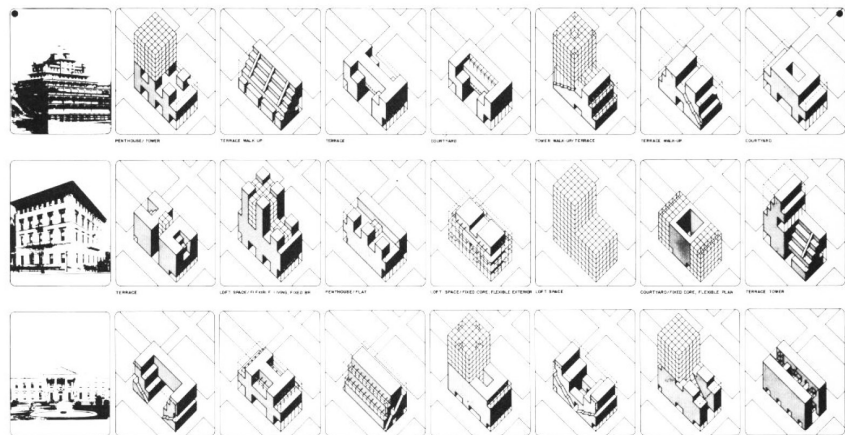
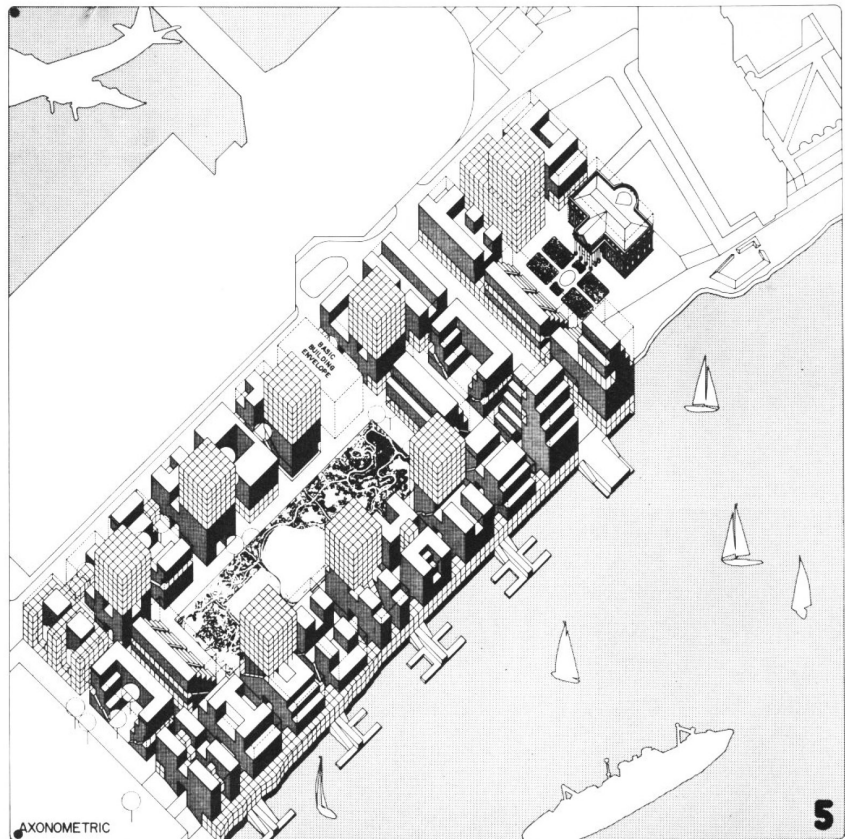
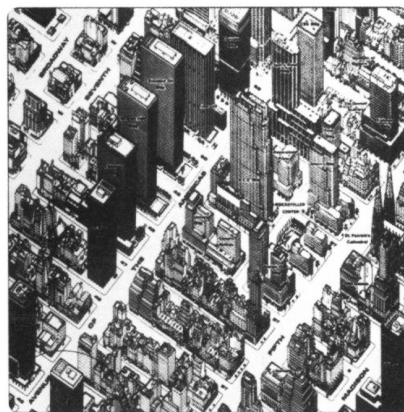
Elements: City of Fragments

The conceptual device of the metaphor, which intensely preoccupied Ungers throughout his career as an architect and educator, certainly finds its most concise manifestation in the *Green Archipelago* proposal for Berlin. However, the moment that it is crystallized as a design *modus operandi* occurs a few years earlier. In 1975, along with his associates from Cornell University, where he taught at the time, Ungers participated in a competition for the re-development of New York’s Welfare Island (later renamed Roosevelt Island), which they imagined as a miniaturized Manhattan, complete with a park and blocks on a grid. [Fig. 2] The typological studies that they undertook for this project inspired the Urban Block summer workshop in 1976 and, subsequently, the formal concept of Berlin as an extended park with dispersed urban islands that would condense programmatic activity.

That year Ungers also participated in “MANtransFORMS,” an exhibition organized by the Austrian architect Hans Hollein at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York City. His contribution titled “Morphology: City Metaphors” was a series of fifty-eight visual comparisons. These juxtapositions include a porcupine with the fortifications of a medieval city as “Protection,” the plan of an Hippodamian city with a patchwork quilt as “Repetition,” and Andy Warhol’s “Green Coca Cola Bottles” with Le Corbusier’s *Ville Radieuse* as “Succession.” In his essay for the exhibition catalog titled “Designing and Thinking in Images, Metaphors and Analogies,” Ungers describes inventorying as “a method of imaginative discovery.”¹¹

10 Oswald Mathias Ungers, Rem Koolhaas, Hans Kollhoff, Peter Riemann, and Arthur Ovaska, *Die Stadt in der Stadt; Berlin, das Grüne Stadtarchipel* (Cologne: Studioverlag für Architektur, 1977), 24

11 Oswald Mathias Ungers, “Designing and Thinking in Images, Metaphors and Analogies,” in *Morphologie: City Metaphors* (Cologne: Walter König; New York: D.A.P., 1982), 8. Originally published in Hans Hollein, ed., *MANtransFORMS: An International Exhibition on Aspects of Design* (New York: Cooper-Hewitt Museum, 1976), 98-113



172, 173, 174. Evoluzione delle tipologie edilizie a Manhattan. 175. Assonometria.

176. Elenco delle tipologie edilizie presenti nel progetto.

Ruins: City, Destroyed and Reconstructed

A few steps back in history, more precisely Ungers's tenure at the Technical University of Berlin in the mid-1960s, unveil the precedence for these ideas. In Berlin Ungers engaged his students in collective projects that involved the documentation of formal or programmatic conditions unique to the gradually abandoned and partially derelict center of the then-newly divided city. Upon completion of each exercise, the material would be compiled by Ungers and his wife Liselotte in a series of booklets. The topics varied broadly, but can generally be classified in two categories. On the one hand, infrastructure studied in pairs that reflect the transition from interrupted modernization to urgent reconstruction - such as "Expressways and Buildings", "Squares and Streets" or "Renovated

Fig. 2

O.M. Ungers and Associates, Competition entry proposing a miniaturized Manhattan on Welfare Island, circa 1975; exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 1976. Image source: Franco Raggi, ed., *Europa / America: Architetture Urbane, Alternative Suburbane* (Venezia: Alfieri Edizione d'Arte; Biennale di Venezia, 1978), 83.

Blocks and Parking.” On the other hand, investigations on a range of scales that emphasized the dualities inherent in Berlin’s fragmented urban landscape - such as “Housing Systems in Spatial Cells,” “Megaforms in Residential Building,” and “Living in the Park.” The latter seemingly refer, albeit indirectly, to concurrent if opposing approaches in building programs in West and East Berlin, more specifically Interbau and Karl Marx Allee respectively, both materialized in 1957. [Fig. 3]



The common denominator in these survey exercises is the way they blend playful experimentation with form and historical research. Ungers believed that the discipline of architecture requires a consistent methodology and architects’ creative ability is nurtured through the meticulous study of design concepts and flexible systems.¹² There is a systematic transition from these booklets on Cold War Berlin urban typologies to the trilogy of workshops on the city and, eventually, the concept of the “city in the city” that shapes the *Archipelago* project. Each step has been the product of adjustment through correction, its fragments carefully scrutinized, deconstructed, and subsequently reassembled.

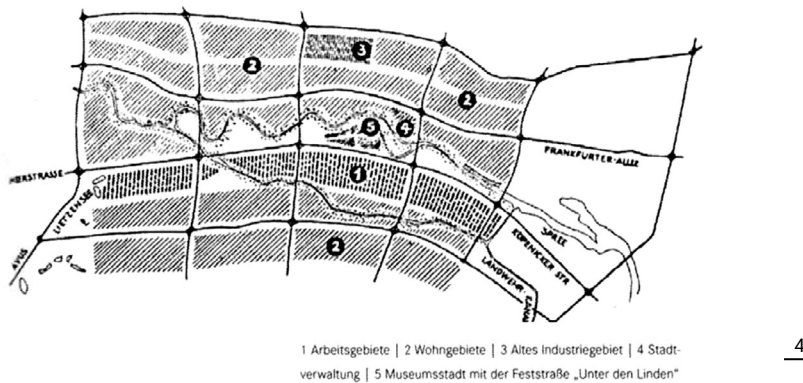
Fig. 3

Horst Siegmann, Photograph of Hansaviertel under construction circa 1957 with the funicular installed during the International Building Exhibition Interbau to showcase the “living in the park” principle of the masterplan and buildings by various international architects in a district allotted within the Tiergarten urban park in Berlin. Image courtesy of Landesarchiv F Rep. 290 Nr 0055978.

12 Oswald Mathias Ungers, untitled paper in *Architectural Education USA: Issues, Ideas and People; A Conference to Explore Current Alternatives - Proceedings*, ed. Emilio Ambasz (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1971), 201. Other participants in the conference included, from the field of architecture, Stanford Anderson, Jonathan Barnett, Denise Scott Brown, Peter Eisenman, Kenneth Frampton, Colin Rowe, Anthony Vidler, and from the discipline of sociology Herbert J. Gans and Robert Gutman

Spolia: Difference and Repetition

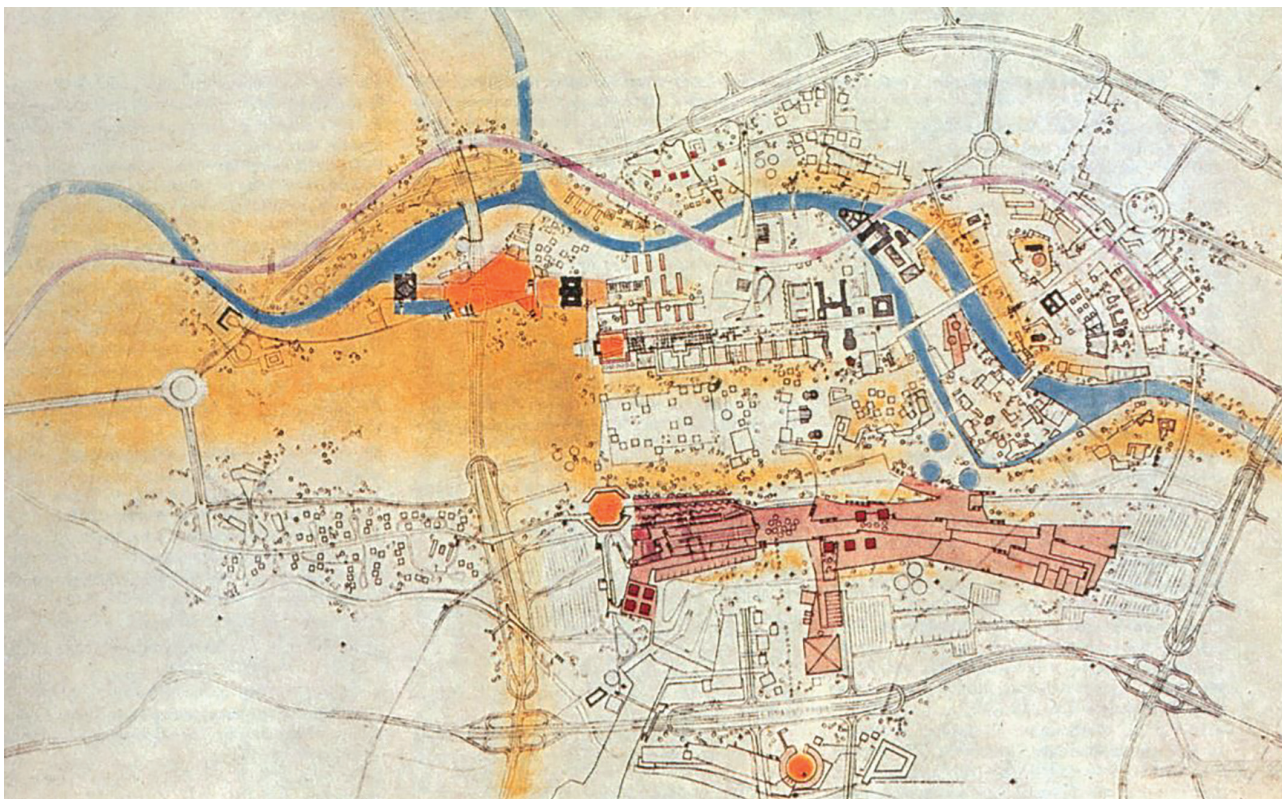
The main, and perhaps most radical, characteristic of the Archipelago is its fragmentary nature. The emptiness is bold and unapologetic, thus challenging the conventions that equated historical urban centers with density. The origin of that idea can be traced back to 1959 and Hans Scharoun's entry to the competition *Hauptstadt Berlin*. Scharoun, who as Chairman of the Architecture Department had appointed Ungers at TU Berlin in the early 1960s, was an architect formerly associated with the Expressionist collective Der Ring from Breslau. Given that, as per the surrender treaties signed after World War II, Breslau was among the territories annexed by Poland, Scharoun must have been deeply conscious of the effects of fragmentation in how space is perceived and inhabited.



One could argue that the fragmentary state of *Kollektivplan*, the unimplemented scheme for Berlin's reconstruction that he devised as first appointed Director of City Planning in 1946, reflects that internalized experience. [Fig. 4]

A little over a decade later, he joined forces with Wils Ebert to revisit a fragment of that plan for *Hauptstadt Berlin*. As the title suggests, this international competition solicited ideas for the city as the singular capital for both German partitions, essentially investing on the potential of a reunified country. Coincidentally, Willi Brandt, who was to become Chancellor and Nobel Prize Laureate on this agenda, at the time served as mayor of West Berlin. But despite the optimism that drove the initiative, in retrospect the project proved mere wishful thinking as in 1961 the city's division was solidified with the construction of the Wall. Scharoun and Ebert's project, which was awarded the Second Prize, proposed the removal of the rubble still present in the city and the clearance of its center through the demolition of all surviving ruins, with the exception of the Reichstag and the historical buildings in the area surrounding the Unter den Linden axis and Museuminsel. This urban void would be overtaken by greenery, interrupted only by loosely dispersed zones of buildings clustered together by formal affinity.

Fig. 4
Hans Scharoun, Masterplan map for *Kollektivplan*, 1946. Image courtesy of Akademie der Künste Berlin, Architekturarchiv, Sammlung Scharoun.



A network of urban squares and pedestrian zones, combined with subterranean freeway tunnels, activated the whole through social interaction to create the sense of “living in the park.”¹³ [Fig. 5]

Persistently as Ungers might have rejected intellectual alliance with the Expressionists,¹⁴ it would be hard to deny that the conceptual seed of his own dispersed “city in the city” was planted by the Hauptstadt Berlin competition entry of Scharoun and Ebert. In a lecture delivered in 1954, Scharoun alluded to the alienating effect of nineteenth century urban planning on the contemporary city. It was monumental axes and uniform urban blocks that caused the disconnect between the city’s history and its inhabitants, he argued, before unpacking his idea for an organizational framework informed by the selective re-interpretation of past forms through their conceptual structures, which he perceived as the “essence of the city” (Stadt-Wesen).¹⁵ Furthermore, he differentiated between the so-called urbanscape (Stadtschaft) and the landscape (Landschaft); in other words, between solids and voids, a distinction that would find its formal expression in the project for *Hauptstadt Berlin* as the core concept of “living in the park.” Ungers’s concept of Cold War Berlin as a Green Archipelago bears

13 A detailed comparative account of the awarded entries can be found in: Helmut Geisert, Doris Haneberg, and Carola Hein, eds., *Hauptstadt Berlin: Internationaler Städtebaulicher Ideenwettbewerb 1957/58* (Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, 1990)

14 Oswald Mathias Ungers, Rem Koolhaas, and Hans Ulrich Obrist, “Oswald Mathias Ungers in conversation” *Log 16* (2009), 63. This interview is an expanded and posthumously published English translation of an interview first published in German in a thematic issue of the journal *Arch+* titled “O.M. Ungers - Berliner Vorlesungen 1964-65” (O.M. Ungers - Berlin Lectures 1964-65), as a Festschrift on the occasion of the architect’s eightieth birthday in 2006. See: Oswald Mathias Ungers, Rem Koolhaas, and Hans Ulrich Obrist, “Die Rationalisierung des Bestehenden,” *Arch+* 179 (2006): 6-11

15 Hans Scharoun, „Vom Stadt-Wesen und Architekt-Sein,” in *Hans Scharoun Baut: Bauten, Entwürfe, Texte*, ed. Peter Pfannkuch (Berlin: Schriftenreihe der Akademie der Künste, 1993), 229

Fig. 5

Hans Scharoun and Wils Ebert, Project for the Hauptstadt Berlin competition (1957) awarded Second Prize. Image source: Helmut Geisert, Doris Haneberg and Carola Hein, eds., *Hauptstadt Berlin: Internationaler Städtebaulicher Ideenwettbewerb 1957/58* (Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, 1990), 35.

similarities with this design approach, which is grounded in a fundamentally structuralist logic. This concept presents an example of spoliation, as elements thereof return not only in Scharoun's work but also in that of Ungers, perhaps as a product of confluence and intellectual proximity during their time in the same academic institution.



6

Lacunae: The City as an Island

Scharoun's project was not the only proposal in the Hauptstadt Berlin competition that invested in charged voids rather than urban density. Alison and Peter Smithson's design, awarded Third Prize, interpreted reconstruction not merely as a material process to rebuild what had been destroyed during the war, but primarily as a blueprint for an architecture of a European society with shared values and a shared future in the second half of the twentieth century. Decades later, in a lecture of 1992 titled "The People We Build For...Our Clients...The Unfolding of the Society We Live In," Alison Smithson would reflect on that ideal:

In the 1950s, in Europe, we thought we knew what sort of society we were and, perhaps more important at the time, what society we all wanted to be [...] This society unfolded in Europe ultimately somewhat like a book, one page more red than the other. The other page, much later, then said it wanted to be green; then, a little later, surprising us all, Europe sud-

Fig. 6

Alison and Peter Smithson, Project for the Hauptstadt Berlin competition (1957) awarded Third Prize. Image source: Alison and Peter Smithson, *The Charged Void: Urbanism* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2005), 48.

denly became one book again...The page that had been red was found to be much grayer than even its critics had said...And maybe one half of the book is, in the near future, going to cut itself into pieces.¹⁶

The project was structured around four main formal concepts. The need for mobility facilitated an urban center devoid of density, with the ground level overtaken by an urban park interrupted only by few arteries for vehicular traffic. The second concept was a network of elevated platforms for pedestrian movement. The third concept, growth and change, materialized as clusters in the network that would programmatically link the urban park with the platforms. The fourth concept was a system of green zones that unified all aforementioned elements. Their project shared fundamental urbanistic principles with Scharoun's proposal and, in extension, with the Green Archipelago concept by Ungers too. **[Fig. 6]** In fact, the Smithsons and Ungers had established a substantial intellectual connection, as documented in *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur (VzA)*, the series of booklets he published at TU Berlin. These include the transcript of a 1965 lecture titled "Without Rhetoric: Some Thoughts on Berlin," delivered by Peter Smithson at TU Berlin in VzA 2; the proceedings from a Berlin-hosted congress of Team 10¹⁷ in VzA 3; and a discussion between Ungers and the Smithsons on the work of Mies van der Rohe in VzA 20. Could this intellectual confluence be the source of the intriguing similarity between the Archipelago and a project by the Smithsons, who in 1975, almost two decades after *Hauptstadt*, re-imagined Berlin through the metaphor of the island too? This architectural *folie* remained unpublished until its inclusion in a 1990 monograph on the Smithsons' urbanistic work, in a chapter amusingly titled "Holes in Cities."¹⁸ Titled "The Poetic Acceptance of Reality," the Smithsons' utopian proposal referred to the inescapable, by then, reality of the Wall's permanence. "For more than twenty years, West Berlin was virtually an island, an island of our minds,"¹⁹ Alison and Peter Smithson mused in the project's description. The isolation imposed by the circuitous Wall is contradicted with the construction of a moat around the city, which would result from joining the existing water sources around Berlin to create a floating urban island literally surrounding the city. Juxtaposing the Wall with an ambiguous symbol of division, Alison and Peter Smithson visualized an urban paradox, a spatial condition that could be understood as a detachment from the inside and a charged void from the outside. "Who is keeping whom in and who is keeping whom out?"²⁰ they playfully asked, essentially subverting the urban island metaphor by designing a city floating in the archipelago of another city. **[Fig. 7]**

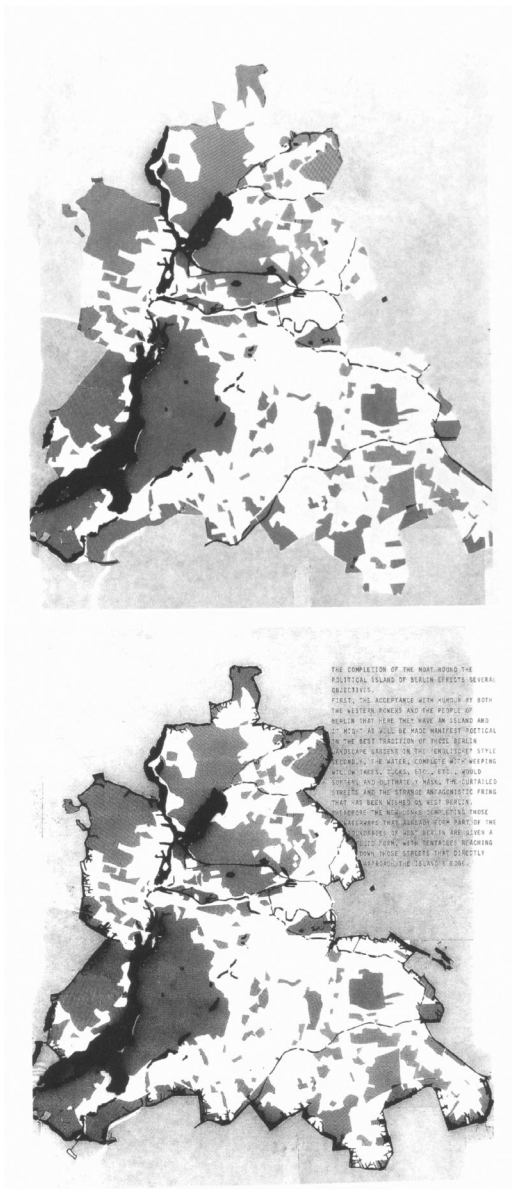
16 Alison Smithson, "The People We Build For...Our Clients...The Unfolding of the Society We Live In," manuscript of lecture delivered at the Yale School of Architecture, 14 April 1992. Special Collections of the Haas Arts Library, Yale University, New Haven CT, NA2543 S6 S65 1992

17 A group of European architects, which included both Ungers and the Smithsons, and challenged the doctrine of modernist urbanism established in the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM), between 1929 and 1959. For a comprehensive history of Team 10, see: Max Risselada and Dirk van den Heuvel, eds., *Team 10: In Search of a Utopia of the Present, 1953–1981* (Rotterdam: NAI - 010 Publishers, 2005)

18 Alison and Peter Smithson, *The Charged Void: Urbanism* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2005), 170

19 Smithson, *The Charged Void: Urbanism*, 192

20 Smithson, *The Charged Void: Urbanism*, 192



The Unfinished: City of Collective Memory

The analogies that pervade the design metaphors of Berlin as an island or an archipelago lead to another connection between the fragmentary nature of Unger's concept and an earlier project that seems to have decisively informed it. Unlike those previously mentioned, this one is an architectural exercise tout court, with no pretenses to any sense of pragmatism. Neither was it designed for Berlin per se; yet, in certain ways it does encapsulate the image of the city in a surprising way. That project, essentially a parallel life of Unger's Archipelago, is Aldo Rossi's theorization of the so-called *La città analoga* (Analogous City), substantially formulated in his book *L'architettura della città* (The Architecture of the City).

Fig. 7

Alison and Peter Smithson, "West Berlin as an Island" (1975), conceptual project. Image source: Alison and Peter Smithson, *The Charged Void: Urbanism* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2005), 193.

In the first edition of *L'architettura della città*, published in 1966, Rossi defines architecture as an autonomous discipline with transformative power over the image of the city and monuments as the mediating locus between the present and the past. In the second edition of 1969, he proceeds to reject what he refers to as “naive functionalism”²¹ and instead argues for an architecture of analogy. The latter outlines a purely conceptual design framework, utilizing structured agglomerations of what Rossi defined as “primary elements,” spatial artifacts that acquire dominance in the urban fabric by means of formal singularity and a capacity to enter transformative relationships.²²

To illustrate his point Rossi referred to Canaletto’s “Capriccio con edifici palladiani,” a fictional view of Venice the artist composed around 1745, wherein Andrea Palladio’s unrealized Ponte di Rialto was juxtaposed with two buildings actually situated in Vicenza, namely the Palazzo Chiericati and the Basilica. As it happens, Canaletto’s painting inspired the first Analogous City. As curator of the Milano Triennale in 1973, Rossi commissioned the artist Arduino Cantàfora to produce a large painting that, like the *Città ideale* of Urbino, unfolded an eclectic array of historically improbable architectural coincidences, from the Roman Pantheon to the AEG building in Berlin designed by the office of Peter Behrens, and from Giuseppe Terragni’s Casa del Fascio in Como to Rossi’s own work in the Gallarate district of Milan.

The second, and perhaps better-known, iteration of *La città analoga* borrowed the visual vocabulary of Giambattista Piranesi’s “Ichnographia” from a folio of 1762 dedicated to the imaginary reconstruction of the Campus Martius in Ancient Rome. The technique was essentially the same, blending planimetric and perspectival views in a dense, labyrinthine *capriccio* with diverse historical fragments tightly entwined with dizzying shifts in scale. Produced for the Venice Biennale of 1976 with the aid of his associates and students from the Federal Polytechnic Institute (ETH) in Zurich, this collage, like Piranesi’s etchings, presented an imaginary place that consisted of decontextualized fragments in a capricious amalgamation. [Fig. 8] In an essay published later that year in the journal *Architecture+Urbanism*, Rossi sharpened his theorization of analogy in architecture:

This concept of the analogical city has been further elaborated in the spirit of analogy toward the conception of an analogical architecture. In the correspondence between Freud and Jung, the latter defines “analogical thought” as: “sensed yet unreal, imagined yet silent; not a discourse but rather a meditation on themes of the past, an interior monologue.” I believe I have found in this definition a different sense of history, conceived of not simply a fact but a series of things, of affective objects.²³

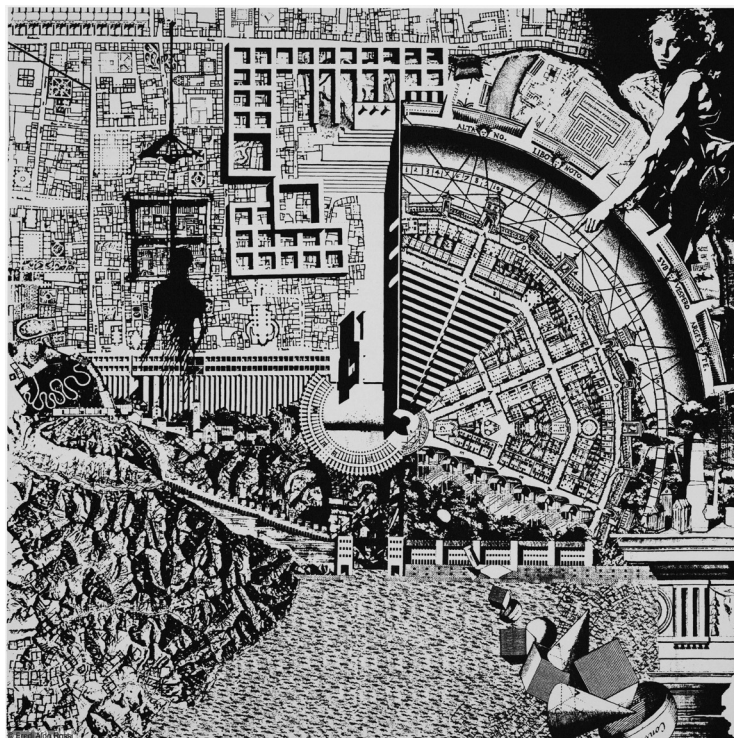
Two significant coincidences occur in 1976 and cannot go unnoticed as

21 Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, trans. Diane Ghirardo and Joan Ockman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982 [1966]), 46

22 Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 86

23 Aldo Rossi, “Analogical Architecture,” *Architecture+Urbanism* 65 (1976): 74

they explain the connection between Rossi's *Analogous City* and Ungers's *Archipelago*. As previously mentioned, in 1976 Ungers participated in an exhibition titled "MANtransFORMS," for whose catalog he authored what in retrospect can be perceived as a design manifesto anticipating the *Archipelago* - the essay "Designing and Thinking in Metaphors and Analogies." He also produced, in the context of the competition for Welfare Island, a typological study on Manhattan urbanism, which he subsequently transfigured as a miniature on another New York City island. That project was later included in the Venice Biennale of 1976, as part of the exhibition "Europa/America: Architetture urbane, alternative sub-urbane" (Europe/America: Urban Architectures, Suburban Alternartives) that also featured Rossi's second *Analogous City*.



8 |

There is more than chronological coincidence to suggest that this second and quite complex iteration of the *Analogous City* may have informed Ungers's concept of Berlin as an archipelago comprised of architectural fragments. Indeed, a closer look reveals a mirage of Cold War Berlin in the form of a remediated map. In the middle, Rossi's design for the Partisan Monument in Segrate divides the imaginary city in two, like the Wall through Friedrichstrasse, with the plan of Rossi's cemetery in Modena ensconced to its right. A fragment of Giuseppe Pistocchi's monument-barrack on Mont Cenis is positioned at the lower end of the wall element, resembling the circular, vast public space of Mehringplatz. Below it, the conflation of two unrealized designs by Rossi, namely a gate for Castel Grande and a regional administrative center for Trieste, form a bridge

Fig. 8

Aldo Rossi, Eraldo Consolascio, Bruno Reichlin, and Fabio Reinhart, "La Città Analoga: Composizione Architettonica," (1976), reproduction of collage, print on paper. Image courtesy of Archivio Aldo Rossi, Collezione Architettura Collection, MAXXI Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo Rome.

that separates land from water, like the one at Hallesches Tor over the Landwehr Canal in Kreuzberg. On the upper right hand corner, the figure of David from Tanzio da Varallo's painting "David and Goliath" leans over a fragment of Piranesi's.

Who will Complete this City (and How)?

In the midst of *La città analoga*, a lone figure from Rossi's sketch "Spazio Chiuso" (closed space) turns its back to the wall and fixates its gaze towards a window, through whose frame can be discerned the plan of the Minoan palace of Knossos in Crete.²⁴ One can speculate about the meaning of this detail. Is it a reference to architects' tendency to construct intellectual labyrinths, like their mythological predecessor Daedalus, and entrap themselves therein? Is it a metaphor for devising impossible escapes over borders and constraints? Or is it a celebration of unconstrained imagination, like that of the archaeologist Arthur Evans, who famously - like Piranesi, Rossi, and Ungers - creatively combined a collection of fragments into a constructed image of history?²⁵ Explaining architecture's role in analogy, Rossi writes:

For the archaeologist and the artist alike, the ruins of a city constitute a starting point for invention; but only at the moment that they can be linked with a precise system do they construct something real. This is mediated by architecture in its relationship with things and the city, with ideas and history.²⁶

On a similar note, when questioned about the metaphor of the *Archipelago*, Ungers claimed that he believes in discovery rather than invention.²⁷ "Things are structurally comparable to me, regardless of the era they are from," he explained.²⁸ The common theoretical premise in these two imaginary cities, the placeless *Analogous City* and Berlin as *Archipelago*, is a magic moment when all the fragments fall into place and a new whole "appears."

The analogical design technique, whose artistic and historical references range widely, in effect liberated the idiosyncratic character of postwar architecture. Contrary to early twentieth century modernist approaches, in which the fragment remained a formally abstract element whose origin was concealed by assembly in part-to-whole relationships, the postwar interest in fragments constituted historical reckoning geared by an impulse towards research and formal

24 Dario Rodighiero's detailed map of *La città analoga*, a museographic installation for the exhibition "Aldo Rossi: The Window of the Poet" at the Bonnefanten Museum in Maastricht in collaboration with the Digital Humanities Lab (DHLAB) of the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale in Lausanne, was a prime aid in tracing the exact visual references of this project

25 Sir Arthur Evans, the British archaeologist who undertook the imaginative yet debatable restoration of the Minoan palace in Knossos, constructed an entire palatial complex based on questionable evidence and in parallel, although unwittingly rather than operatively, a mythology about the culture that would nurture such an architecture. See: Sir Arthur Evans, *The Palace of Minos: A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages of the Early Cretan Civilization as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos* (London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1921)

26 Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 166

27 Ungers, Koolhaas, and Obrist, "Oswald Mathias Ungers in Conversation," 67

28 Ungers, Koolhaas, and Obrist, "Oswald Mathias Ungers in Conversation," 94

experimentation. This suggests the optimistic conviction that history remains open to interpretation even when political orthodoxies define unorthodox territorial divisions.

No wonder, then, that so many instances of fragmentary “analogous cities” should surface during the Cold War era. Ungers’s concept of Berlin as an Archipelago of island-cities is a prime example of this genealogy, which confirms that ideas do not occur *ex nihilo* but in fact evolve as products of exchange, historical consciousness, and gradual development. The notion of exchange itself matters, because the Cold War represented precisely the division of the world in East and West, zones of influence and control, ideas either bound to one dogma or its opposite, a clash between value systems that in retrospect appear equally binary and constraining. Ultimately, speculative projects like these allow us to ponder on what constitutes a fragment and what a whole in architecture, the city, and beyond.

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