

HPA

Histories of Postwar Architecture

n.12 2023

vol.VI

Envisioning Tomorrow's Cities O. M. Ungers' Urban Reflections

edited by

Annalisa Trentin

Jörg H. Gleiter

Ioanna Angelidou
André Bideau
Gerardo Brown-Manrique
Michele Caja
Benjamin Chavardès
Chiara Ciambellotti
Simon Ganne
Orsina Simona Pierini
Eva Sollgruber
Oswald Mathias Ungers
Sophia Ungers



Histories of Postwar Architecture

n.12 2023

vol.VI

Envisioning Tomorrow's Cities **O. M. Ungers' Urban Reflections**

edited by

Annalisa Trentin

Jörg H. Gleiter



Histories of Postwar Architecture

ISSN 2611-0075

<https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/v6-n12-2023>

"Histories of Post War Architecture" is a scientific journal recognized by ANVUR (Italian National Agency for Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes) for disciplinary area 10 (Antiquities, philology, literary studies, art history). Since 2018 it is rated "Classe A" Journal for disciplinary area 08 (Civil engineering and architecture). The Journal is indexed in the following databases and search engines: Scopus, ANCP, BASE, DOAJ, ERIH PLUS, Google Scholar, JournalTOCs, PLEIADI, ROAD, Worldcat.

under the auspices of _____

AISU Aisu International
Associazione Italiana
di Storia Urbana



AISTARCH
Società Italiana
di Storia dell'Architettura

UAA

Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft



PNRR Partenariato Esteso Cultura umanistica e patrimonio culturale come laboratori di innovazione e creatività

CHANGES

CULTURAL HERITAGE ACTIVE INNOVATION
FOR NEXT-GEN SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY
EXTENDED PARTNERSHIP

Spoke7

PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL
HERITAGE AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGES,
NATURAL AND ANTHROPIC RISKS

For this issue we would like to thank Sophia Ungers and Anja Sieber Albers of the UAA - Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft for their support in the production of this issue, which is published on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the honorary degree in architecture conferred to Oswald Mathias Ungers by the University of Bologna.

Scientific Committee

Nicholas Adams (Vassar College), **Eve Blau** (Harvard University), **Ruth Baumeister** (Aarhus School of Architecture), **Herman van Bergeijk** (Delft University of Technology), **Maristella Casciato** (Getty Research Institute), **Pepa Cassinello** (Universidad Politécnica de Madrid), **Christophe van Gerrewey** (EPFL), **Carola Hein** (Delft University of Technology), **Hélène Jannière** (Université Rennes 2), **Thomas Leslie** (Iowa State University), **Mary Caroline McLeod** (Columbia University), **Daniel J. Naegele** (Iowa State University), **Joan Ockman** (Penn University), **Antoine Picon** (Harvard Graduate School of Design), **Antonio Pizza** (Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura de Barcelona), **Dominique Rouillard** (Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris Malaquais), **Paolo Scrivano** (Politecnico di Milano), **Laurent Stalder** (ETH Zurich), **Martino Stierli** (MoMA), **Rosa Tamborrino** (Politecnico di Torino), **André Carinha Tavares** (University of Porto), **Letizia Tedeschi** (Archivio del Moderno, Università della Svizzera Italiana).

Editorial Team

Editor in Chief

Giovanni Leoni (University of Bologna, Italy)

Deputy Editor in Chief

Matteo Cassani Simonetti (University of Bologna, Italy)

Journal Manager

Ilaria Cattabriga (University of Bologna, Italy)

Publishing Editors

Micaela Antonucci (University of Bologna), **Francesco Benelli** (Università di Bologna), **Lorenzo Ciccarelli** (University of Florence, Department of Architecture, Italy) **Marco Falsetti** (Sapienza University of Rome, Department of Architecture and Design) **Elena Formia** (University of Bologna), **Rute Figueiredo** (Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa (Da/UAL)), **Elmira Jafari** (Delft University of Technology, Holland), **Beatrice Lampariello** (Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium), **Raúl Martínez Martínez** (Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya-BarcelonaTech, Spain), **Gabriele Neri** (Politecnico di Torino), **Anna Rosellini** (University of Bologna), **Matteo Sintini**, (Ministry of the Cultural Heritage), **Ines Tolic** (University of Bologna).

Editorial Assistants

Andrea Anselmo (Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium)

Giovanni Bellucci (University of Bologna)

Arianna Casarini (University of Bologna, Italy)

Chiara Ciambellotti (University of Bologna)

Gloria Lisi (University of Palermo)

Ramona Loffredo (University of Bologna)

Ilaria Maria Zedda (University of Bologna)

Cover picture:

Megastruktur – Bebauung Modell B, O.M. Ungers, Berlin 1995, *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur*, no. 25 (August 1969).

Graphic and Design Editors

Stefano Ascari (University of Bologna, Italy)

Ilaria Cattabriga (University of Bologna, Italy)

Giovanni Bellucci (University of Bologna, Italy)

Front page:

Gesamtplan, O.M. Ungers, Schnellbahn und Gebäude, *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur*, no. 21 (December 1968).

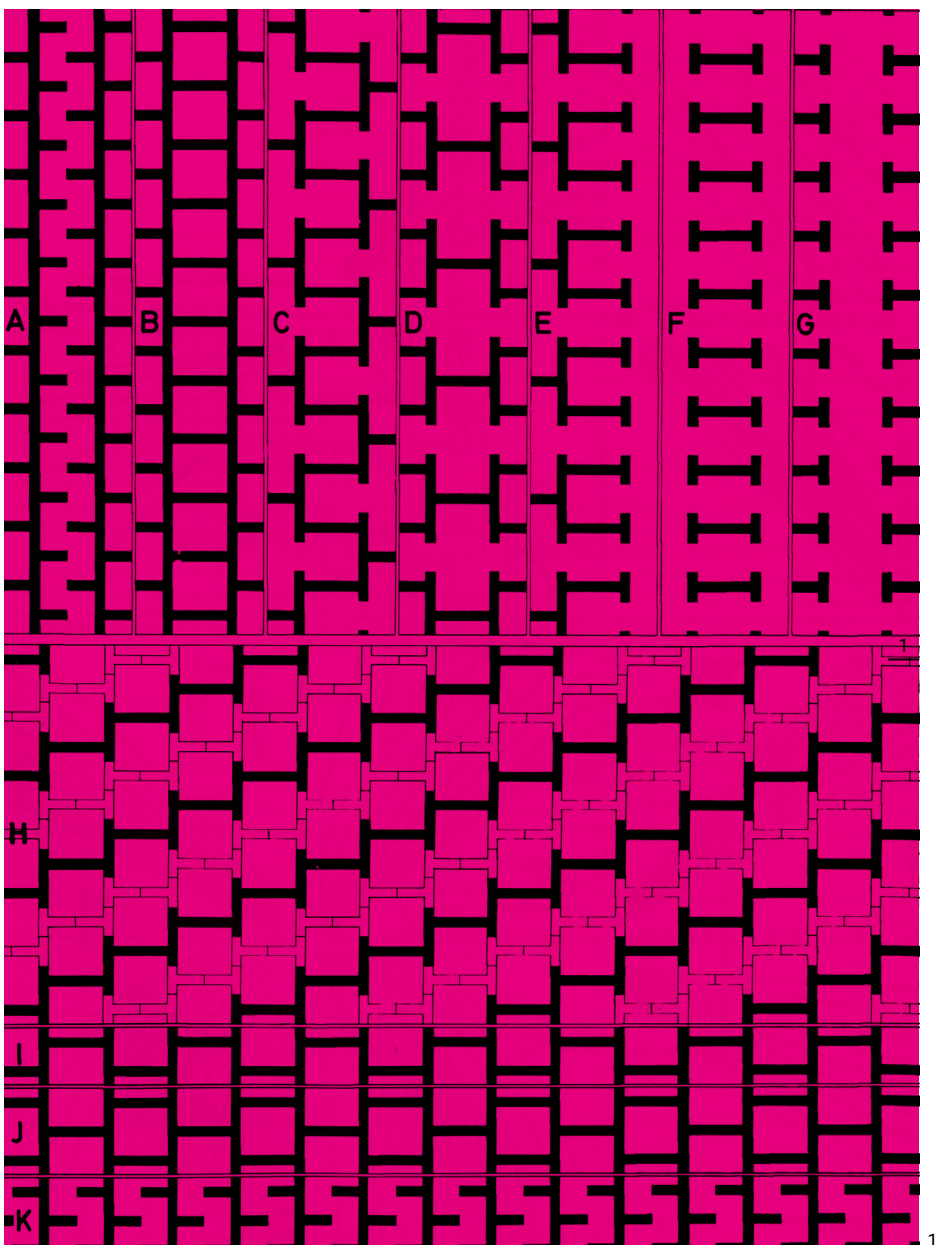


Envisioning Tomorrow's Cities. O. M. Ungers' Urban Reflections

n.12 2023 vol.vi

edited by
Annalisa Trentin
Jörg H. Gleiter

/ EDITORIAL	Annalisa Trentin, Jörg H. Gleiter Rewriting History: O. M. Ungers' Radical Visions for Future Cities7
/ SOURCES	Sophia Ungers Notes on Oswald Mathias Ungers14
	Oswald Mathias Ungers The Urban Island in the Ocean of the Metropolis16
/ INVITED PAPERS	André Bideau Shifting Agency in Berlin: a Critical Decade30
/ ARTICLES	Ioanna Angelidou The Possibility of an Island: Cold War Berlin as Charged Void, Landscape and Mirage54
	Chiara Ciambellotti Rereading the Ungers. Utopian Realism as a Basis for Contemporary Urban Design72
	Simon Ganne, Benjamin Chavardès Reviving Ungers' Visions: Catalyst for Architectural Innovation at IBA 87 among Postmodern Architects 94
	Michele Caja From the Urban Island to the Insula. Morphological Variations around a Theme108
	Eva Sollgruber Oswald Mathias Ungers and the Concept of the Open City: Grünzug Süd and the Beginnings of Ungers' Urban Thinking128
	Orsina Simona Pierini Tiles of Space: Typology and Morphology in Action Genealogy and Legacy of the Project for the Neue Stadt in Köln by Oswald Mathias Ungers142
	Gerardo Brown-Manrique Ungers, the Morphology of the City, and Trier154



Annalisa Trentin, Jörg H. Gleiter

Rewriting History: O. M. Ungers' Radical Visions for Future Cities

Issue 12 of *HPA Histories of Postwar Architecture* on the topic of *Envisioning Tomorrow's Cities: O. M. Ungers' Urban Reflections* poses the question of the innovative power of German architect O. M. Ungers (1926-2007) in the 21st century. The question concerns the significance of Ungers' theory and practice under the changing conditions of climate-friendly development, the remodelling

Fig. 1

Bebauungsvariationen,
O.M. Ungers,
"Gutachten Ruhwald",
*Veröffentlichungen zur
Architektur*, no. 9 (August
1967).



<https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/20386> | ISSN 2611-0075
Copyright © 2023 Annalisa Trentin, Joerg H. Gleiter

of the city, the problems of dealing with natural resources, global warming and changing models of living in general. The need to rethink the conception of architecture and the city calls for a review of possible orientation and especially for theoretical models as a basis for current practice.

To this end this issue of HPA proposes to turn once again to the work of Ungers and to investigate the visionary and experimental aspects that are hidden in his work and went unnoticed so far. The question is whether and how Ungers can serve as a starting point for new models and visions of the city of tomorrow. We asked our authors to unearth and bring to light those new aspects in the work of Ungers, that may serve as key concepts for the solutions in the current crises of the city.

We believe that Ungers' radical vision of future cities far exceeded the rational approach to form, morphology and urban transformation to which his work is too often reduced, despite his multifarious activities as a visionary architect, farsighted planner and scrupulous intellectual. Can Ungers' radicality be fruitful to the solution of today's problems?

The question is whether and how we can learn from Ungers today, how relevant is Ungers today, a good fifty years after the publication of *The City in the City: Berlin Green Archipelago*, the most original among the many groundbreaking investigations that Ungers undertook. When Ungers and his collaborators published this booklet, Berlin was a western outpost behind the Iron Curtain or an island in the archipelago of Soviet-dominated Eastern Bloc states. Berlin was still marked in an extreme way by the destruction of the war, it was economically marginalised, whereas it had previously been the largest industrial city in Europe.

Ungers' original contribution to the practice and theory of architecture of his time was that he made this very city the testing ground for his visions of the new city. Written as a memorandum for the Internationale Building Exhibition (IBA), that took place in Berlin 1987, it contains eleven theses on Berlin. In this text, one can read the essential differences between Ungers' vision and what is practised; Ungers speaks of context and talks about the poeticization of place and has tried to explain what he means. The idea is to develop the new plans and projects from what exists, from what Ungers calls "ontological". He is of the opinion that reality is as it appears and cannot be derived solely from historical examples, such as a loss or any utopia. At first everything appears destroyed and disconnected, so much so that it would almost be better to demolish everything because in reality there is no longer any internal connection, but a new reality can be created that re-establishes a new connection.

This is what Ungers means by an ontological design approach, he believes that a dialectical model can be viable: the dialectic between the new and the old, between the most diverse things, presenting the ruptures and inconsistencies with such severity that the elements of the city emerge more clearly. For Ungers, it is through this variety that greater richness is achieved in the city.

Let us take another look at Ungers, in the spirit of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the classic of world literature, to whom Ungers repeatedly referred: "That world history must be rewritten from time to time, there can be no doubt in our day. Such a necessity arises, however, not because much that has happened has been rediscovered, but because new views are given, because the contemporary of a progressing time is led to standpoints from which the past can be surveyed and judged in a new way."

Goethe is saying nothing more clearly here than that we must look back at history again and again and form our own picture of past facts. Not because new material has emerged or been discovered in the archives, but because our point of view has changed. It is enough that we look at history with different eyes from a new point of view and perhaps recognise things that we were blind to before, for which we previously had no concept or awareness. It is only the changed point of view that allows us to recognise the new in the old and that places current practice in a line of tradition.

For Ungers, the task of urban development is to finally understand the complementary character as the character of the city and to bring together the different ideas of the city into a common whole. The complementarity of different city models is already history, Berlin as a whole being the best example. The concept of the 'city within a city' actually emerged in Berlin from the study of historical development, Berlin was examined by Ungers according to various historical phases, from the beginnings of the two twin cities Berlin and Cölln, from the medieval and commercial city to the inner city of today. In Berlin, an association of cities was already established in the mid-18th century and this development continued. All of this overlapped over 700 years, and today there are traces and remains of all the great urban projects that could never really have been realised.

For Ungers, the thesis was always the ideal concept of the city, and the reality was always an antithesis that refuted this thesis: this is how the city has developed during centuries. Ungers said: You can see this very clearly in Berlin, and this is also what makes Berlin so fascinating. And if the city's storyline is written like this, then I see it as proof of my model of discontinuity. Moreover, the city proved that any totalitarian, exclusivist and exclusionary system was and is unsustainable.

It is in this regard that the work of Ungers constitutes an inexhaustible source of research and inspiration. Much of it has not yet been seen, explored and individuated. As it was Ungers' lifelong desire to catalogue and address all the possibilities of action in the field of the transformation of the built environment, whether it is landscape, public space, or a simple dwelling.

Hence, it is the duty of the later generations to look at Ungers' work with new eyes sharpened by the current cultural and architectural conditions. With Le Corbusier, we can say that we see differently and see other things than the generations before us. *Eyes that cannot see...* is one of the chapters in

Le Corbusier's *Vers une architecture* from 1923. This was Le Corbusier's reproach and at the same time invitation to architects to finally look at their time and history with open eyes.

But when we ask the question of Ungers' topicality today, we have to go one level deeper. A far more important question arises: to what extent is Ungers classic today – his theory, his experiments and his architecture. The term classical means precisely the opposite of outdated. Classicism refers to that which comes from the past but is still valid, which still concerns us today, with which we are still connected today, which is still part of our convictions and our practices, even though its origins lie in the past. Is Ungers a classic in this sense and in what sense and in what aspects is he still relevant today?

Ungers always had a sense for the clash of the classical and the contemporary, the eternally valid and the ephemeral. This is what characterises his modernity. He had a sense that the past forms the necessary substrate on which the transformations can take place in each generation. With Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, to whom Aldo Rossi repeatedly referred for his theory of permanence, one can state: Fortunately, the past never completely dies for man. He can forget it, but he always carries it within him. For at every epoch, he is only the product and the summary of all previous epochs. When he explores his soul, he can distinguish these different epochs by what they have left behind in him.

Fustel de Coulanges recognised the survival of past rites in the profane practices of subsequent generations. It can be added that this also applies to architecture. For this Rossi coined the term permanence. Permanence does not mean that everything has to live on and continue to exist physically; it often lives and works underground, invisible and hidden, but perhaps all the more effectively. Following on from this, the question of Ungers' continued existence arises in current debates on the practice and theory of architecture.

For this purpose, we have suggested the following binomials, that may offer new ways of looking at Ungers: utopia - dystopia, ecology - biodiversity, rhetoric - humanism, universality - Eurocentrism, morphology - transformation, post-modernism - posthumanism. The aim here was to provide key terms, that from today's point of view, offer ways to investigate Ungers' ideas of the city. The purpose is to define a range of possible cityscapes, helpful to establish a series of theoretical references and scenarios. The intention is not to celebrate a remote past in a rhetorical way, but to turn our attention to a design methodology based on an organic idea of the city.

The question is therefore to what extent Ungers is the basis for current architectural practice in an age that is now too quickly referred to as the Anthropocene. And conversely, today's point of view opens up a new perspective on Ungers, his theory and his practice. What are the aspects of Ungers that, in the spirit of Goethe and Fustel de Coulanges, could not be seen before, but which can be recognised today, if we look back to the second half of the 20th century from our current point of view and, with new eyes and a new sensibility, can recognise

things in Ungers that always existed there, but which are only now unfolding their relevance and topicality.

Ungers' text *The Urban Islands in the Ocean of the Metropolis. The new Berlin (xy): The pluralistic concept of the complementary 'urban archipelago' – planning for the future on historical soil*, here translated into English for the first time, is an essential point of reflection testifying to an idea of the city based on history in constant evolution, where fragments can find new meaning and where the rhetoric of urban repair, based on the prevailing idea of the city through block development, is strongly criticised. For Ungers, building on the edge of a block is only a certain idea of the city, after all, there were many other concepts, the garden city for example or Scharoun's utopian dream of Arcadia, and all these different ideas have the right to co-exist, they are complementary. The task of urban development for Ungers is to finally understand the complementary character as the essential feature of the city and to bring the different ideas of the city together into a common whole.

Ungers dwells on the fact that in urban planning, people had long been looking for ideas that would 'order' and 'unify' the city: 'These were the terms that were used: a terrible thought today. The city is not a village; only the village seeks unity, uniformity. The city, on the other hand, must be incoherent, discontinuous: this means something more than not having continuity'.

This concept of discontinuity, or rather *experimentation*, is well represented by the texts selected for this issue of the HPA journal, which through their variety illustrate, even if only partially, a universe of experimentation and research.

André Bideau essay *Shifting Agency in Berlin: a Critical Decade* represents an important synthesis of the experiments conducted by Ungers in Berlin, a city that served as a model for new themes at a time when the expressions and demands of social groups were appearing in the urban sphere. The experiences conducted by Ungers at TU Berlin and later at the Cornell Summer Academy highlight how the American experience was able to provide a new interpretation of the fragmented Berlin where the two Summer Academies organized by Ungers and his colleagues at Cornell University offered a lens for observing how external forces condition the knowledge gained by architects.

In her essay *The Possibility of an Island: Cold War Berlin as Charged Void, Landscape, and Mirage* Ioanna Angelidou thematizes *The City in the City: Berlin, the Green Archipelago*, that Ungers together with others authored in 1977, retrospectively from the preservationist interventions in Berlin in the 1980s and 1990s. Angelidou's intention is to sketch an alternative and enriched genealogy of this seminal text. Looking back to the 1970s Angelidou departs from the various attempts to reconstruct Berlin, in East Berlin before 1990 and in the reunified Berlin after 1990. Using the terms fraction, ruin, *spolia*, *lacunae*, and the unfinished, Angelidou reconstructs the key terms that Ungers refers to.

In *Rereading the Ungers: Utopian Realism as a Basis for Contemporary Urban Design* Chiara Ciambellotti provides an overview of the utopian thinking of

Ungers. She demonstrates how Ungers' utopian ideas arose on the one hand from a critique of the architecture practice of his time – particularly the modern capitalist consumer society – and on the other hand from a critical-historical perspective. In Ungers' concept of utopia, an idealistic and an operative dimension overlap. For the questions posed in this issue of HPA, Ungers' definition of utopia as a critical tool is particularly interesting. This distinguishes Ungers' concept of utopia from the utopian thinking of his contemporaries and makes it compatible with today's discussions about the future of the planet. It is commendable that, for the first time, Ciambellotti appropriately honours the role of Liselotte Ungers, who in her book *Die Rückkehr des Roten Mannes - Indianer in den USA* (The Return of the Red Man - Native Americans in the USA) addresses the fate of Native Americans in the context of the utopia of America as the land of freedom.

Simon Ganne and Benjamin Charvardès' contribution locates Ungers' innovative practice in the transition zone between modernism and postmodernism. They particularly emphasise the exchange of ideas between Europe and the USA, on which Ungers developed his experimental urban design. This includes themes such as The Urban Villa, Urban Garden, Großform, Archipel City and City within the City. Ganne and Charvardès pay particular attention to the International Building Exhibition Berlin IBA of 1987, which became a fruitful experiment for the reconstruction of the European city based on Ungers' preliminary work. They show how this can be fruitful for the city of the 21st century.

Michele Caja with the essay *From the Urban Island to the Insula. Morphological Variations around a Theme* considers the experiences in design and theory carried out by Ungers parallel to the idea of the Urban villa and Archipel City archipelago, moving from the idea of the urban island to the scale of the urban block, experimented through different projects, and based on morphological variations. Caja, recalling figures as Rem Koolhaas and Karl Friedrich Schinkel, focuses on the fact that the urban island is slowly transformed into an urban insula, as occurs in the critical reconstruction introduced during the Internationale Building Exhibition (IBA) in Berlin by Kleihues, of which Ungers was one of the main protagonists.

Eva Sollgruber's essay *Oswald Mathias Ungers and the Concept of the Open City: Grünzug Süd and the Beginnings of Ungers' Urban Thinking* introduces us to an urban project that represents a paradigm for explaining some of the essential concepts behind the Green Archipelago idea. The idea of *Großform* and the Planning criteria defined by Ungers help us understand the genesis of the urban projects, especially Grünzug Süd, that were born in a period, the 1960s, where his connection with the members of Team 10 was very strong. More specifically, Sollgruber intends to identify the correlations between Grünzug Süd and the projects created in the same period by Alison and Peter Smithson, thus shedding light on urban planning concepts that are still relevant today.

Closely related to the theme of *Großform*, Orsina Simona Pierini, in her essay *Tiles of space: Typology and Morphology in action Genealogy and legacy of the*

project for the Neue Stadt in Köln by Oswald Matthias Ungers, goes into the specifics of an exemplary project based on the relationship between body and space. Pierini's concern is to situate this project within a broader reflection on the residential unit, highlighting how the compositional principle of volume and space, stems already from some of Le Corbusier's projects and is a widespread theme in the critical reconstruction of the residential housing in postwar architecture. Through Jean Prouvé or Alison and Peter Smithson, but also Hejduk or SANAA, Pierini traces a genealogy that finds full relevance in contemporary design.

In conclusion, Gerardo Brown-Manrique's essay focuses on the third phase of Ungers' work, i.e. the phase after Ungers' return from the USA. At the centre are the morphological transformation processes of the city. Brown-Manrique's essay shows how today's debates about the city of the 21st century can connect to and learn from this part of Ungers' work. This is particularly true with regard to the theme of the collective unconscious, which is once again topical today in the context of debates on the relationship between human and non-human actors. The essay *The Dialectic City*, which Ungers wrote together with Stefan Vieth in 1997, deserves special mention here. For the morphological transformations of this third phase, Brown-Manrique focuses on the projects that Ungers created for the city of Trier. Trier was founded as a Roman city and is therefore particularly interesting for the issue of morphological transformation. In these projects, Ungers shows himself to be an innovator of the idea of urban morphology, which is something that can be taken up again today.

Sophia Ungers

Notes on Oswald Mathias Ungers

In 2004 Oswald Mathias Ungers received his honorary doctorate from the University of Bologna. It was his second honorary doctorate after the Technische Universität Berlin awarded him this honor in 1999. It was a great honor for him and the event will always remain in our memory. The University of Bologna staged a spectacular event, and all the deans of the Italian architecture universities were present to share this moment with Ungers. His deep connection to Italy, starting from the Roman architecture of Vitruv, through the Renaissance with Leon Battista Alberti, Andrea Palladio and Donato Bramante, up to the friendships with his contemporaries Aldo Rossi, Vittorio Gregotti, Carlo Aymonino, Adolfo Natalini and Gianni Braghieri just to name a few. All these colleagues informed his thinking and his design. It was in 1959 that Gregotti and Rossi came to Cologne to see the new building by Ungers in the Belvederestrasse 60 and wrote a comprehensive article in *Casabella* on "Un giovane architetto tedesco". Their interest in his work, especially the house Belvederestrasse 60 (which is now home to the UAA foundation), was among the catalysts that started his international career.

As early as in the 1960's, Ungers was interested in passing on his enthusiasm for architecture. It was therefore in line with his thinking that he and Liselotte Ungers founded the UAA Ungers Archive for Architectural Research. This foundation was created to make the extensive library that he and his wife collected, available for researchers and the interested public. In 2011, Anja Sieber-Albers and I began to activate the foundation to make it more visible in the architectural landscape of Germany, with the goal to promote architectural discussion and research. It is



<https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/20307> | ISSN 2611-0075
Copyright © Sophia Ungers

based in the former home and office building of Ungers which was built in 1959. In 1989 Ungers added a cube of black basalt in the garden to house the library. Both buildings are national monuments. The UAA also manages the estate of Ungers including his plans, models, lectures and bibliography. It aims to make these unique research tools available to researchers and Phd students for their work, as well as communicating architecture to a general public.

The UAA is more than pleased to be a part of this number of HPA journal dedicated to Ungers. As a foundation, we have been in close contact with the University of Bologna and the Technische Universität Berlin and have received their support throughout the years. Again, this publication and the following symposium underline the deep ties between Ungers and Italy, between the architect and his history. We want to thank Annalisa Trentin and Jörg Gleiter, as well as all the authors who have contributed to this publication. Some we know well and have spent many days with them looking through archival material, while others are new to us. It is exciting to see how all are interpreting the work of Ungers and keeping his thinking relevant today.

In the beginning of his architectural career, urban planning was not that important in Ungers' architectural agenda. However, the situation in Berlin and other modern cities gave him the impetus to study the urban structure of a city and give impulses to a new way of thinking about urban infrastructure. To start off this publication, we are adding a text by Ungers that was published in *Tageszeitung* in November 1990, which continues his idea of the city archipelago. The last paragraph clearly sums up his approach:

The problem which is open for discussion – and this especially applies to Berlin -is not to design a completely new urban environment, but to design a complement and transform that which exists; it is not the invention of a new urban system, but the reformation of the present one; not the discovery of a new order but the rediscovery of existing principles; not the construction of a new city, but the reconstruction of the given situation; not a new beginning but the continuation of the old. Not to strive for a new utopia but rather design a better reality, not the concept of a new world but the improvement of the existing one and a meaningful interaction of heterogenous parts – that is the future of the city of Berlin.

Oswald Mathias Ungers

The Urban Islands in the Ocean of the Metropolis

Die Stadtinseln im Meer der Metropole. Das Neue Berlin (VII): Das pluralistische Konzept der Städtearchipel – Planung auf historischem Boden, *was first published in: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, November 22nd, 1990. Then in an untitled version, in: Berlin morgen: Ideen für das Herz einer Großstadt, an exhibition catalogue, edited by Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani and Michael Mönninger, Gerd Hatje, Stuttgart, 1991, pp. 160-167, published for the exhibition in the German Architecture Museum, Frankfurt am Main, January 26th to March 24th, 1991. See also: Stadtinseln im Meer der Metropole, in: Michael Mönninger, Das Neue Berlin: Baugeschichte und Stadtplanung der deutschen Hauptstadt, Frankfurt am Main, Insel, Leipzig, 1991, pp. 214-223. The incipit of Ungers explanation of the project is based on the text Die Biographie einer Stadt published in Idee, Prozess, Ergebnis. Die Reparatur und Rekonstruktion der Stadt, exhibition catalogue, edited by Felix Zwoch, Frölich & Kaufmann, Berlin, 1984, pp.255-258.*

This text is published for the first time in English in this issue of HPA, with a translation by Anthony F. Rich.

Towns and cities are places for the constant formation and transformation of concepts, ideas, realities and conditions which are reflected in sensual experiences. They are like figures undergoing a metamorphosis, which sometimes develop from some topographical chance or from a deliberate decision, following the laws of logical consequences or antithetical leaps.

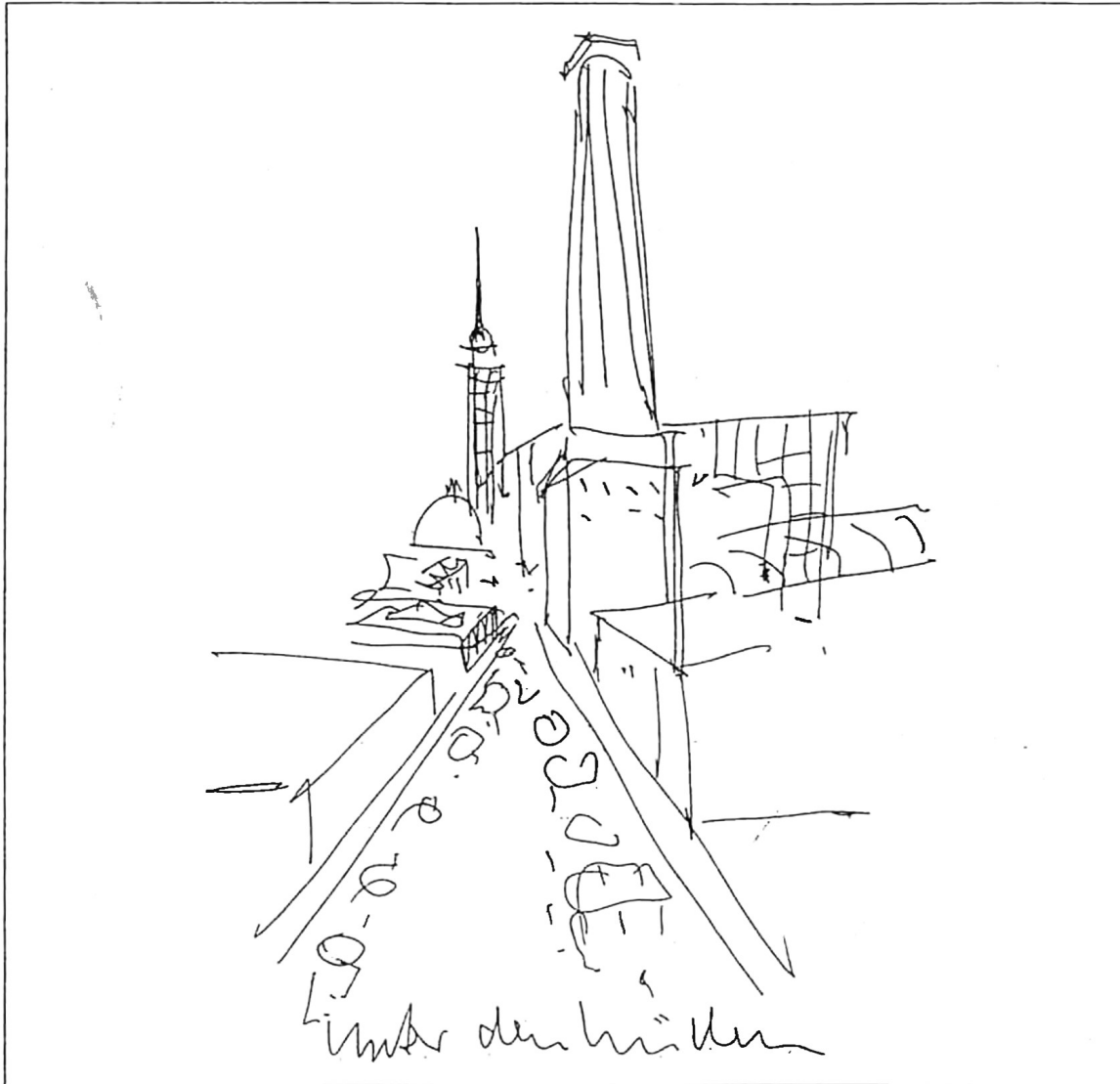
The story of mankind is also the story of its built environment – its towns and cities. Towns are phenomena that cannot be comprehensively captured with scientific theories alone, even though many such attempts were made in the 19th and 20th centuries in particular. The complexity is obviously too multi-faceted to be compressed into a theory that cannot avoid being one-dimensional. Theories generally only explain facts that have already been isolated and are derived from quantitative criteria. A town is of course also defined by its land use, transport networks, locations, population figures, economic activity, social situations, productivity and all kinds



<https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/20308> | ISSN 2611-0075
Copyright © Oswald Mathias Ungers

of other quantifiable facts, but what actually characterises the town goes far beyond that. Just supposing we could capture all the measurable factors: even then, we would still not know what actually keeps the town alive.

Is it a place of commerce, of the exchange of goods and ideas, or is it a place of liberation, of protection and security, as in older times?



11

Towns are places where the traces of different cultural eras and architectural mindsets are preserved. They bear witness to people's intellectual spirit and physical capacity to the extent to which political, social and aesthetic ideas, convictions and utopias coincide with the history of the local architecture and urban planning.

Such a town, in its dialectically opposing architectural elements and fragments, which exist side by side and are either mutually exclusive or complementary, has the appearance of an urban nexus of intellectual qualities.

Do we still believe, despite the experience of history, that the town plan is final and irrevocable? If so, it is worthwhile reflecting intensively once again about the

Fig. 1-9

Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Die Stadtinseln im Meer der Metropole. Das Neue Berlin (VII): Das pluralistische Konzept der Städtearchipel – Planung auf historischem Boden.*

idea of the fragment, as it used to be interpreted and understood in the age of humanism. Applied to the concept the town, it means discovering and taking into account the spaces in between, the parts and what is special about each of them, and integrating them into the complexity of the whole. Both the clear message of the past and the idea of the future as a continuation of the past are part of the concept of the humanist town, a town which, as Nikolaus von Kues put it, draws life from the "coincidentia oppositorum", the "coming together of opposites".

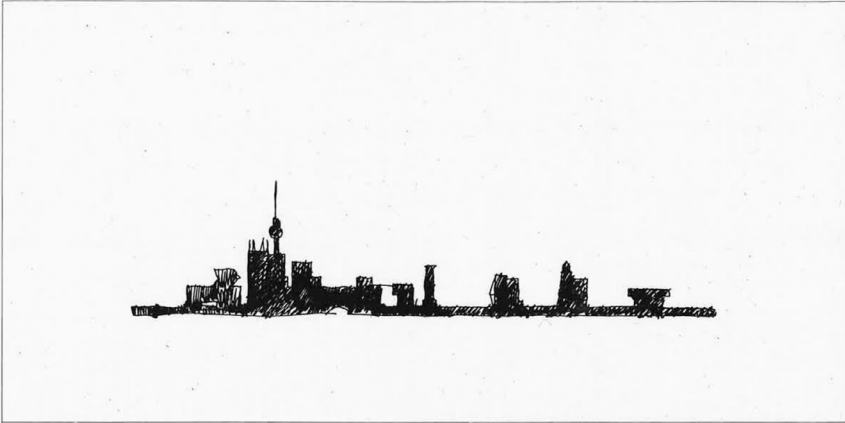
Instead of trying to understand the town as a system of logical connections - a common goal in modern-day urban planning -, we would perhaps obtain more insights into the mutual dependencies if we were to think of the town in morphological terms - i.e. as a transformation from one appearance to another - and accept the present aspect of the town as a manifestation of past historical events.

Berlin could be said to constitute the model of a city which, in the course of its 700-year history, has passed through predictable and unexpected stages that explain the present appearance of the city better than any number of functional analyses. Initially, Berlin consisted of two villages – one for fishermen and the other for traders; then it was a market place and soon after that, it became the residence of a Renaissance Prince. He changed it into a military garrison and finally a fortress. After that, it became the capital of a kingdom and then, after the foundation of the 2nd German Empire, the imperial capital. In the 20th century it developed into the biggest industrial city in Europe, became a metropolis and then once again the capital, this time of a 1,000-year Reich. The experience ended in the biggest heap of rubble in Europe. It culminated in Berlin's being divided into two cities again - East and West Berlin, as it had been at the start of its history. Today, it has a chance to become a metropolis again and perhaps the capital of a unified Germany for the third time.

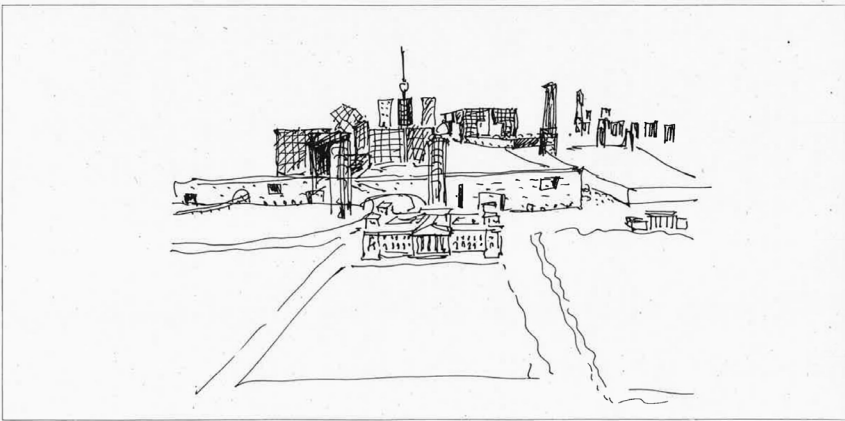
The built structure of Berlin is the sum of ideas, thoughts, decisions, chance events and realities from its history. Planned and fortuitous events, constructive and destructive forces have determined the shape of the city and at the same time its diversity. The town map is like a textbook of events in which every mark left by history is recorded. The records are more like a gigantic jigsaw puzzle composed of bits and pieces than an ordered, logical whole. Each generation passed the town on to the next as a collection of fragments, which constantly changed and multiplied. No generation has ever succeeded in coming to a final conclusion. The city has – thank goodness! – remained piecemeal, discontinuous, incomplete and therefore varied and alive. The only continuous element is a constant dialectic process, in which each thesis is refuted by the antithesis.

All future planning for Berlin will inevitably have to deal with the problem of the city's history. This presents an opportunity to develop strategies for the city's future. Care must, however, be taken in order to avoid two directions of illusory thinking: one is to assume that the city could be repaired in its historical form.

DAS NEUE BERLIN



KONEN DER ARCHITEKTUR

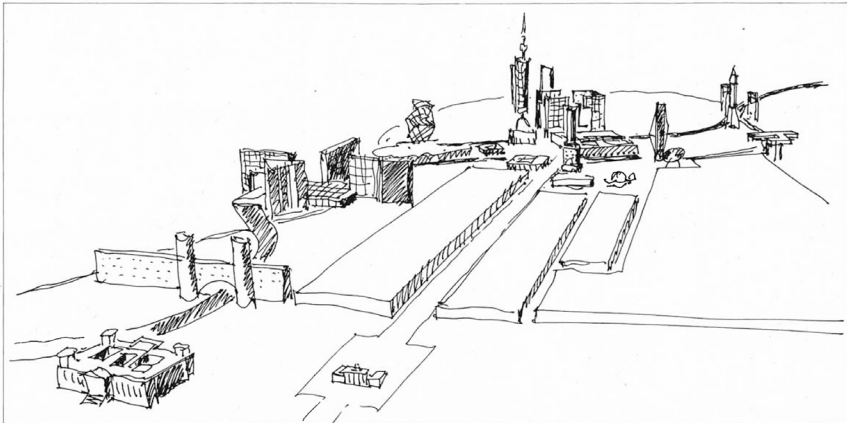


SKIZZEN

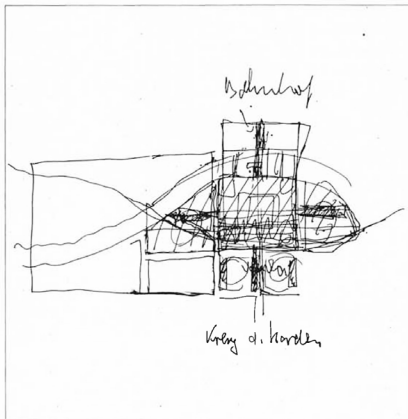
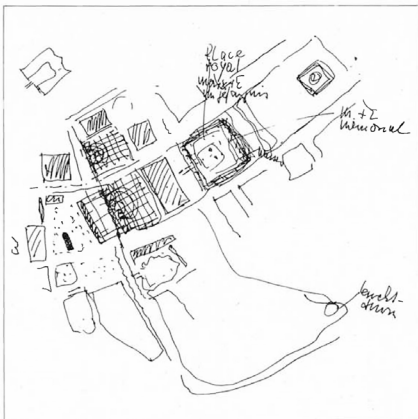
PROF. O. M. UNGERS

2 |

DAS NEUE BERLIN



KONEN DER ARCHITEKTUR



SKIZZEN

PROF. O. M. UNGERS

3 |

The situation, demands and expectations are just not sufficient for this purpose.

Secondly, the process process of renewal must not be left to chance. The disorderly development that this inevitably involves includes chaotic elements, which are destructive for a city.

The unavoidable process of reorientation can be seen as an experience which remains permanently concealed behind manifestations of a simulated and hence false vitality. On the other hand, it can also be regarded as an experimental project, as a consequence of which the experience of the city as an architectural and urban environment in the sense of a varied ensemble becomes more intense.

Thanks to its extreme and idiosyncratic character, Berlin is simply predestined, more than other cities, to act as a kind of laboratory in the search for solutions to the new problems. Berlin today could – as has happened so frequently in its history – again assume the prototypical status of a pilot project, and the Berlin case could be used to demonstrate new exemplary concepts for the general European problem of a synthetic metropolis.

The prevailing opinion nowadays that inner-city districts can only be rehabilitated by means of more intense construction activity, in order to restore the original condition in this way, is based on the wrong premise and is therefore illusory. Implementing the idea of urban repair entails an inescapable constraint of exclusiveness.

Assumptions of this kind disregard the fact that most districts have fallen into a state of disorder, simply because the need for further development did not exist. In fact, proposals like this not only result in the general problem of confusing real and synthetic history, with all the consequences of producing kitsch in the name of good taste, but what is more, the underlying demand is just as artificial as the products created to satisfy it. Especially in Berlin, this only disguises the inexorable problems of reorientation, and the confrontation with reality is merely delayed.

Based on this awareness, it would be worth considering whether, in the context of a programme for the selective relief of the urban pressure, indeed of a partial demolition of poorly functioning parts of the present city, Berlin's future development might not offer a unique opportunity to reorganise districts that no longer satisfy the necessary requirements – whether for architectural, social or structural reasons. At the same time, it would be necessary to identify areas worth preserving and either to intensify their unique character or – where they are fragments – to round them off with additions. The enclaves carved out of the urban chaos in this way would then in effect become independent "urban islands" in a part of the city which had otherwise been cleared and would form an "urban archipelago" as it were, in a "green natural lagoon".

The first step towards implementing the idea of a “city within a city” - Berlin as an “urban archipelago” – would be to identify and select those districts which have identifiable characteristics of a quality that justifies preserving and elaborating. These identity spaces, if we may call them that, should not be determined on the basis of a particular taste or merely aesthetic aspects. The decisive criterion for selecting them ought to be the question of the extent to which ideas and concepts are present in a pure and tangible form, so that the history of the city and also the architecture can once again be brought into line with the history of ideas.

The second step in reordering the city in this way is to complete the fragments to be preserved, which could then achieve their final architectural form for urban planning purposes in the course of that process. First of all, the objective needs of these fragmentary urban islands would need to be identified and then, in response to this, satisfied in detail by using a range of social institutions aimed at a certain densification. This approach leads to the development of a repertoire of supplementary facilities which are decidedly unsentimental in nature. In areas of great urban density, the existing pressure should be reduced by creating open spaces such as town parks, public amenities and squares, whereas areas with less population density could be further intensified by integrating centres of densification.

The sole intention of future architecture and draft planning should be to elaborate the proper form of each individual “urban island” which has been selected as such. The prime task in this context is to determine the physiognomy, as it were, of the district concerned and to shape it in such a way that it develops a character of its own. The “urban archipelago” which arises in this way, consisting of individual “urban islands” which differ in their nature and their urban and social structure, then corresponds to the image of a “city within a city”.

Each district considered separately acquires its own peculiar identity, which differs substantially from that of each other district. This is not just an open urban concept, in which many different places compete with each other and in so doing enhance the diversity and complexity of the city at the same time, but also from the political and social point of view it is a pluralist concept, in which multiple ideologically differing opinions can coexist side by side. In specific terms, both the Märkisches Viertel and Westend, Kreuzberg and Lichtenfelde, and the new multi-story blocks at right angles to the streets in the East of the city, are necessarily elements of a pluralist urban concept, and should be seen as complementing each other with different qualities, which increase the range on offer and hence the freedom of choice. They are not mutually exclusive contradictions.

The urban concept of the “city within a city”, which is pluralistic in this sense, corresponds to the modern structure of society, which is developing more and more into an individualistic society with different expectations, wishes and ideas, in contrast to the totalitarian view of society, in which any kind of individ-

ualism is systematically suppressed.

The concept of "the city within a city" means nothing other than individualising the city and thus at the same time abandoning type-casting and deliberate uniformity. This is how on the one hand the openness of the concept and on the other hand diversity should be understood.

The individualisation of the city also addresses the question of the citizen's identification with his city. Whereas a loss of identity and hence depersonalisation inevitably occurs in a town or city which is formed anonymously according to a uniform principle, the resident in an open system can decide for himself on an identity space shaped according to his own wishes and ideas.

The phase of identifying localities, the "urban islands" as we term them, would be one of defining and describing the programme and, of equal importance, dealing with the formal elements of urban development. Not all the new additions would necessarily have to be designed from scratch. It would certainly be conceivable also to realise projects that had been designed at a different time and for different situations, but which for some reason or other had not always been implemented, and to use them as models. Leonidov's Kulturpalast, for example, could serve as a model for developing the Görlitzer Bahnhof station in Kreuzberg, and the linear urban project for Magnetogorsk might act as a point of departure for the development parallel to the "Unter den Eichen" street.

Other examples of retroactive architecture could relate more specifically to Berlin's architectural history and in this way correct some major failings of the past, such as the late realisation of such important projects as Mies van der Rohe's glass high-rise building, sited at Friedrichstrasse station as a symbolic landmark indicating the entrance to the central district and as a counterpart to the television tower in East Berlin, which dominates the entire scene, constructing Taut's hyperbolic dome over the Olympic stadium, or completing the chain of towns along the Havel in line with Wilhelm IV's plan for the Havel landscape.

In their present state, both the Tiergarten district and the southern part of Friedrichstadt offer a unique opportunity to demonstrate the reduction model and its positive application. All the existing buildings in these areas should be carefully restored irrespective of their historical past and embedded in a park. No new buildings and architectures would be needed, only a town park with the present buildings dotted round it like urban palaces.

The concept of "the city within the city", consisting of a collage of different urban units, is complemented antithetically by the areas between the "urban islands". There, urban structures which are in some cases of no value at all should be allowed to revert gradually to nature and green land, and it should be ensured that the city is not rebuilt there. This would certainly apply to the area around Kemperplatz. The urban islands would thus be separated from one another by belts of nature and green, which explains the metaphor of the city as a green archipelago and defines the structure of the "city within a city".

The green spaces in between form a system of modified nature and contain a catalogue of types ranging from suburban areas, open parks, wooded regions and even urbanised agricultural use (allotments).

The polarity between nature and culture, or nature and metropolis, which is absent today in most cases, having been compromised and blurred, and is sorely missed, is given a new impulse by this concept. Since such a nature/culture system would have to be designed as a matter of principle, i.e. it is purely synthetic in essence, it would tend to intensify rather than reduce the experience of the metropolis, thanks to its rich contrasts. The metropolis is of course nothing other than a name for an environment whose configuration is based solely on human inventiveness.

The natural pattern should also absorb the infrastructure of the modern technological age, i.e. in addition to an extensive system of roads for cars linking the urban islands, there should also be supermarkets, industrial estates and similar facilities dependent on cars, and also all those 20th-century typologies which are not tied to a specific location, but are dependent on mobility and cannot be integrated into a dense urban structure on the right scale without destroying it.

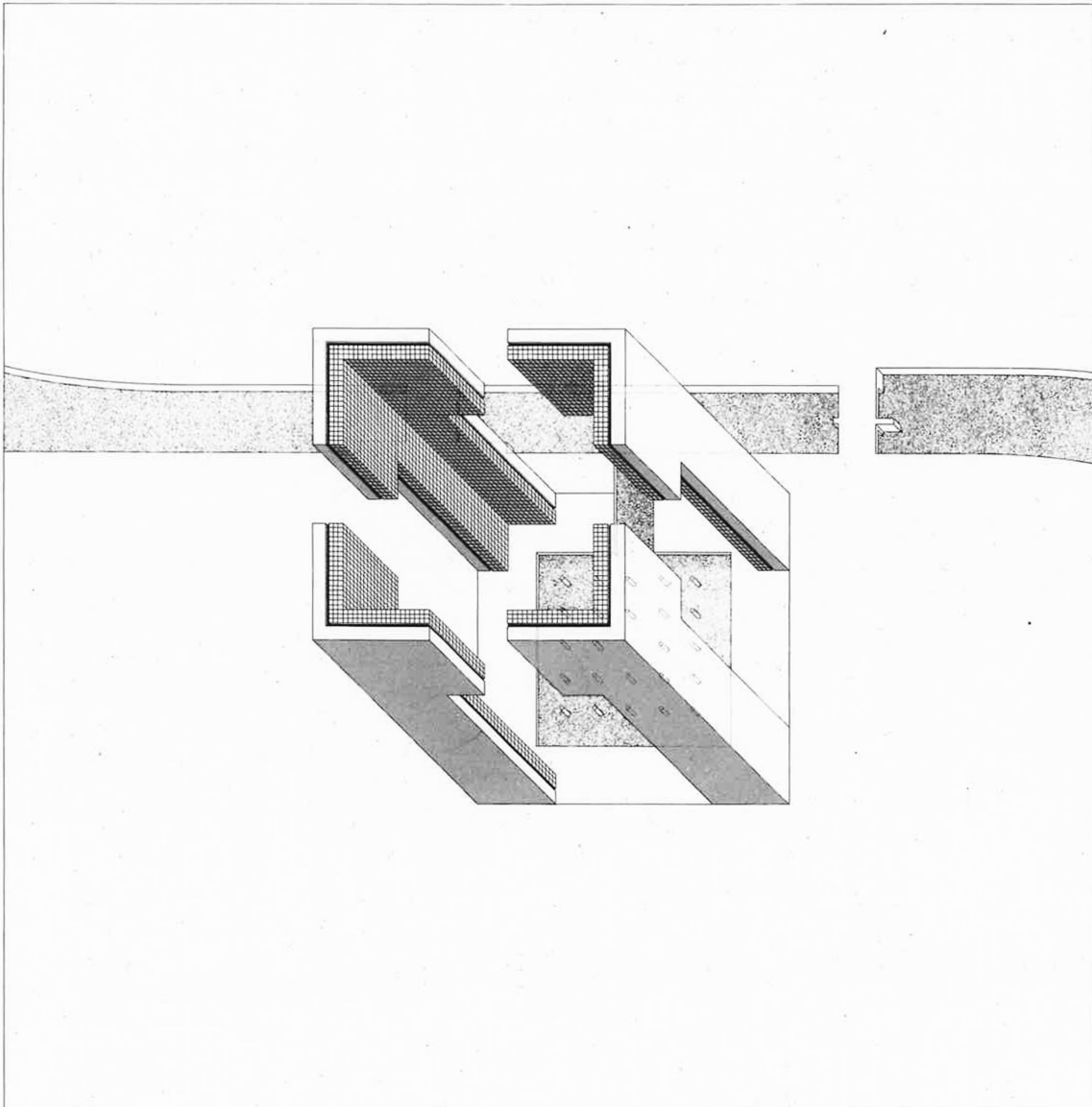
When the concept of the “city within a city” is applied specifically to the existing reality, some districts stand out more sharply because of their urban development qualities than other, less significant areas. A random selection of districts like this includes:

- the Kreuzberg district round the Görlitzer Bahnhof station
- the southern part of Friedrichstadt
- the central district
- the “Spree ribbon”
- the Prenzlauer Berg district
- the perimeter development by the Volkspark
- Müllerstrasse
- the Tempelhof Field
- Stalinallee
- Alexanderplatz
- the Museum Island

to list only a few striking examples.

The areas mentioned represent extremely different building structures and include on the one hand block developments and on the other hand more loosely packed quarters with villa-type housing, high-rise buildings, blocks at right angles to the streets and mixed housing. These different typological uses ought to be preserved and supplemented where necessary by additional measures that blend well with what is already there. This avoids having a uniform development principle spread over the entire city.

There are some architectural projects in the existing urban space that could be cited as comparatively historical projects, though they are not meant literally, nor can they be applied in the utopian sense, but they are intended more as



MARX-ENGELS KUBUS

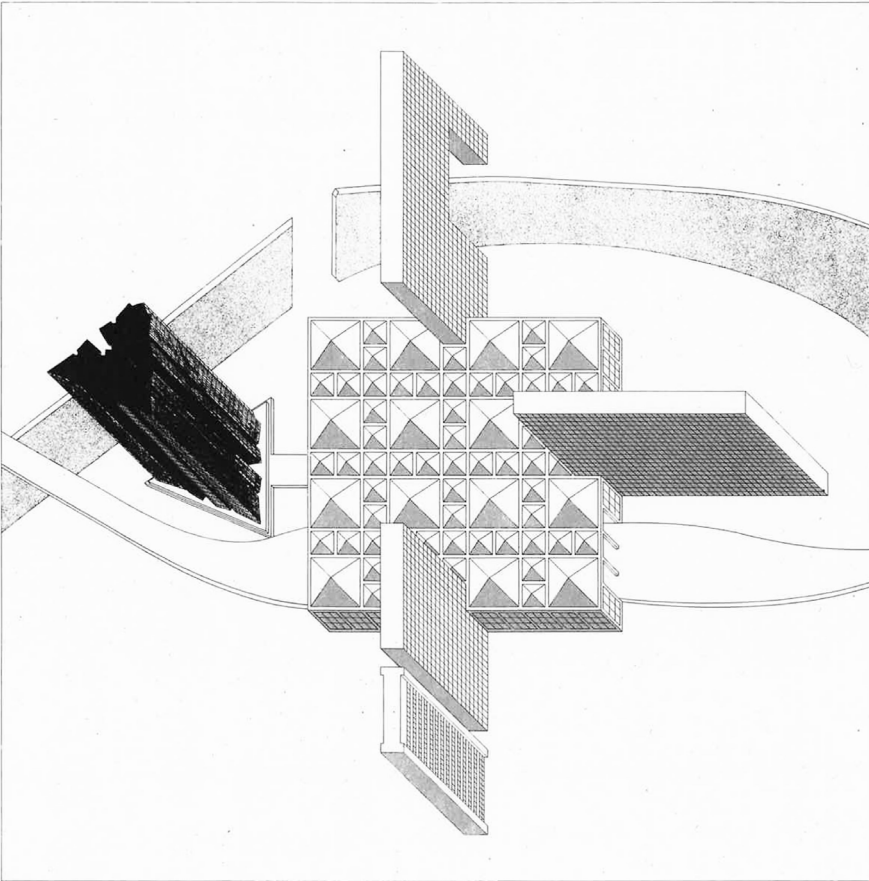
PROF. O.M. UNGERS

analogies to explain the urban development intentions behind them. These are the following projects for comparative purposes:

- the construction of a cultural building in the style of Leonidov's library project on the Ernst-Reuter-Platz roundabout
- the realisation of Mies van der Rohe's Expressionist glass high-rise building as a social multi-purpose centre at Friedrichstrasse station
- the realisation of Adolf Loos's design for a skyscraper for the Chicago Tribune in the form of a Doric column at the end of Unter den Linden street.

The placement of these three typologically and historically decisive buildings would not only give Berlin's principal axis its final form, which would include the Brandenburg Gate and the Victory Column, but would also set a counterbalance to the prosaic dominance of the Television Tower, which these measures would move to the end of an axis that had been re-interpreted in the historical sense:

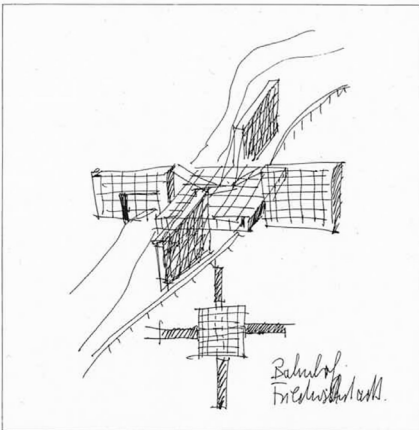
- the transplantation of Leonidov's linear urban concept along "Unter den Eichen" street



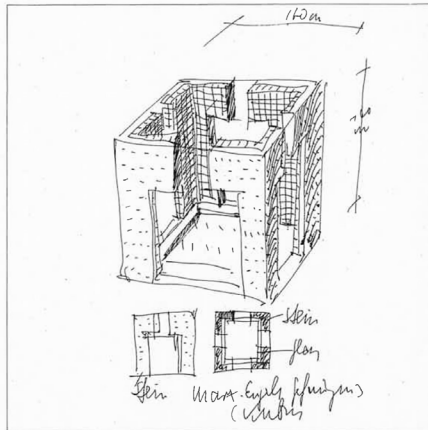
BAHNHOF FRIEDRICHSTADT

PROF. O. M. UNGERS

5 |



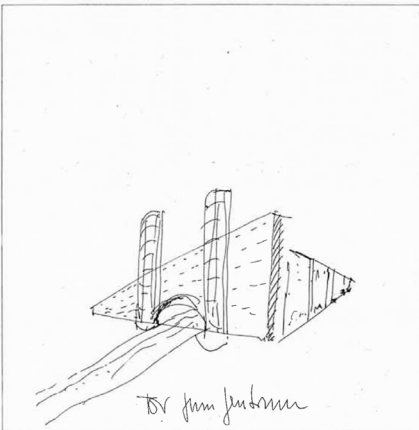
Bahnhof
Friedrichstadt



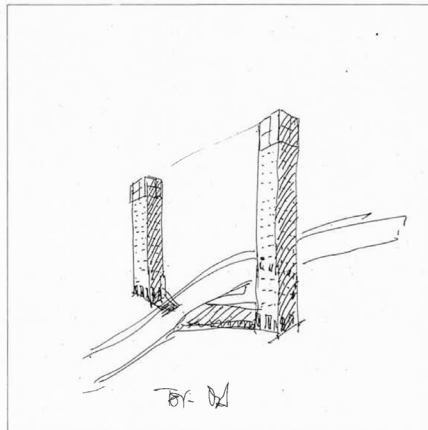
140m

Stein
flor
Marm.-Emply. (Kupfer)
(Vestib.)

6 |



BR für Fußgänger



BR-02

SKIZZEN

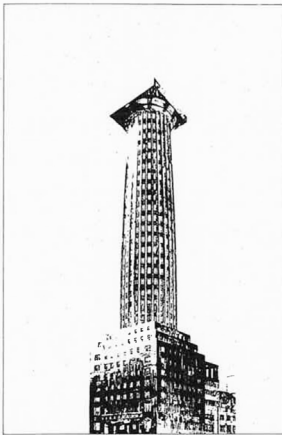
PROF. O. M. UNGERS

- the transfer of New York's Central Park to the area around the Görlitzer Bahnhof station as a central park for the Kreuzberg district
- the construction of a continuous perimeter development on the southern edge of the Volkspark on the lines of the Royal Crescent in Bath (England)
- the step-by-step realisation of a linear strip of residential housing on the banks of the Landwehr Canal like Le Corbusier's Algiers project
- the construction of cross-road buildings at regular intervals along the "chain of generals", the succession of streets and squares named after generals, comparable to Lissitzky's horizontal skyscrapers or "cloud-hangers" project for Moscow
- laying out a linear park tracing the death strip of the former Wall
- the development of the Tiergarten district to create an open urban landscape
- In the free areas between the self-contained urban islands of the urban archipelago, projects with a suburban flair should be developed in line with a number of proposals that have already been put forward, such as:
 - creating a suburban grid modelled on Ludwig Hilberseimer's detached-building project for Chicago
 - introducing a regional network in line with Frank Lloyd Wright's proposal for Broadacre City
 - providing mobile-home sites to replace inner-city flats and as an alternative to living in the Green Belt and leisure-orientated dwelling
 - creating sports, recreational and leisure facilities, beginning with parks and playgrounds, wildlife enclosures and artificial landscapes for mountain-climbers, and also Walt Disney-type leisure landscapes, but also with natural landscapes with nature conservation parks
 - - setting up industrial estates in the style of Silicon Valley with leisure facilities such as areas for games, bathing and sports facilities for the employees

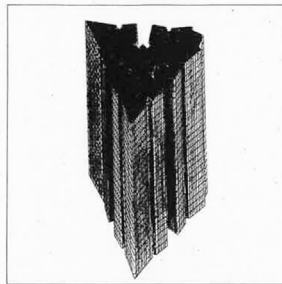
The model of the "city within a city" is one approach to solving a series of major problems which urban planning will need to confront in future. These include

- restoring identity in the urban space
- improving the urban quality in the sense of a space for living and activity offering variety and diversity
- solving the problem of improving the quality of the city in contrast to constant growth and unlimited expansion, with the loss of quality which that entails
- fostering a close link between town and country, i.e. renewing the relationships between culture and nature
- creating a pluralist system of mutually unresolved contradictions in contrast to a uniformly orientated, centralist system
- intensifying the location and preserving the collective memory and historical awareness in the sense of continuity of time and space

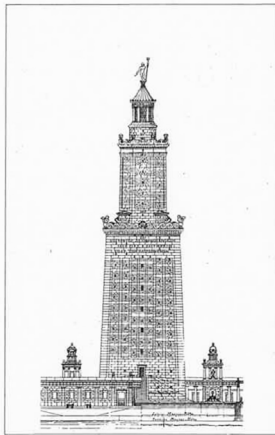
In historical terms, the model of the "city within a city" transforms Wilhelm IV's



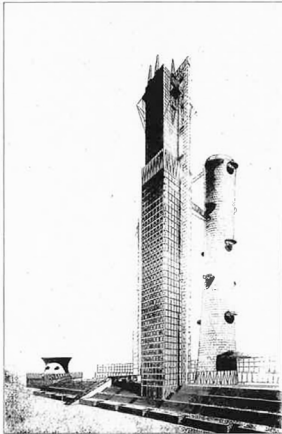
CHICAGO TRIBUNE A. LOOS



MIES VAN DER ROHE



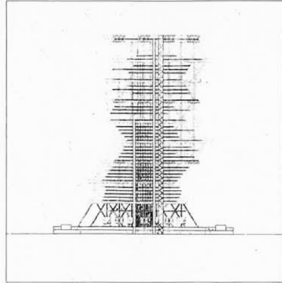
LEUCHTTURM VON ALEXANDRIA



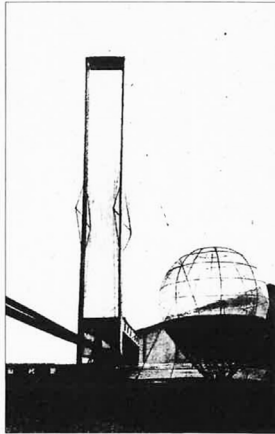
ROTER PLATZ LEONIDOV



WOLKENBÜGEL EL LISSITZKY



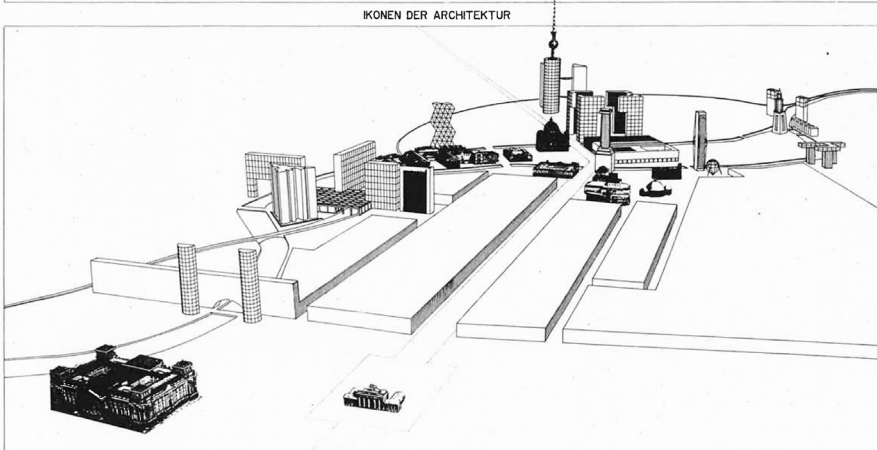
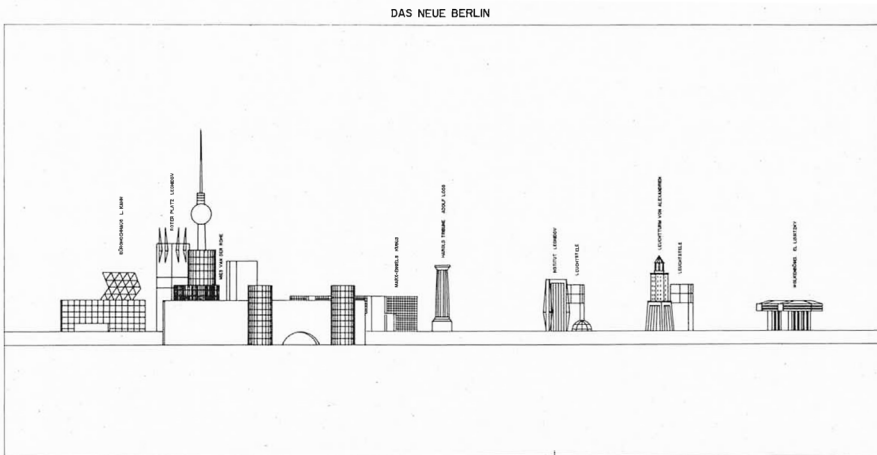
BÜROHOCHHAUS L. KAHN

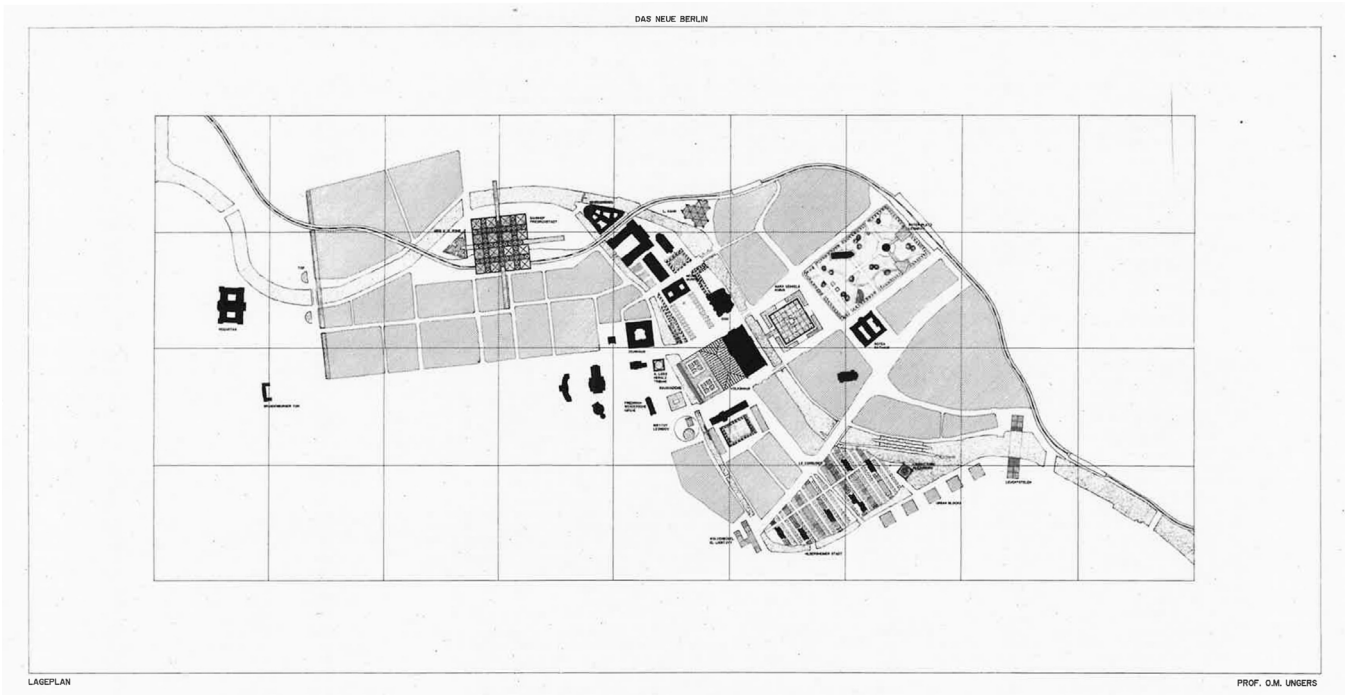


INSTITUT LEONIDOV

7 |

8 |





concept for the Havel landscape, which contemplated architectural events as historical mementoes. In his historical design, the Havel landscape between Potsdam and Berlin has a system of architectural monuments artificially superimposed on it to reflect history, thus transforming it into an educational landscape in the humanist sense. In it, memories become reality and reality becomes an experience of history.

It is a landscape in which the individual events from different cultural eras are placed in a mutual relationship with ideas and theories. These include the Pfaueninsel with the Baroque ruins of the castle and the dairy embodying a romantic world gone by, Stüler's church in Gatow radiating the rational spirit of the Italian Renaissance, the Pfingstberg with the fragments of an ancient temple, the church in Sacrow in the Byzantine style, Schinkel's Casino as a document of the Enlightenment and an ideal structure along Classical lines. Nor should we forget Glienicke, the Neogothic Babelsberg and Stüler's pumping station, which form part of this antithetical world of architectures and references.

With the architectural islands, the city itself is also transformed into an archipelago of special places. The only connection between the objects is the memories they evoke and the historical awareness. In much the same way, the design of the Havel landscape contains the key and the actual basic idea behind the concept of Berlin as a "city within a city", as an "urban archipelago", which picks up Berlin's humanist tradition and carries it forward in modified form to the present day.

This only hints at some of the subjects whose importance in connection with the future of the city had to be examined discussed. The problem to discuss - and this applies to Berlin to an especially great degree - is not a plan for a completely new urban environment, but rather a plan for supplementing and

transforming what is already there; it is not a question of inventing a new urban system, but rather of improving the existing one, not discovering a new order, but rather rediscovering existing principles, not how to construct a new city, but rather how to “reconstruct” the present one, not making a new start, but continuing the old. It is not a search for a new utopia, but rather a plan for a better reality, not a concept for a different world, but one for improving what is there and enabling heterogeneous parts to interact meaningfully: that is the future of the city of Berlin.

Cologne, 13.11.1990

O.M. Ungers

Shifting Agency in Berlin: a Critical Decade

Urbanization and Governance, Social Housing, Urban Movements, Knowledge Production, Professional Crisis

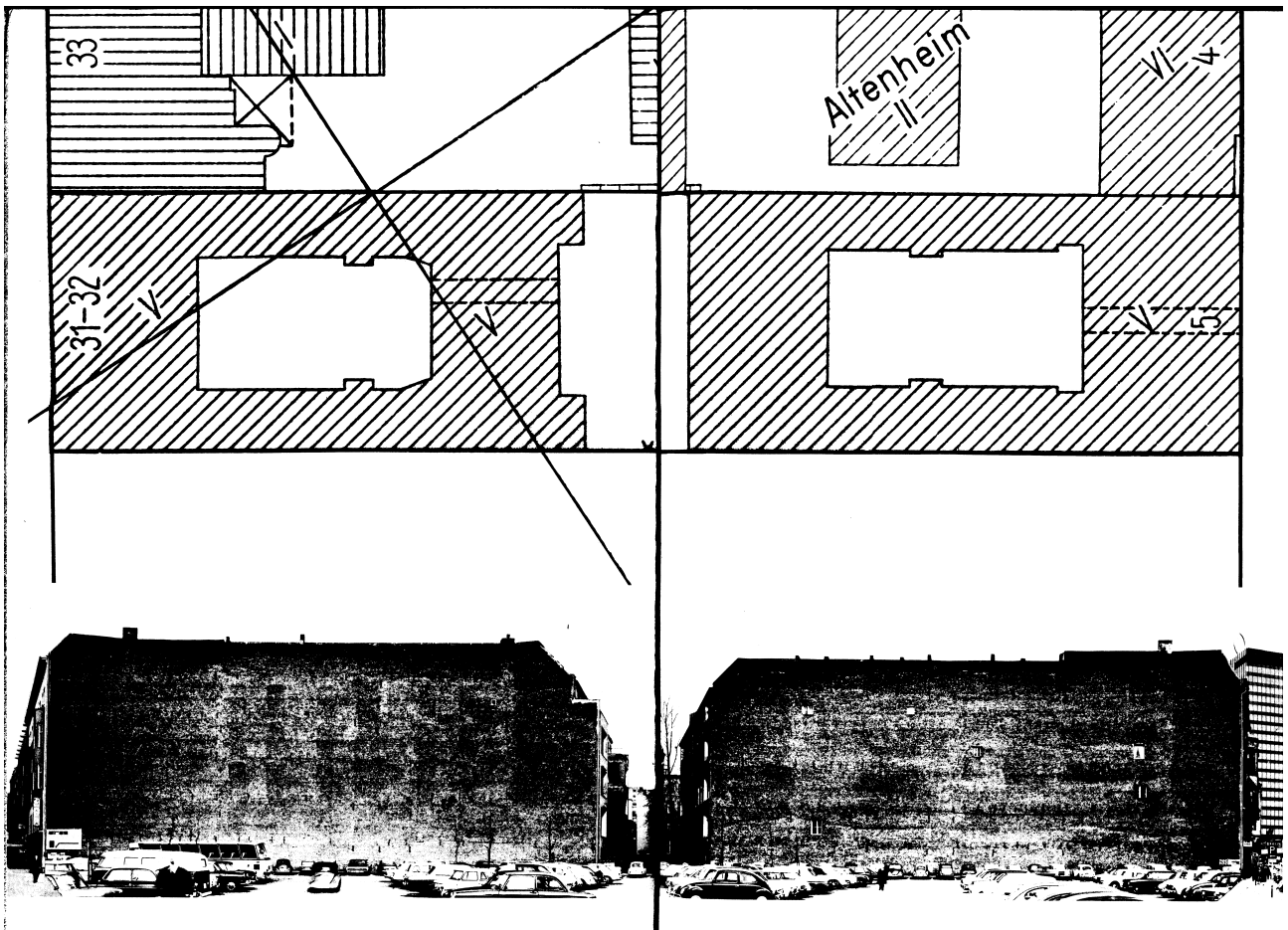
/Abstract

There is a reciprocity between architecture production and urban publics, especially clear in times of professional crisis. For O.M.Ungers, Berlin served as a model for novel themes in a period when representations and demands of social groups were appearing in the urban realm. These challenged the Welfare State and the architecture production enmeshed with it. In a fragmented urban landscape, the urban villa introduced customized objects as “prototypes for inner city residences” (Ungers et al., 1978). Together with the more notorious Green Archipelago in the same year, the urban villa was the product of a Cornell Summer Academy that was premised on the manifest shortcomings of mass housing. Its participants in 1978 were avid observers of the material evidence that contemporary Berlin presented. Ungers was himself eager to re-legitimize his architectural practice after the crisis of mass housing in the same city during the late 1960s. The accompanying text, *The Urban Villa*, refers to a “personalization of lifestyle” and the “shift from the dependant tenant to the independant home owner”: a suburbanization of the already insular, provincial city? an early vehicle for Postmodernism? The interpretation of Berlin’s distressed urban condition certainly owes to experiences that Ungers had made in a geographical and a professional distance over the past decade. His gaze was conditioned by a distinctly different professional, social and cultural context that Cornell University and New York City had exposed him to since leaving Berlin to teach abroad. Yet structural changes affected cities and urban governance on both sides of the North Atlantic. In Ungers’s case, the ‘American’ experience can be argued as informing a novel reading of the fragmented Berlin. Which architectural agency can be related to knowledge derived from an urban realm that is itself changing? If anything, the two Summer Academies organized by Ungers and his colleagues from Cornell University offer a lens to look at how external forces condition the knowledge acquired by architects.

/Author

André Bideau
Institute gta, ETH Zürich
bideau@arch.ethz.ch

André Bideau has lectured and published extensively on the work of O.M.Ungers since his publication of *Architektur und Symbolisches Kapital* (2011), addressing the work of Ungers in Berlin and Frankfurt. Bideau teaches architecture history at Accademia di architettura Mendrisio and ETH Zurich where he directs the MAS program in history and theory of architecture. He is a co-founder of Zentrum Architektur Zürich where he has curated several exhibitions since 2018. Based upon his research on Swiss historian of urbanism André Corboz, he conceived *Territory as Palimpsest*, an exhibition shown at Accademia di architettura Mendrisio and EPF Lausanne in 2022/2023.



1 |

What kind of knowledge do cities yield, how do architects unpack and leverage this knowledge in a particular moment? Which kind of architectural agency can be related to knowledge produced in the urban realm? Such questions can be raised regarding the knowledge affecting the collective of authors surrounding Oswald Mathias Ungers in the late 1970s. Was it a particular moment in the history of Berlin when they released their manifestos *The Urban Villa* and *The Green Archipelago*? Produced by Ungers and his teaching assistants in 1977 and 1978,¹ both texts hail from the decade of 'learning from': to attempts that all aimed at repositioning architectural research and practice.

To grasp of the connection between knowledge production to architectural agency one must turn to a lesser known research publication from a decade earlier. "Berliner Brandwände" [Fig. 1], dedicated to fire and party walls, is certainly one of the more startling products in Ungers's evolution. As a publication, *Berliner Brandwände* is evidence of the thematic openness of research during late 1960s and early 1970s.² A sequence of grainy images taken by photographer Arthur Laskus is combined with cartographic information related to Berlin's 19th

Fig. 1

Lateral view of Berlin's fragmented perimeter blocks with cadastral plan at Rankestrasse and Marburgerstrasse and Marburgerstrasse (Lehrstuhl für Entwerfen VI. Prof. O.M.Ungers (ed.), «Berliner Brandwände», *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur*, Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin, 27/1969).

1 Oswald Mathias Ungers, Hans Kollhoff, and Arthur Ovaska, *The Urban Villa. A Multi-family Dwelling Type*. Cornell Summer Academy 77 in Berlin (Köln: Studio Press for Architecture, 1977).

2 Lehrstuhl für Entwerfen VI. Prof. O.M.Ungers (ed.), «Berliner Brandwände», *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur*, Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin, no. 27 (1969).

century tenements. Their inner organization has been cracked open by the acts of destruction of the war which have randomly exposed party walls. This was the urban landscape such as Ungers would have experienced it upon his arrival from Cologne as a professor at Technische Universität Berlin in 1963. Countless exposed blank surfaces could still be experienced in 1960s and 1970s West Berlin— where Ungers taught, designed and built during various decades of his professional career.

Released in 1969 by collaborators Jürgen Sawade and Ulrike Pampe, the small publication was the result of a research survey conducted at Technische Universität. It is unusual as a product, showing neither a research hypothesis nor drawing any conclusion for design. Yet *Berliner Brandwände* shows an ambivalent reading of the city which is characteristic for Ungers in this period. On one hand, an urban taxonomy is presented. A formerly hidden layer of information, the party wall was peeled open by bombing and now reveals its dual nature as property line and fire wall. The photographic spreads are aligned with cadastral plans, thus revealing the economic reality underpinning the 19th and early 20th century Mietskaserne tenements. We see the matrix of the tenement city that which been discredited both by pre- and postwar modernists, most famously in Werner Hegemann's "Das steinerne Berlin" from 1930.³ On the other hand, the publication bestows an abstract, almost sculptural aura to the isolated tenements. Here the reading of the history of urbanism is not a systemic, but an accidental one. Moreover, the vast windowless elevations achieve a sublime quality in the photography of Arthur Laskus.

Although similar to jarring X-rays of the structural logic of the process of urbanization, its speculative dimension is not attacked in *Berliner Brandwände*. Rather, the party wall serves as an objet trouvé in the thinned-out urban landscape of late Sixties West Berlin. Its representation calls to mind the contemporary work of Bernd and Hilla Becher.⁴ Ungers was an avid art collector with the Bechers' photography of vernacular and industrial architecture figuring in his collection: barns, gas tanks, furnaces and water towers organized as surveys of the everyday that were as meticulously typological as they were atmospheric. Their photography took stock of abandonment and obsolescence, a condition that indirectly corresponds with the depleted urban landscape presented in *Berliner Brandwände*. Empty lots show shrinkage as a reality and contrast to the city's exponential growth during the late 19th century. The survey is an early and pivotal step towards a reading of the city that is no longer predicated on quantitative growth, but increasingly defined by the distribution of symbols and markers. By addressing urban form and morphology, the design of housing was implicitly re-situated in a referential space.

3 Werner Hegemann, *Das steinerne Berlin: Geschichte der grössten Mietkasernenstadt der Welt* (Berlin: Kiepenheuer, 1930).

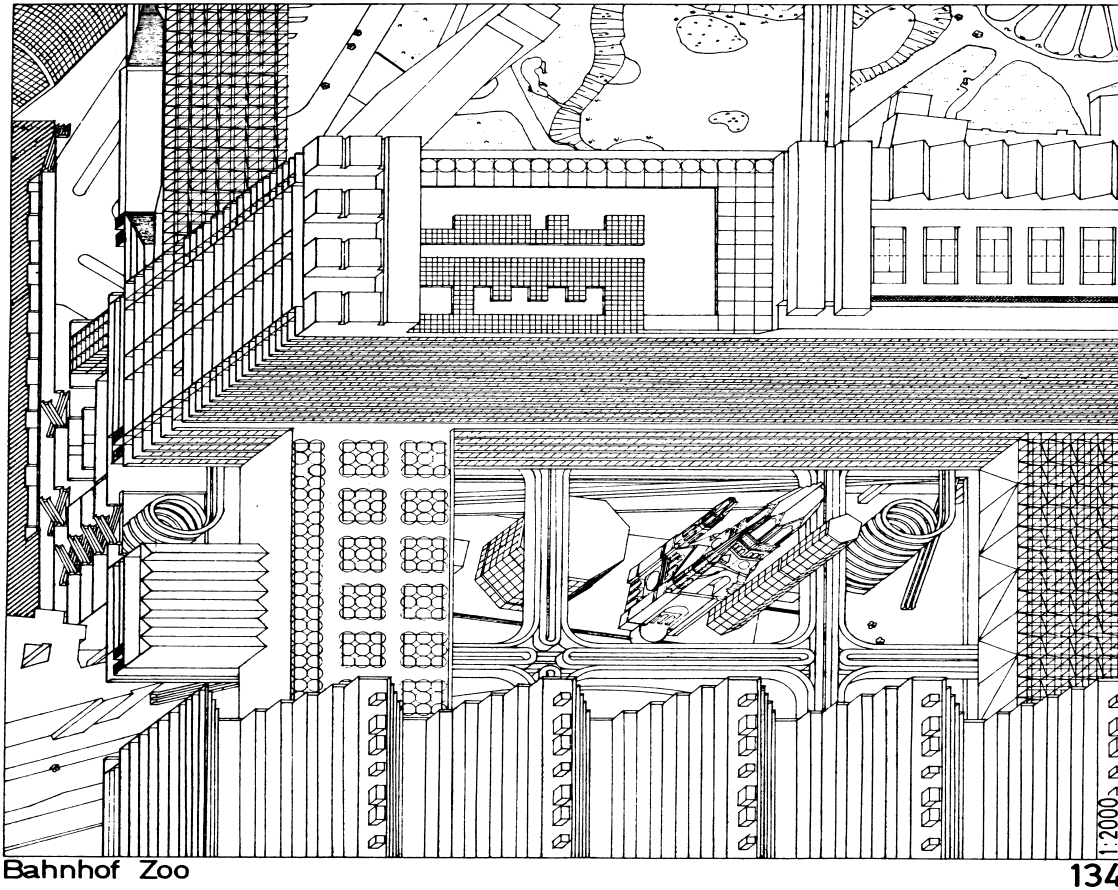
4 Ungers, an avid art collector who owned works by Bernd and Hilla Becher of vernacular and industrial architecture, is likely to have seen early exhibitions of their work during the second half of the 1960s; Bernd and Hilla Becher, *Anonyme Skulpturen: Formvergleiche industrieller Bauten* (Düsseldorf: Städtische Kunsthalle, 1969).

Fig. 2

Proposals for the megastructuralist reorganization of Bahnhof Zoo/Gedächtniskirche area ((Lehrstuhl für Entwerfen VI. Prof. O.M.Ungers (ed.), «Berlin 1995», *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur*, Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin, 25/1969).

Fig. 3

Hypothetical concentration of 1950-1966 housing production in Germany in a strip of 500 km (Lehrstuhl für Entwerfen VI. Prof. O.M.Ungers (ed.), *Grossformen im Wohnungsbau*, *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur*, Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin, 5/1966).



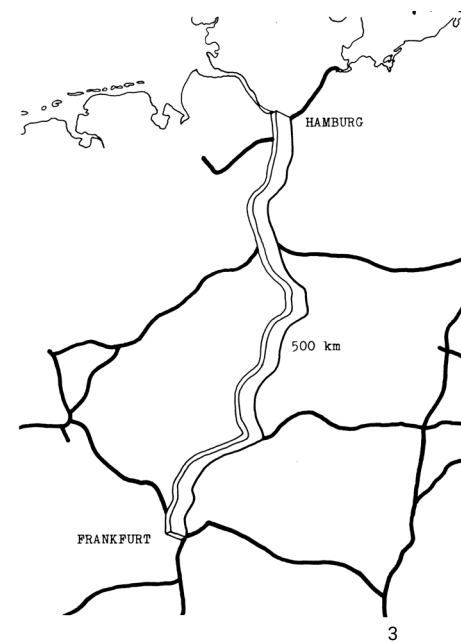
2

HPA 12 | 2023 | 6

Surveying party walls and anonymous 19th-century real estate meant coming to terms with a given urban landscape via an ‘as found’⁵ perspective, while proposing an implicit critique of ahistorical urban renewal and its techno-functionalistic discourse. Such concerns were not the case for the entire series, the latter being explicitly the focus of many of its issues. *Berliner Brandwände* is more a harbinger of a research agenda yet to come. Although in their interest in urban form the authors hark back to the Structuralism of Team Ten or to Kevin Lynch’s ‘imageability’ they offer neither a design agenda nor do they make any attempts to regulate the urban condition, past or present. Rather, their aim is to read the urban landscape in 1969. No longer is the conceptual criterium to project limitless growth, but to come to terms with the identity of Berlin.

The Demise of Mass Housing

Berlin Party Walls was the last of 27 issues of a series released between 1965 and 1969 by Ungers and his collaborators at the Berlin design chair. The *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur* (Publications on architecture) represent the topical range in which architecture production was caught up by the end of the decade [Fig. 2]: the question of whether functionalist planning, in particular



3

⁵ Ungers was an informal member of Team Ten and would invite its key members to lecture and teach at Cornell University in 1972.



System der Wohnbebauung mit allseitiger Raumbildung

mass housing and urban renewal, could operate in a politically tenable way, and of who held the power and wielded the interests behind a building economy producing ever more housing units.

4

Some of the research published by Ungers and his chair at Technische Universität problematized the power system under which architects operate, aspiring to transcend the production of objects and arrive at an understanding of design that was driven more by process and research and less by form. Issues were devoted to prefabrication, circulation systems, hybrid housing and traffic megastructures or the vision of a fully networked Berlin⁶— in other words, to utopias premised on mobility, industrialization and limitless growth.

Ungers himself was apt at balancing conceptual issues such as historicity, phenomenology, urban history on one hand and extreme technocracy, while thinking in terms of systems on the other for his research and design agenda. Yet this dichotomy of design led to an increasingly tense situation within the ideologies of architecture discourse, ie especially concerning how professionals

6 Notably these issues of *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur*: «Schnellstrassen und Gebäude», no. 4 (1966), «Wohnungssysteme in Stahl», no. 17 (1968), «Schnellbahn und Gebäude», no. 21 (1968), «Wohnungssysteme in Gross-tafeln», no. 22 (1968), «Wohnungssysteme in Raumzellen», no. 24 (1969), «Berlin 1995», no. 25 (1969).

Fig. 4
O.M. Ungers: grid with massing of Märkisches Viertel housing, Berlin-Wittenau (1962-1967).

leaning toward the radical left should position themselves. The issue of mass housing embedded in contemporary 'Grosssiedlungen' [Fig. 3] was particularly contentious. Although 'social', this model was increasingly enmeshed with market dynamics, a result of the opening of housing production to private capital or to large semi-public corporations in many countries such as the developer *Neue Heimat* in Germany. Given his involvement with subsidized housing since the 1960s, the challenge for Ungers lay precisely in addressing the ever-larger scale of these projects, providing his expertise to increasingly anonymous developers and to the building sector at large. The conflict unfolded when mass housing was already seen as the culprit in the dissolution and neglect of both the social and built fabric of cities – such as the porous perimeter blocks surveyed in Berlin Party Walls in 1968. Paradoxically, at this time Ungers was being attacked for his involvement with Märkisches Viertel [Fig. 4], the notorious 17000-unit superproject in Berlin-Wittenau. From within radicalized academia, he saw his work criticized for providing the building sector with a veneer of cultural distinction, contributing to a monofunctional satellite in a remote location adjacent to the Wall.

In mass media, Märkisches Viertel became an easy target and a scapegoat.⁷ Ungers became so disillusioned with this climate that he took an academic leave to teach at Cornell university in 1968,⁸ remaining attached to Berlin through his participation in competitions, symposia and workshops for the next decade. But his building activity entirely ceased after 1967 when Märkisches Viertel was completed. This led to a career evenly split into two halves, with approximately two decades of building activity on each side of a gap that coincided with Ungers's immersion in the United States. This interval and the conceptual experimentation stemming from it are of particular interest here. They reflect the changing role of the city as a site of knowledge production.

To grasp the breadth of subjects addressed by Ungers, one must consider the time span of his work as a designer, theoretician and educator. Not only does his activity cover a substantial historic range with such significant periods for Germany as postwar reconstruction and economic recovery, the Cold War, the recession of the 1970s, the prosperity of the 1980s and subsequent reunification.⁹ It also coincides with fundamental changes in the profession which was, as in the case of the experiences made with Märkisches Viertel, under critical stress from the late 1960s onward. These changes would impact the relationship between theory and practice, research and design, and, especially, the role of architects narrating the city.

7 Kurt Wolber, «Leben wie im Ameisenhaufen», *Stern*, no. 30 (1970): 62-77; Hermann Funke, «Da hilft nur noch Dynamit», *Der Spiegel*, Heft no. 45 (1970): 238.

8 Accepting the invitation to teach there in the Spring term of 1968 extended by Colin Rowe. Jaspar Cepl has detailed the ensuing situation of his chair at Technische Universität in Berlin in 1968 and 1969, when research studios were run by teaching assistants like Michael Wegener and Jürgen Sawade, but still entailed oversight by Ungers who by then had begun to teach at Cornell University. Jasper Cepl, *Oswald Mathias Ungers: Eine intellektuelle Biographie* (Köln: Walther König, 2007), 243, 254-256.

9 For this broader arc see: André Bideau, *Architektur und symbolisches Kapital: Bilderzählungen und Identitätsproduktion bei O. M. Ungers* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2011); André Bideau, «Elusive Ungers», *AA Files*, no. 64 (2012): 3-14.



5

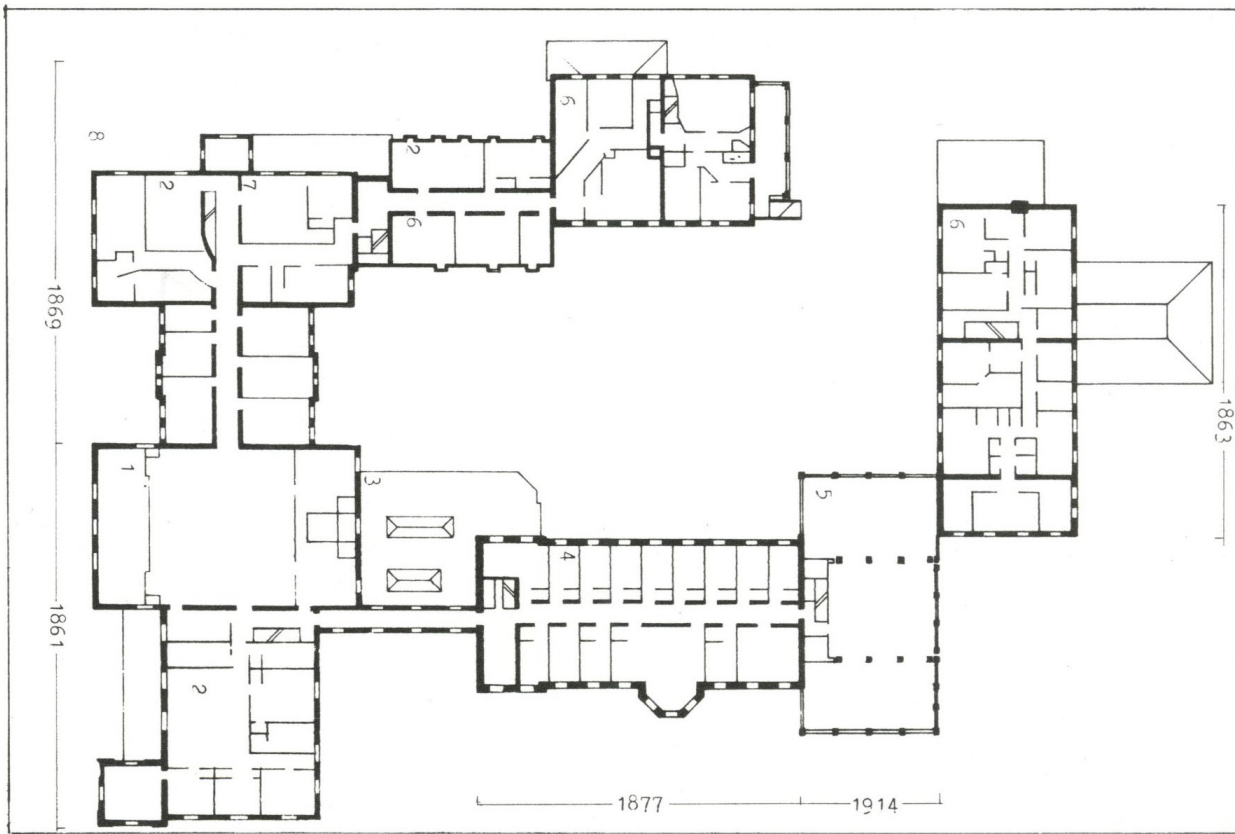
Exceptionalism: Seeing Berlin as a Model

Can a city condition or shape architectural narratives? Which factors, agents and scales are relevant in a given time? To consider the impact that Berlin had upon the discourse of Ungers one must reflect upon the city's postwar identity – both as a political territory and as a site of cultural exchange. An isolated, non-sovereign outpost, West Berlin was dependent on relationships to other territories such as the *Länder* of West Germany and the Western nation states. Heavily subsidized, it was a privileged laboratory – regardless of its provincial status. From the 'Interbau', the international building exhibition in 1957, to ambitious undertakings of the 1960s such as the new national gallery by Mies van der Rohe or the satellite city Märkisches Viertel, West Berlin, the symbolic weight of architecture in West Berlin was different from other Western German cities. Without doubt, Ungers responded to the force field intensified by the construction of the Wall, two years prior to his appointment at Technische Universität in 1963. The division of the former capital into rival systems provided a spotlight for architecture production with a thematic and iconographic dimension.

Berlin's condition privileged the 'identitarian' turn that Ungers's work began to take during the 1970s. But in their studios and research, he and his collaborators also reflected the socio-economic context during this period. For instance, when taking up the question of housing, *The Green Archipelago* and the related research studio, *The Urban Villa*, both engaged with countercultural and alternative milieux of Berlin. The metaphor of urban 'islands' conveys the autonomy

Fig. 5

Hosted by socialist student organization SDS in February 1968, the Internationaler Vietnam-Kongress at Technische Universität Berlin attacked United States involvement in Vietnam, NATO and capitalism in general (Landesbildstelle/Uni-Archiv).



that the design proposal sought to provide these milieus with. Their members are equipped with an individual agency, taking charge of their local environment through home ownership or cooperatives. Implying the empowerment of individuals, this model differs from the housing policies of the Keynesian Welfare State.

Previously, planning endeavors on either side of the wall had been magnified as through a Petri dish, offsetting different narratives of welfare: *Soziale Marktwirtschaft* in the Federal Republic from the planned economy in the German Democratic Republic. Given this rivalry of two systems, housing, cultural facilities, education and traffic infrastructure were heavily subsidized in West Berlin which lacked in private building activity. Via his research at Technische Universität Ungers had gravitated toward the demands of technocratic planning and the industrialized building sector. Beginning in 1967, however, the student protests increasingly problematized the systemic dimension of architecture. Attacking the power structures of the West, the radical Left criticized US military hegemony as well as the ensuing political and economic entanglements that affected liberal and progressive planners and educators like Ungers.¹⁰ Rejecting the German Welfare State and enlightened capitalism entailed the constellation of mass housing and urban renewal. Fresh from his involvement with

6

Fig. 6
Mansion House of
Perfectionists, Oneida, New
York, showing construction
phases between 1861 and
1914 (Liselotte and Oswald
M. Ungers *Kommunen in der
Neuen Welt*, 1972).

10 A watershed event for the German left was the state visit of the Shah of Iran to Western Germany in 1967, including the Imperial couple's visit to Berlin where protesters were attacked by local police and pro-Iranian supporters. On June 2 a Berlin police officer shot Benno Ohnesorg, a student at Technische Universität.

Märkisches Viertel and serving as the current dean of the architecture department at Technische Universität, Ungers was an obvious target in 1967.

As a critical juncture this moment can be related to the shifting perception of West Berlin as an outpost: Its singular destiny in opposition to Communism was increasingly less a defining feature.¹¹ As the prevailing power structure of the West was questioned the spotlight shifted away from megastructures at a heroic scale. Furthermore, Berlin's exceptional Cold-War status was diminished as the relationship between the two superpowers began to evolve under a coalition led by chancellor of Willy Brandt, a former mayor of West Berlin: By signing peace accords in 1972, the two German states acknowledged their mutual right to exist and initiated diplomatic relations. This marked the beginning of a depoliticization of space, now no longer tasked with translating a political ideology. After the late modern superproject, political détente opened up architecture for narratives that were increasingly geared toward difference, community and heritage.

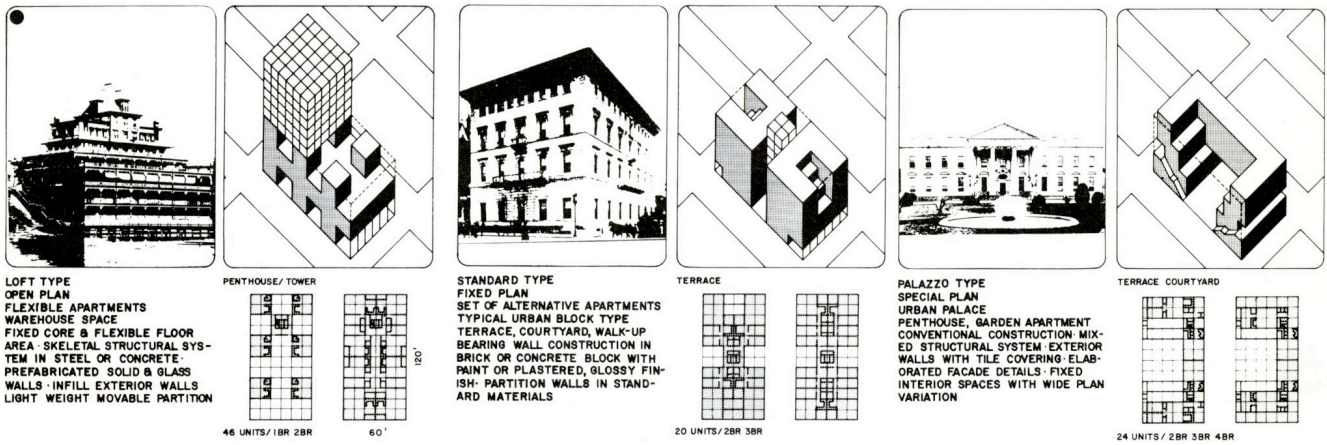
If West Berlin served as a model for novel themes for Ungers, it did so because his gaze was conditioned and informed abroad. As both the cultural critique and the geopolitical shift redefined the professional agenda 1967-1972 Ungers was himself exposed to a completely different context. His 'American' experience can be argued as informing a novel reading of Berlin. The interpretation of its distressed urban condition owes to experiences made while in the United States: to the distance both in a geographical and a professional sense.

Communities as Opportunities

Is it a paradox that physically leaving Berlin in 1968 can inspire a new relationship of architecture and the city? Had Ungers not witnessed issues of territory, community, urbanity in Berlin first-hand, subsequently testing them through the Cornell Summer Academies in 1977 and 1978, the theorization of its urban landscape would not have taken on the same significance. On the other hand, the interests that he pursued while based in the United States would have been different had he arrived there without his experiences as practicing architect in postwar Germany. Ultimately, the theoretical agenda and, eventually, the building practice that Ungers resumed in Germany in the late 1970s bear a connection to the prior United States exposure. And here the relevant insight was addressing shrinkage and crisis instead of growth.

The first semester of Ungers's activity at Cornell University coincided with the assassination of Martin Luther King Junior on April 4 1968, an event triggering riots where countless downtowns went up in flames. The acute crisis only aggravated an ongoing implosion based on destructive urban renewal,

¹¹ To understand such shifts of consciousness in the perception of cities, sociologists Martina Löw and Helmuth Berking coined the term of the 'inherent logic', in part referring to the concept of 'habitus' developed by Pierre Bourdieu. Martina Löw, Helmuth Berking (eds.), *Die Eigenlogik der Städte: Neue Wege für die Stadtforschung* (Frankfurt a.M: Campus Verlag, 2008).



economic segregation and white flight to suburbia, while the two previous years had already seen race riots in Los Angeles and Detroit.

Although far away from any urban center and from the conflicts unfolding on a national scale, protests eventually reached the Cornell campus in Ithaca, New York. One year after his arrival, as Ungers had become chair of the architecture department, armed African American students occupied the student center Willard Straight Hall in spring 1969.¹² The claim to specific territories made by individual communities was a subject that Ungers immersed himself when an opportunity arose in the first years in upstate New York. Together with his wife Liselotte Ungers, he published a series of articles for Swiss periodical *Werk*, then under the direction of sociologist Lucius Burckhardt. The five articles presented the socio-economic experiments of settler communities, mostly dating from the first half of the 19th century and active for several decades only. Expanded to include contemporary countercultural communes, the articles published in *Werk* in 1970 and 1971 were subsequently released in paperback by German publisher Kiepenhauer & Wietsch as “*Kommunen in der Neuen Welt*” in 1972. [Fig. 5]¹³

The projects presented by Liselotte and O.M Ungers were demonstrations of how private enterprise could impact remote areas. By and large, the historic sites were located in upstate New York or the rural Midwest, examples of the overlap of pioneering settler dynamics, spiritualism and socialism, a subject also addressed in the contemporary research of Dolores Hayden on the ‘idealism of the American environment’.¹⁴

Kommunen in der Neuen Welt presents case studies of the historic communities created by Owenites, Fourierists, Rappists, Perfectionists, Shakers, and

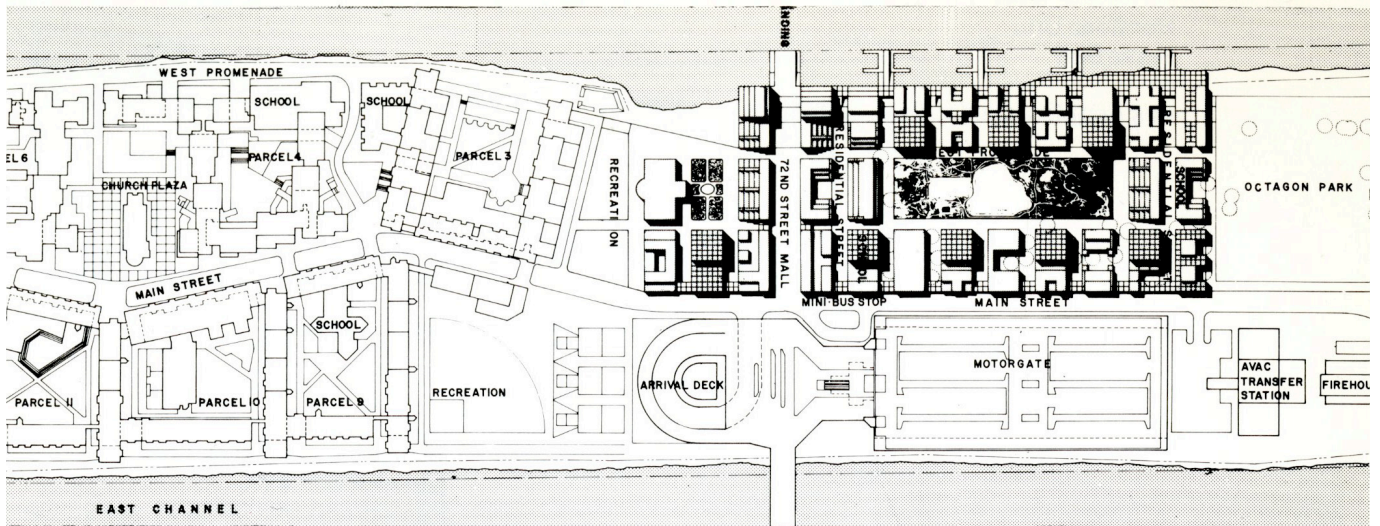
12 Cepl 2007, 253.

13 Liselotte Ungers, *Oswald Mathias Ungers. Kommunen in der Neuen Welt, 1740-1971* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1972).

14 Dolores Hayden, *Seven American Utopias. The Architecture of Communitarian Socialism, 1790-1975* (Cambridge-MA: MIT Press, 1976), 377: Hayden refers not to the 1972 publication, but to the earlier article by L. and O.M. Ungers, “Utopische Kommunen in Amerika, 1800-1900. Die Amana Community”, *Das Werk* (August 1970): 543-546.

Fig. 7

O.M. Ungers: Manhattan references and massing studies for Welfare Island competition, New York City (1975).



other, mostly spiritual movements, all with a critical and ideological distance to the respective mainstream of their time. Taking a particular interest in the agency of each settler group, the authors demonstrate how identity is translated into a specific spatial arrangement, self-contained and with a programmatic dimension. Among the case studies analyzed, the issue of ownership, the position of women, the relationship between the community and the exterior are recurring categories. In its research interests, *Kommunen in der Neuen Welt* is indicative of the scrutiny that the social policies of the postwar Welfare State were subjected to around 1970. But whereas contemporary criticism of these policies was mainly voiced in cities, Liselotte and O.M Ungers took their inquiry to the open territory. Here, the utopian settlements provided knowledge that would ultimately inform an alternative approach to urban issues in Berlin.

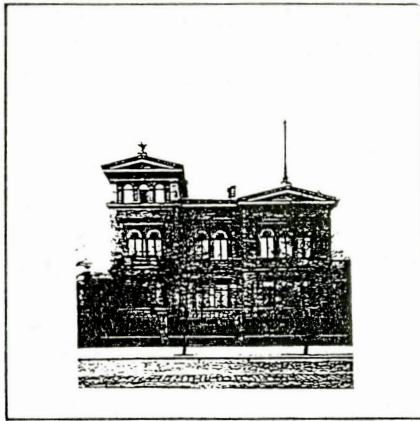
The publication was a response to the new environment of academic life in the United States – the Cornell campus itself being an isolated, rural community. The fieldwork was in part based upon travel undertaken by Ungers together with his family, now also based in Ithaca. But the study must also be placed in context with Ungers's previous career in mass housing. Lost in a project like Märkisches Viertel, the utopian dimension was the central feature of the collective experiments from the 19th century. At the same time, these pioneering projects addressed economic and spatial issues. *Kommunen in der Neuen Welt* was also an attempt to grasp this organizational dimension, a comprehensive, urbanizing potential. In this regard, the research around 1970 relates to some of the previous *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur* at Technische Universität Berlin.

In the wake of the scathing criticism he had faced in Berlin, Ungers was still eager to reposition the subject of large-scale planning and mass housing.¹⁵

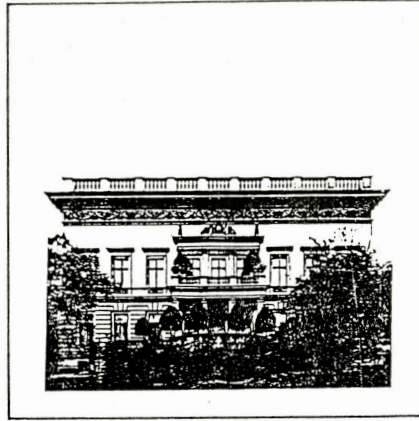
15 He remained in touch with developments in Germany where in 1967 social democrats had joined the coalition government, embarking on a policy of Keynesian 'Globalsteuerung' (global control), amongst its goals the regulation of the overheated economy and a coordinated policy for the transformation of urban centers, passing the 'Städtebauförderungsgesetz' in 1971. André Bideau, "Housing as a discursive void: Oswald Mathias Ungers in the 1960s and 1970s", *Candide*, no. 7 (2013): 70.

Fig. 8

O.M. Ungers: proposal for Welfare Island with quotations of Central Park and Manhattan grid, New York City (1975).



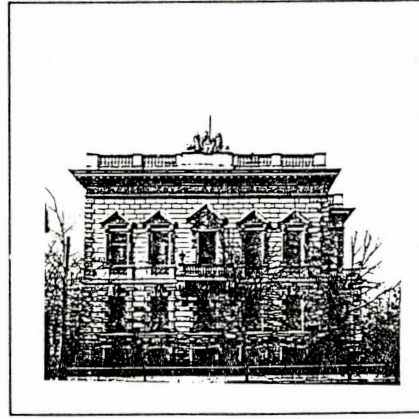
47. Maassenstrasse 28, Berlin, 1879



48. Weinbergsweg 12, Berlin, 1874



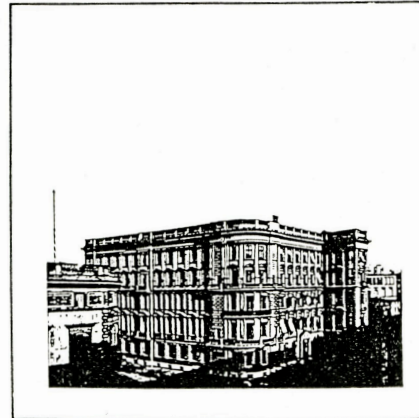
49. Wilhelmstrasse 33, Berlin, 1893



50. Kurfürstenstrasse 136, 1884-86



51. Kurfürstendamm 6, 1883-84



52. Königrätzerstrasse 132,

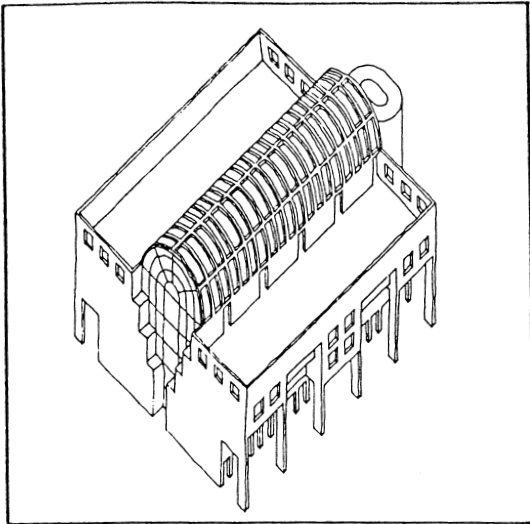
9

Some of his first Cornell design studios would address housing on the territorial scale. Again, an opportunity was provided by a project in the area. Lysander was one of the new towns then under consideration by the Urban Development Corporation (UDC), an agency established by New York State in 1968 under interventionist governor Nelson Rockefeller. Located near Syracuse NY and destined to accommodate 55000 inhabitants, Lysander was premised upon the improved production of affordable housing. The UDC sought innovation in design and a departure from the formula of slum clearance, introducing architectural competitions into the conceptually impoverished housing sector. The UDC also targeted inner-city areas where blight was rising after more than two decades of the dual

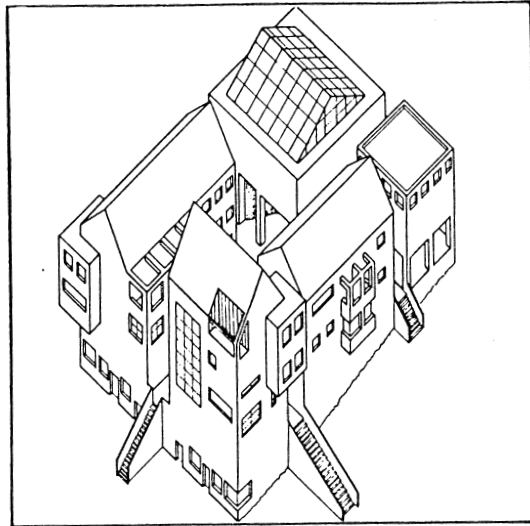
Fig. 9

Berlin reference examples from 1874-1893 for the urban villa (Cornell Summer Academy 1977).

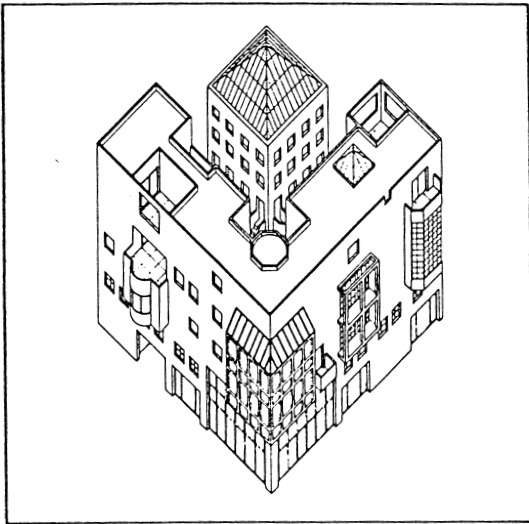
Entwurfsbeispiele für städtische Mietvillen



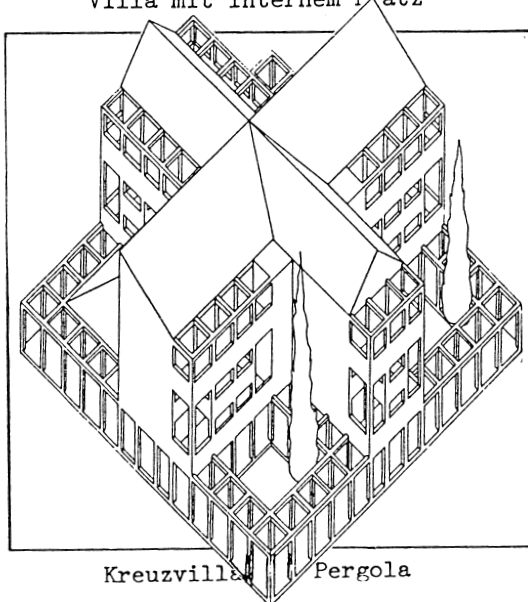
Villa mit Kaufpassage



Villa mit internem Platz



Eckvilla



Kreuzvilla Pergola

policy of neglect and urban renewal. The challenges posed by mass housing were addressed in Ungers's studios at Cornell University, as well as in 'The Urban Block', a summer academy that he taught in New York City in 1976.¹⁶ Driven by planning methodology, such research by design also fed his own practice.

Having secured no building commissions since the late 1960s, the UDC offered opportunities such as the Welfare Island competition in New York City [Fig. 8] in 1975. This virtually abandoned, yet highly visible strip of land in the East River had been designated as a key UDC redevelopment site, intended to become a model middle-class metropolitan community. Based on the master-plan by Philip Johnson & John Burgee from 1969, consecutive planning phases

10

16 O.M. Ungers, Werner Goehner, Arthur Ovaska, Hans Kollhoff, *The Urban Block and Gotham City, Metaphors & Metamorphosis. Two Concurrent Projects, College of Architecture, Art and Planning* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University, 1976).

Fig. 10

Oswald Mathias Ungers, Hans Kollhoff, Arthur Ovaska, *The Urban Villa. A Multi-family Dwelling Type. Cornell Summer Academy in Berlin, 1977: exemplary configurations.*

were to achieve a strong identity for Welfare Island.¹⁷ In the competition that was launched in 1975, Ungers responded with a miniaturization of the adjacent midtown Manhattan, replete with its own grid and Central Park. The modular forms of his entry were the result of an iteration of block structures: different sets of genealogies all premised upon a footprint defined by Manhattan's grid. Therefore, the generative logic of real estate [Fig. 7] addressed in *Berliner Brandwände* in 1968 resurfaced in the morphological transformations for Welfare Island in 1975. What had been a survey of tenements was now operative for design.

Toward a Customized Urban Environment

In 1976 Ungers extended the exploration of scale, image, metaphor to the exhibition installation 'City Metaphors'. Again in New York City, this was his contribution to 'Man TransForms', the inaugural group exhibition curated by Hans Hollein for the Cooper Hewitt National Museum of Design. Ungers's installation and subsequent publication¹⁸ were an attempt to reclaim a conceptual dimension for the thinking on urban form – and clearly a shift away from the infatuation with process, system and structure. A version of Ungers's exhibition catalogue text, "Designing and Thinking with Images, Metaphors and Analogies" was used in the printed documentation when the Cornell summer academy went to Berlin the following year.¹⁹

Regarding comprehensive, large-scale planning, New York City experienced its turning point in 1976, however. A two-fold collapse occurred the same year as the Cornell summer academy and the 'City Metaphors' installation at the Cooper Hewitt Museum: The UDC foreclosed and the city reached the brink of bankruptcy – the former effectively terminating all government-assisted innovation in housing production, the latter only narrowly averted by a joint plan of New York's banks. In either instance, the federal government under President Richard Nixon had already distanced itself from municipal problems and begun to dismantle the 'Great Society' programs launched under Lyndon B. Johnson. The scope of federal and local policy was re-defined by supply-side economics. Facing austerity and increased dependency on the private sector, the UDC now reverted to incentivizing economic development in urban areas.

Combined with publications, symposia or the participation in exhibitions like

17 Although Welfare Island was officially renamed Roosevelt Island in 1973 the UDC competition carried the previous name.

18 Hans Hollein (ed.), *Man TransForms: An International Exhibition on Aspects of Design: For the Opening of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Design Cooper-Hewitt Museum: October 1976* (New York: Cooper-Hewitt Museum, 1976). Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Morphologie. City Metaphors*, Köln 1982.

19 Oswald Mathias Ungers, "Designing and Thinking with Images, Metaphors and Analogies", in *The Urban Block and Gotham City. Metaphors & Metamorphosis. Two Concurrent Projects, College of Architecture, Art and Planning* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University, 1975).

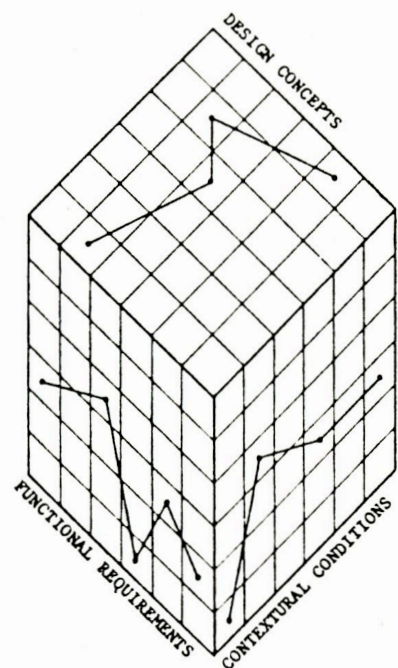
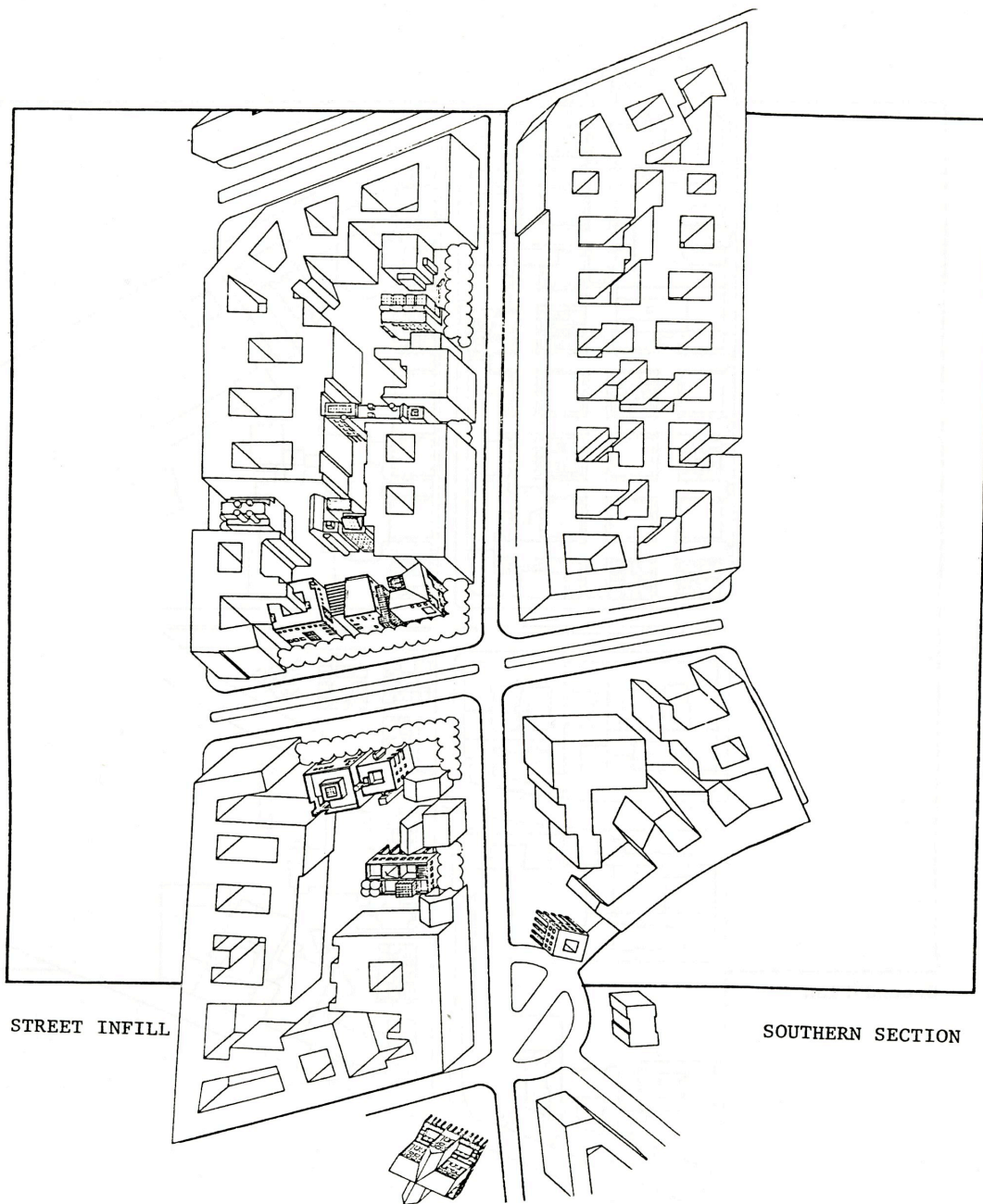


Fig. 12

Arthur Ovaska: 'synthetic programming' generating design parameters for the Urban Villa (Cornell Summer Academy 1977).



'Man TransForms', the decade-long academic exile from Germany arguably served as a conceptual incubator for Ungers. Although he never severed his ties to Germany and participated in numerous competitions there, he returned with a new narrative for the city that he had abandoned left in early 1968. Essential for this repositioning was also the research-based design with Cornell University students in Berlin where the second and third summer academies were conducted. In itself, the engagement with European cities was a genuine United States tradition as well. Hailing from the Beaux Arts curriculum of elite schools, the idea was to immerse architecture students in European culture, most

11

Fig. 11
Urban villas inserted in existing fabric of Südliche Friedrichstadt, Berlin-Kreuzberg (Cornell Summer Academy, 1977).

typically by offering studios, often entire semester programs taught in Rome or Florence. The classical format was reappropriated when Ungers decided to bring Cornell students to Berlin during two consecutive summers where they would deal with a contemporary European urban condition. Clearly a more challenging case than Rome, Berlin was an open text awaiting reinterpretation. It was also the city where Ungers sought to re-establish his lost design authority. With their titles *The Urban Villa* (1977) and *The Urban Garden* (1978) the two summer academies each gave programmatic importance to a particular research topic, while extending the thematic arc begun with *The Urban Block* (1976) in Manhattan.²⁰

The first of the Berlin topics shows an intersection between historical analysis and a new housing model, akin to its predecessor the previous year. Following the Manhattan block, the 'villa' is based on the evolution of a precedent, now identified in Berlin. A hybrid concoction that synthesized historical precedents, the urban villa was promoted as a 'Multi family dwelling type' [Fig. 10]. The Summer Academy based its research on various precedents that afforded adaptability through their scale: large residences which often been subjected to subdivision and reuse in the recent past. However, the references did not hark back to the perimeter block, but instead to the free-standing housing that had preceded it. These townhouses continued to be produced in more affluent neighborhoods of German cities in the latter part of the 19th century, evidence of "a typological vocabulary of formal richness", presenting an architectural language that reflects "social diversity".²¹ The catalogue went on to encompass 20th-century examples by Walter Gropius (Meisterhäuser in Dessau, 1926), Frank Lloyd Wright (Suntop Homes in Ardmore, 1939), Marcel Breuer and Emil Roth (Doldertalhäuser in Zurich, 1936) Atelier 5 (Siedlung Brunnadern in Bern, 1974), but the survey was clearly aimed at reconciling contemporary housing with the context of a historic neighborhood like Berlin-Kreuzberg, the site chosen for the Cornell students.

The resulting publication presents the urban villa as an alternative to the contemporary tendency to understand the perimeter block as sole representation of a legacy that Modernism had discredited. According to the authors, O.M. Ungers, Hans Kollhoff and Arthur Ovaska, housing issues could no longer be reduced to issues like repetition and quantity. Neither did they deem functionalist urban renewal appropriate, nor the generic infill of blocks and courtyards, rather a 'pluralistic urban environment with mutually unresolved contradictions'.²²

Which urbanity did the Summer Academy identify for Berlin, and did the United States have an impact upon Ungers in 1977? *The Urban Villa* and *The Green Archipelago* – the draft of which was produced in parallel to the Summer

20 In the introduction to the 1977 studio publication not the "Urban Garden" is mentioned as a theme, but "Art and Architecture in the Public Space" (sic) instead; the resulting publication was: Oswald Mathias Ungers, Hans Kollhoff, Arthur Ovaska, *The Urban Garden. Student Projects for the Südliche Friedrichstadt Berlin. Summer Academy for Architecture 78 in Berlin* (Köln: Studio Press for Architecture, 1978).

21 Ungers, Kollhoff, Ovaska, *The Urban Villa*, 4.

22 Ungers, Kollhoff, Ovaska, *The Urban Villa*, 6



13

Academy by Rem Koolhaas with Ungers²³— sought a proposal for an increasingly diverse society in a shrinking city. In West Berlin this two-fold dynamic of size and differentiation was unfolding as much as it was in contemporary New York: an “exodus psychosis” of “anxiety-prone inhabitants” coupled with the “desire for a stronger individualization of the environment”.²⁴ The envisioned urbanity by the authors would be pluralistic and decentered, its physical density significantly lower [Fig. 10] than that of the historic tenements. With participants more diverse, this urbanity would be informed by a multitude of quasi-independent communities, owing less to the urban tradition of Europe than to the notion of the United States neighborhood. Obviously, what sociologist Herbert Gans had identified as ‘The Urban Villagers’²⁵ in 1961 had come under stress over the following two decades as ethnic communities were increasingly destabilized. In New York, the UDC had sought remedies to counter the social and physical depletion caused by white flight and urban renewal.

23 The co-authorship and its context are discussed in: Florian Hertweck, Sébastien Marot (ed.), *The City in the City. Berlin: a Green Archipelago: A Manifesto (1977)* by Oswald Mathias Ungers and Rem Koolhaas with Peter Riemann, Hans Kollhoff, Arthur Ovaska (Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2013).

24 Oswald Mathias Ungers, “Cities within the City. Proposals by the Summer Academy for Berlin”, *Lotus International*, no. 19 (1978): 82, 91.

25 Herbert Gans, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans* (New York: The Free Press, 1965).

Fig. 13

Urban renewal involving typical Kreuzberg tenements, late 1970s (IMAGO / Peter Homann).

Which Heritage?

Given his firsthand experience of the demise of the UDC, Ungers could fathom the consequences of policy changes for the relationship of architecture and urbanism. The United States had exposed him to the social realities of the failing fabric of inner cities. After the defunding of public programs, deprived inner-city communities had become increasingly involved with private foundations, philanthropy, religious and organizations. Participation and ad-hocism offered forms of agency that were incremental and reduced in scale.

Such was also the case in Kreuzberg although public investment was not at stake in Berlin. Home to West Berlin's most disenfranchised communities and slated for further massive redevelopment, publicly funded urban renewal had come under attack in Kreuzberg. As its test site the Cornell summer academy selected a particularly war-torn area. Still underpinned by traces of the layout of 18th century royal Berlin, this part of Kreuzberg was defined by a confrontation between sparse remnants of prewar fabric, recent public housing, underutilized traffic infrastructure and gaping voids. Later designated as key zone for the 1987 IBA International Building Exhibition, its remaining housing stock from the 19th century was already at the center of attention for preservationists, critical neighborhood collectives to the squatter movement.

When the group from Cornell University arrived here in 1977 the studios took place at Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Kreuzberg, a venue resulting from a squat at the beginning of the same decade. It is no surprise that the text for *The Urban Villa* refers to increased citizen participation and private initiative in housing while addressing adaptive reuse. Through its intermediate scale the urban villa encourages not only participatory planning but also home ownership and 'free expression of personality.' [Fig. 12]²⁶ The positive connotations of the free market are essential in preparing the new reading of Berlin as a collection of relatively autonomous 'Cities within the City' each allowing a 'stronger individualization of the environment'.²⁷ Inspiring user-driven customization of the habitat is a clear break with the universalistic standards of the welfare state. The new approach addressed an increasingly middle-class city in which residents voice diverse needs.

1970s Berlin, with the environmental movement, community advocacy and urban counterculture on the rise, was fertile ground for experiments that drew from United States individualism like the Cornell summer academies. Both *The Green Archipelago* and the *The Urban Garden* claim that the Genius Loci of Berlin has always been that of a verdant city. Introducing the concept of urban farming to the walled city, *The Green Archipelago* again adopts a user-driven perspective. Residents are meant to establish a close bond participating in their individual neighborhoods. This agency is conveyed in the very metaphor of the

26 Ungers, Kollhoff, Ovaska, *The Urban Villa*, 4.

27 Ungers, "Cities within the City", 91.

island. As an open constellation the archipelago is no longer premised on a comprehensive urbanity. Instead, it implies negotiation between communities 'floating' in an open space.

The Cornell Summer Academies perceive Berlin as a green, quasi suburban territory. Their frame of reference not only encompasses contemporary ecological awareness, however. In advocating for a porous urban landscape they also embrace historical precedent by drawing from the works of Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Peter Josef Lenné or Hans Scharoun. The conceptual aperture reveals how versatile the discourse of a 'green' Berlin was during the mid-1970s: On one hand, the local activism of citizens and the ad-hocism of homeowners is invoked. On the other hand, it allows professionals to deploy the cultural capital of the historically informed architect – asserting disciplinary authority in interpreting an urban environment with references made to Italo Calvino, C.G.Jung and Arthur Schopenhauer.²⁸

This ambivalence points to a shift in the mediality of architecture itself, as different narratives and audiences regarding history emerge. Here Ungers's relationship to heritage in the shattered and shrinking urban fabric of Berlin is the example of a transition. In 1968 *Berliner Brandwände* had already re-visited the 19th century and the related real estate, the 'Mietskaserne'. But since the *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur* were released by the Ungers chair at TU Berlin, the function of history had fundamentally changed for architecture production, thus providing new opportunities. In the wake of the European Year of Preservation in 1975 coalitions willing to support the heritage represented by tenement housing had emerged. In response to the tenets of historic preservation promulgated by the Venice Charter in 1964, the isolated monument was de-emphasized while the everyday environment was validated as a bearer of identity. Accordingly, *The Green Archipelago* perceived anonymous structures or accidental urban configurations and infrastructures as specific historic markers. In Berlin, these markers encompassed the



14

28 As an introduction to publication of the student projects from the 1978 Cornell Summer Academy, Ungers contributed his essay "The Architecture of Collective Memory" where a series of his unbuilt designs from the first half of the 1960s illustrated the compositional themes such as the 'environment of recollection' or the idea of the city as 'not a uniform picture but a vivid ensemble of pieces and fragments', along with a drawing of "The City within the City" proposal. A revised version of the text was released as "Architecture of the collective Memory. The infinite Catalogue of urban Forms", *Lotus*, no. 24 (1979): 5-11.

Fig. 14

Liselotte and Oswald M. Ungers *Kommunen in der Neuen Welt*, 1972: back cover showing members of a contemporary US commune.



everyday environments of a metropolis largely defined by industrialization and its explosive, speculative growth after German unification in 1871. The related tenements were no longer surveyed as enigmatic relics: Less than a decade after the publication of *Berliner Brandwände*, they had become sites of resistance to urban renewal. Soon the object of subsidies, then of private investment, 19th century heritage became desirable real estate and, by the 1980s, a driver of gentrification.

Although opting for a more open approach to housing than merely repeating the Berlin perimeter block the authors of *The Urban Villa* and *The Green*

Fig. 15

O.M. Ungers: Köthener Strasse housing, Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin (1988-89).

Archipelago tapped into the same legacy: the *bürgerliche* Stadt. Ungers and his team were keen to reappropriate the morphology of the 19th century by invoking the townhouse [Fig. 9]. The same era had already served as the frame of reference in 1975 when Ungers participated in the symposium/design workshop 'Bauen in der historischen Strasse' curated by François Burkhardt, again targeting a dense working-class neighborhood of historic Kreuzberg.²⁹ The event was sponsored by Berlin's department of housing and urban planning, in turn hinting at a paradigm change in planning doctrine. With its guest list 'Bauen in der historischen Strasse' also signaled the international awareness that Berlin would attract when the International Building Exhibition (IBA) was launched in 1979.³⁰ Fusing architecture and urban design, it would be characterized by the rediscovery of the façade-lined streetscape. The bulk of its projects were located in Kreuzberg. As a highly mediatized event IBA reflected how the urban territory had become a curated marketplace of architectural concepts that welcomed international practitioners. Encouraging this spotlight signaled a departure from the community issues that the Cornell Summer Academies had recently identified: the demise of a more politicized concept?

Which Agency?

The exchange with the United States that IBA fostered overlapped with Ungers's own transatlantic professional biography. Quite contrary to many of his German colleagues he interacted with different national and international contexts as a practitioner, educator, and theoretician. When marginalized in Germany during the 1970s, Ungers saw his work and writings published in Italy.³¹ Mainly, he exemplifies the strong influence of United States architecture and urban development upon several generations of European practitioners and theoreticians.³² To an extent unthinkable in the geographies and geopolitical contexts of today, the US exposure of Europeans to both practice and academia endured well into 1980s, in turn contributing to the reception of Postmodernism. However, this exchange goes further back in time than IBA.

After 1968, the United States presented a specific cultural context to think about the identity and agency of social groups [Fig. 11]. In this regard, Liselotte

29 Another precursor to the IBA, co-hosted by Internationales Design Zentrum and Berlin's department of housing and urban planning for the Adalbertstrasse block with participating designers Gottfried Böhm, Vittorio Gregotti, Charles Moore, Alison Smithson and theoreticians André Corboz and Christian Norberg Schulz. François Burkhardt, Heinrich Klotz (ed.), *Entwerfen in der historischen Strasse: Arbeiten des IDZ Symposiums im Herbst 1975 zur baulichen Integration Alt-Neu veranstaltet mit dem Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen* (Berlin: Abakon, 1976).

30 Shortly after the 1978 Cornell Summer Academy in Berlin Ungers, together with Josef Paul Kleihues and Hardt-Waltherr Hämer became co-director of IBA, soon resigning from the post which did not permit him to engage in related building activity.

31 In particular the Welfare Island Competition for New York City: Oswald Matthias Ungers, "Planning Criteria", *Lotus International*, no. 11 (1976): 14-41 and the revised version of the Cornell Summer Academy 1977 - Ungers, "Cities within the City", 82-97.

32 Exemplary figures: André Corboz, Heinrich Klotz, Rem Koolhaas, Stanislaus von Moos, Manfredo Tafuri, Bernard Tschumi. Manfredo Tafuri "L'Architecture dans le Boudoir/The Ashes of Jefferson", in Manfredo Tafuri, *La sfera e il labirinto: avanguardia e architettura da Piranesi agli anni '70* (Torino: Einaudi, 1980), 269-303.

and Oswald M. Ungers had been drawn to the 'utopian' communities – whose collective projects represented the sheer opposite of the lifestyle that social housing in Postwar Europe had come to produce. In their field trips to the habitats left behind by these communities, they retraced the polycentric settlement patterns of the American landscape. Dispersed and remote, the communes were a manifestation of a general cultural legacy imbued with an anti-urban bias. From Thomas Jefferson onward, subsequently in the romanticism of Henry David Thoreau or the rugged individualism of Frank Lloyd Wright, the dialectic of landscape and city in the United States is distinctly different from Europe. Ungers was exposed to this cultural tradition at a critical juncture in his career. He made experiences while in the United States that later shaped his response to Berlin. This response was in turn conditioned by the circumstances of 1970s Berlin. *The Green Archipelago* was developed and deployed as a metaphor to engage with this specific context.

The Cornell Summer Academies questioned the shortcomings of architecture in dealing with the urban condition and with social housing. If anything, they offer a lens to look at how external forces condition the knowledge that architect acquire. At the same time, there is a reciprocity between this knowledge and the urban publics. This reciprocity refers to a given time and space such as West Berlin where architecture production cannot be separated from economic and political institutions, nor from power relations and their regulation. The cultural and social "embeddedness" of these power relations has been described by Bob Jessop.³³ This evolving relationship can be seen in the attitude toward subsidized housing and urban renewal in the German Welfare State.

Ungers and the group of researchers involved in Cornell Summer Academies were avid observers of the material evidence that Berlin presented. Their research interests were motivated by design. They were opportunists and strategists alike – eager to re-legitimize architectural practice in an urban realm which was itself changing.³⁴ As demonstrated by the decade addressed here, the relationship between architects and society shifted both in Berlin and New York. Structural changes affected cities and urban governance. New power configurations unfolded, challenging the Welfare State and leading to new representations of social groups in urban space. This in turn changed the nature of the architectural product, as demonstrated by *The Urban Villa*. As a type it was embedded in the dynamic of nascent Post-Fordism, responding to the desire for differentiation and identity production that came to define urban policies in the 1980s and 1990s on both side of the North Atlantic. Here, *The Urban Villa* redirected the agency and imaginary of architecture toward individuals and markets. After the crisis of mass housing through urban renewal the "personalization of lifestyle" and the "shift from the dependant tenant to the independant

33 Bob Jessop, *The Future of the Capitalist State* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 8.

34 Their exploitation of the social dimension of architecture in times of professional crisis was astutely diagnosed by Werner Sewing: «Die Gesellschaft der Häuser», *Archplus*, no. 187-188 (1997-1998).

home owner” heralded a new legitimacy for practice in Berlin.³⁵ A “Prototype for Inner City Residences”,³⁶ the urban villa was an early vehicle for Postmodernism [Fig. 13], introducing its themes and customized objects into the fragmented urban landscape.

35 Ungers, Kollhoff, Ovaska, The Urban Villa, 5.

36 Ungers, Kollhoff, Ovaska, The Urban Villa, 2.

Bibliography

- Becher, Bernd and Hilla. *Anonyme Skulpturen: Formvergleiche industrieller Bauten*. Düsseldorf: Städtische Kunsthalle, 1969.
- Bideau, André. *Architektur und symbolisches Kapital: Bildersählungen und Identitätsproduktion bei O. M. Ungers*. Basel: Birkhäuser, 2011.
- Bideau, André. "Elusive Ungers", *AA Files*, no. 64 (2012): 3-14.
- Bideau, André. "Housing as a discursive void: Oswald Mathias Ungers in the 1960s and 1970s", *Candide*, no. 7 (2013): 70.
- Burkhardt, François, Heinrich Klotz, eds. *Entwerfen in der historischen Strasse: Arbeiten des IDZ Symposiums im Herbst 1975 zur baulichen Integration Alt-Neu veranstaltet mit dem Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen*. Berlin: Abakon, 1976.
- Cepl, Jasper. *Oswald Mathias Ungers: eine intellektuelle Biographie*. Köln: Walther König, 2007, 243, 254-256.
- Gans, Herbert. *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans*. New York: The Free Press, 1965.
- Hayden, Dolores. *Seven American Utopias. The Architecture of Communitarian Socialism, 1790-1975*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976.
- Hegemann, Werner. *Das steinerne Berlin: Geschichte der grössten Mietkasernenstadt der Welt*. Berlin: Kiepenheuer, 1930.
- Hertweck, Florian, Sébastien Marot, eds. *The City in the City. Berlin: a Green Archipelago: A Manifesto (1977) by Oswald Mathias Ungers and Rem Koolhaas with Peter Riemann, Hans Kollhoff, Arthur Ovaska*. Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2013.
- Hans Hollein, ed. "Man Transforms: An International Exhibition on Aspects of Design: for the Opening of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Design Cooper-Hewitt Museum : October 1976." New York: Cooper-Hewitt Museum, 1976.
- Jessop, Bob. *The Future of the Capitalist State*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002, 8.
- Löw, Martina, Helmuth Berking, eds. *Die Eigenlogik der Städte: neue Wege für die Stadtforschung*. Frankfurt a.M: Campus Verlag, 2008.
- Mühlthaler, Erika, ed. "Lernen von O.M.Ungers", *Archplus*, no. 181-182 (2006).
- Sewing, Werner. "Die Gesellschaft der Häuser", *Archplus*, no. 187-188 (1997-1998).
- Tafari, Manfredo, ed., "L'Architecture dans le Boudoir/The Ashes of Jefferson", in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: avant-gardes and architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s* (Cambridge-MA: MIT Press, 1987), 269-303.
- Lehrstuhl für Entwerfen VI. Prof. O.M.Ungers (ed.), "Berliner Brandwände", *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur*, Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin, no. 27 (1969).
- Ungers, Liselotte and O.M. Ungers. "Utopische Kommunen in Amerika, 1800-1900. Die Amana Community", *Das Werk* (August 1970): 543-546.
- Ungers, Liselotte and Oswald Mathias Ungers. *Kommunen in der Neuen Welt, 1740-1971*. Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1972.
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias, Werner Goehner, Arthur Ovaska and Hans Kollhoff. *The Urban Block and Gotham City. Metaphors & Metamorphosis. Two Concurrent Projects*. Ithaca NY: College of Architecture, Art and Planning, Cornell University, 1976.
- Ungers, Oswald Matthias. "Planning Criteria", *Lotus International*, no. 11 (1976): 14-41.
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias, Hans Kollhoff, Arthur Ovaska. *The Urban Villa. A Multi-family Dwelling Type. Cornell Summer Academy 77 in Berlin*. Köln: Studio Press for Architecture, 1977.
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias. "Architecture of the collective Memory. The infinite Catalogue of urban Forms", *Lotus International*, no. 24 (1979): 5-11.
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias, Hans Kollhoff, Arthur Ovaska. *The Urban Garden. Student Projects for the Südliche Friedrichstadt Berlin. Summer Academy for Architecture 78 in Berlin*. Köln: Studio Press for Architecture, 1978.
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias. "Cities within the City. Proposals by the Summer Academy for Berlin", *Lotus International* 19 (1978): 82-97.
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias. *Morphologie. City Metaphors*. Köln: W. König, 1982.

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.

/Author

Ioanna Angelidou
Yale University (PhD) / University of Graz
(Junior Fellow, Excellence Cluster “Dimensions of Europe”)
ioanna.angelidou@aya.yale.edu

Ioanna Angelidou is an architect and historian of architecture. She undertook her doctoral studies at Yale University, where she also earned an MPhil in the History and Theory of Architecture and served as Teaching Fellow. She studied Architecture at Columbia University in New York and Aristotle University in Greece, and worked as an architect and curator in Europe and Japan. Her research has been supported by grants from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Getty Research Institute, the Max Weber Foundation, the Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte, the MacMillan Center for International Studies, the Canadian Centre for Architecture, the Society of Architectural Historians, Yale’s John F. Enders Fellowship, the Julia- ne and Franz Roh Fellowship awarded by the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte and the Institute for Art History at Ludwig Maximilian University, and a Visual Arts Grant from the Japan Foundation. Her publications include articles in the Getty Research Journal, Arch+, and Log as well as chapters in the books *Remediated Maps: Transmedial Approaches to Cartographic Imagination* (Quaderni della Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte; 2024), *Aldo Rossi: Perspectives from the World* (Il Poligrafo Seria di Architettura, 2019), *Writing Place: Investigations in Architecture and Literature* (010-NAi Publishers, 2016), *Archiscripts* (Birkhäuser, 2015) and *Small Tokyo* (International Institute for Architecture and Urbanism, Keio University, 2012), among others. In 2024 she was a Junior Fellow in the Excellence Cluster “Dimensions of Europe” at the University of Graz, where she commenced a new research project on architecture archives in Cold War Europe.

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.

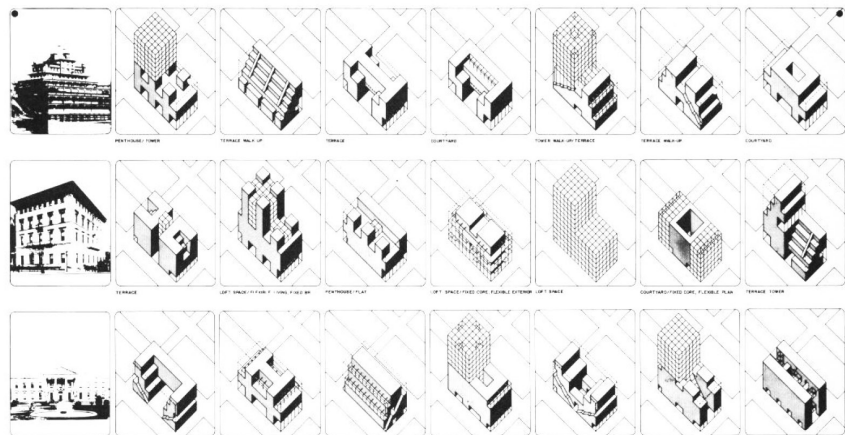
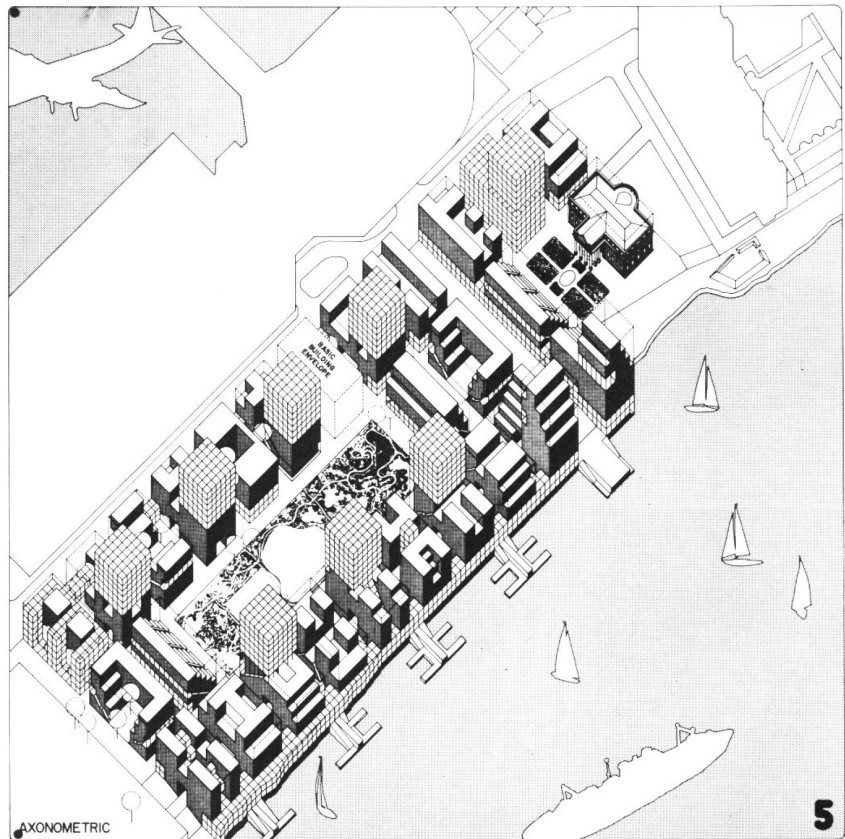
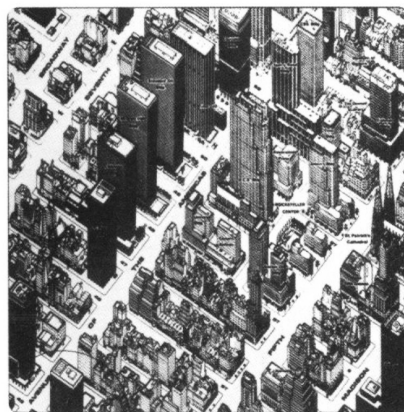
Elements: City of Fragments

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.

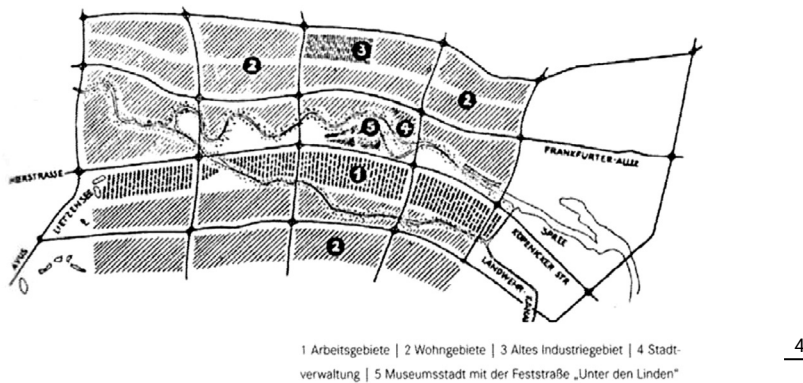
Fig. 3

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

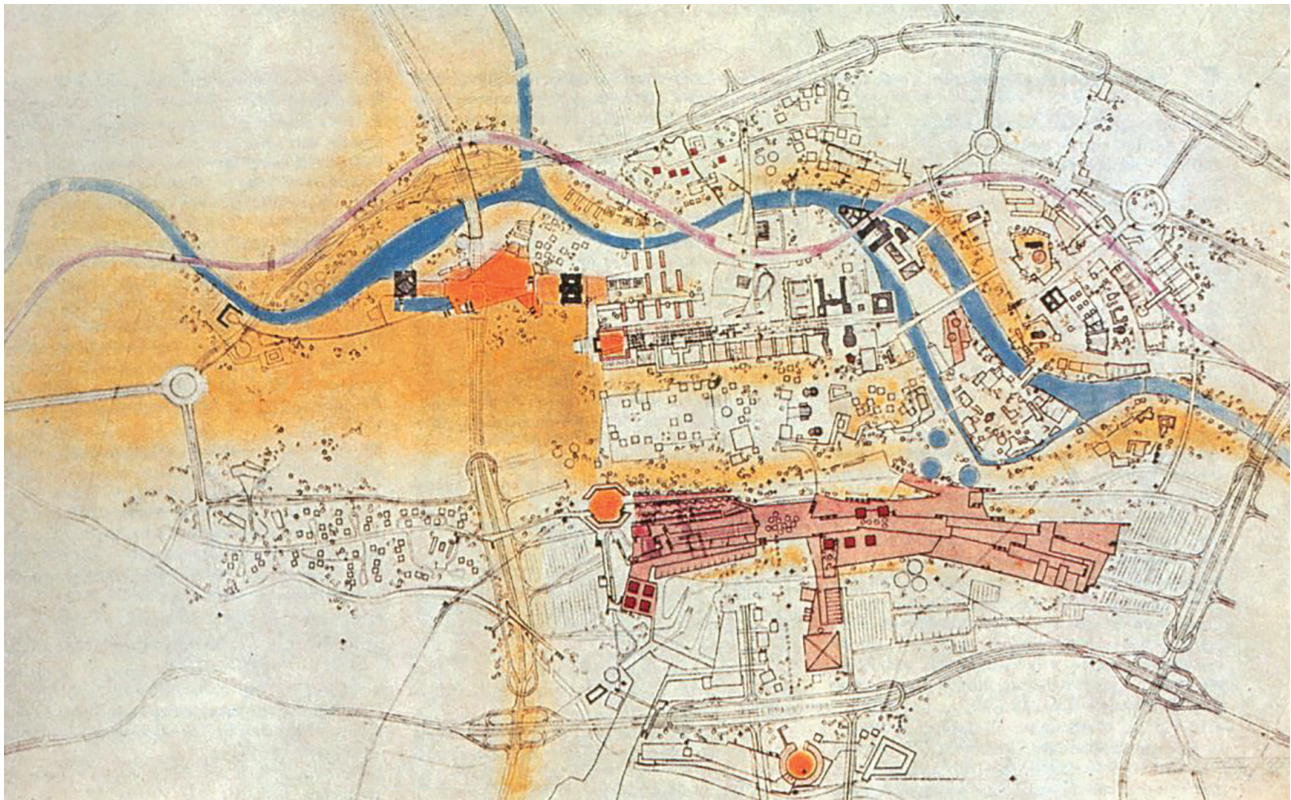
The main, and perhaps most radical, characteristic of the Archipelago is its fragmentary nature. The emptiness is bold and unapologetic, thus challenging the conventions that equated historical urban centers with density. The origin of that idea can be traced back to 1959 and Hans Scharoun's entry to 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.



5

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]

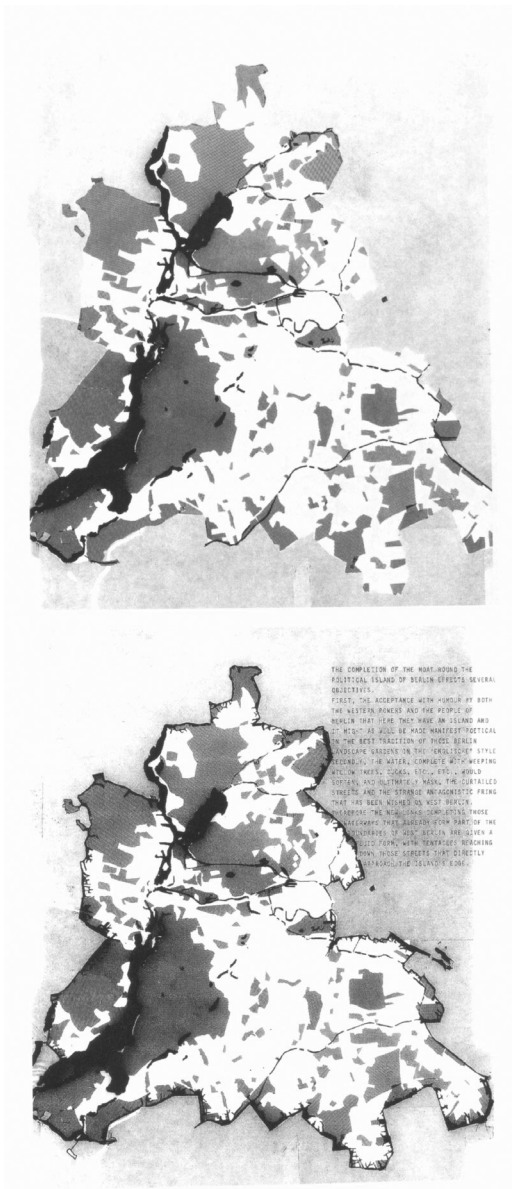
16 Alison Smithson, "The People We Build For...Our Clients...The Unfolding of the Society We Live In," manuscript of lecture delivered at the Yale School of Architecture, 14 April 1992. Special Collections of the Haas Arts Library, Yale University, New Haven CT, NA2543 S6 S65 1992

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



71

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

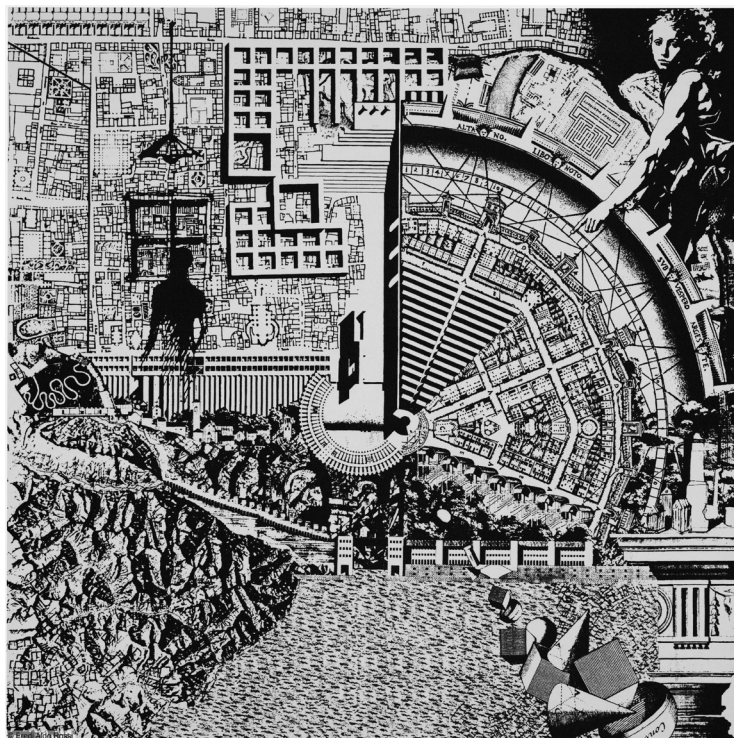
Two significant coincidences occur in 1976 and cannot go unnoticed as

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.

Bibliography

Special session of the World Peace Council in Berlin, 2-5 February 1979. Dresden: Verlag Zeit im Bild, 1979.

Ambasz, Emilio, ed. *Architectural Education USA: Issues, Ideas and People; A Conference to Explore Current Alternatives - Proceedings*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1971.

Calle, Sophie. *Detachment*. Arles: Actes Sud, 2013.

Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*. Translated by William Weaver. New York: Harcourt, 1974 [1972].

Engel, H., Weber, K. and Werner Düttmann, eds. *1776 - 1976: 200 Jahre Berlin, Beispiele der Berliner Baugeschichte Ausgewählt vom Landeskonservator*. Cologne; Berlin: Studioverlag für Architektur, 1977.

Evans, Arthur. *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.

Geisert, Helmut, Doris Haneberg, and Carola Hein, eds. *Hauptstadt Berlin: Internationaler Städtebaulicher Ideenwettbewerb 1957/58*. Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, 1990.

Krier, Leon. "Cities Within the City." *Architecture + Urbanism* 83 (1977): 69-152.

Pfannkuch, Peter, ed. *Hans Scharoun Baut: Bauten, Entwürfe, Texte*. Berlin: Schriftenreihe der Akademie der Künste, 1993.

Risselada, Max and Dirk van den Heuvel, eds. *Team 10: In Search of a Utopia of the Present, 1953-1981*. Rotterdam: NAI - 010 Publishers, 2005.

Rodighiero, Dario. *Analogous City: The Map*. Lausanne: École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, 2015.

Rossi, Aldo. "Analogical Architecture," *Architecture+Urbanism* 65 (1976): 74-76.

Rossi, Aldo. *The Architecture of the City*. Translated by Diane Ghirardo and Joan Ockman. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982 [1966].

Sandler, Daniela. *Counterpreservation: Architectural Decay in Berlin Since 1989*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016.

Smithson, Alison. "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 on 14 April 1992. Special Collections, Haas Arts Library, Yale University, New Haven CT, NA2543 S6 S65 1992

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

Ungers, Oswald Mathias, "Designing and Thinking in Images, Metaphors and Analogies." In *MANtransFORMS: An International Exhibition on Aspects of Design*, edited by Hans Hollein, New York: Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Smithsonian Institution, 1976), 98-113.

Ungers, Oswald Mathias, "L'architettura della memoria collettiva: L'infinito catalogo delle forme urbane." *Lotus International* 24 (1979): 5-11.

Ungers, Oswald Mathias, *Morphologie: City Metaphors* (Cologne: Walter König; New York: D.A.P., 1982).

Ungers, Oswald Mathias, Rem Koolhaas, and Hans Ulrich Obrist. "Die Rationalisierung des Bestehenden," *Arch+* 179 (2006): 6-11.

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

Ungers, Oswald Mathias, 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.

Rereading The Ungers: Utopian Realism as a Basis for Contemporary Urban Design

Oswald Mathias and Liselotte Ungers, Utopia, Communes, Degrowth, Urban Planning

/Abstract

Although much has been said about the work of Oswald Mathias Ungers, this essay aims to address the decade from '67 to '77, which saw the departure of the Ungers family for the United States of America, more precisely for the city of Ithaca in the state of New York. It was precisely the American period that allowed O.M. Ungers to reflect and revise much of the work that had seen him directly involved in some controversies, which culminated in protests in December '67.

The purpose of this text is to briefly review some of the events that took place during that period, in order to shed light on two almost unknown texts that saw their birth mainly thanks to the American period and the social ferment of the time: *Kommunen in der Neuen Welt. 1740 - 1972*, published in '72 by both authors and *Die Rückkehr des Roten Mannes: Indianer in den USA*, published in '74 by Liselotte Ungers. It is essential to point out these publications, not only to bring to light a part of Ungers' work unknown to most, but also to clarify some of the urban strategies proposed by O.M. Ungers that become, now more than ever, fundamental references for the possible resolution of contemporary crises.

In a period that sees the rediscovery of utopia as a model for solving the many crises we are facing, as was already the case in the 1960s and 1970s, it is appropriate to recall and deepen Ungers' reflections on the Utopian device trying not to fall back on the proposal of sci-fi or retro-futuristic models.

/Author

Chiara Ciambellotti
Università di Bologna
Chiara.ciambellotti2@unibo.it

Chiara Ciambellotti (1996) is a PhD candidate in Architecture and Design Cultures. She studied at the University of Bologna where she graduated in 2022.

In 2022 her thesis entitled "Project for a non-extractive architecture" was one of the winners of the Call for Projects 2022-2023 launched by LINA, the European Architecture Platform.

In addition, she acts as a teaching tutor for several courses at the University of Bologna. She has participated in international conferences, published text and contributed to the organisation of workshops and exhibitions.

The field in which she operates is that of history of architecture and urban planning, paying particular attention to social and ecological dynamics. Specifically, she explores possible alternatives and solutions that place a degrowth model at the centre of urban discourse. To do so, she focuses on rediscovering the fundamental intellectual work carried out by Liselotte and Oswald Mathias Ungers between the 1960s and 1970s.

Whereas with us property is private and personal, with them everything is in common...I am convinced that where private property exists, where everything is calculated by money, it is difficult for things to unfold with justice and success for a state¹

Introduction

The emergence of communes, interest groups, oppositions, is not a random and temporary phenomenon, but one that must be taken very seriously².

This was how Oswald Mathias Ungers introduced the *Internationaler Kongress Architekturtheorie* held at the Technical University of Berlin from 11th to 15th December '67, proving that he was fully aware of what was happening at that time in Berlin and more generally across the world. These were the years leading up to the better-known '68. Berlin was already shaken by student protests during the spring of '67, as evidenced by the 5th June 1967 cover of *Der Spiegel* magazine entitled *The Rebel Students of Berlin*³. Young people mobilised against the visit of the Shah of Persia, the dictatorship in Athens, the United States mission in Vietnam and, along with all these causes, they also fought "against schools and universities that produce the conformist type, reward the opportunist and prevent the development of critical consciousness. We want to dismantle authoritarian forms of government in the university and society and practice democracy here as elsewhere"⁴. The conference saw the participation of some of the leading figures in architectural theory and critique of the time including: Siegfried Giedion, André Corboz, Julius Posener, Kenneth Frampton, Reyner Banham, Colin Rowe, Lucius Burkhardt, and many others. As Ungers himself admitted, the purpose of the conference was to initiate a reflection - in his view fundamental - on the theoretical foundations of architecture in an era that had seen, was seeing and would have seen a period of intense building activity. At the seminar's opening, which Ungers believed had the potential to change the course of architectural theory, he presented a stimulating challenge to the audience. The medium through which this was done was the story of Laputa Island, the levitating island described by Jonathan Swift in his book *Gulliver's Travels*. The island of Laputa, described by Jonathan Swift, is inhabited by people who devote their lives to the study of the world's most refined and abstract sciences

1 The term Utopia was first coined by the English humanist Thomas More in his novel *Utopia* published in Latin in 1516 under the title "Libellus vere aureus, nec minus salutaris quam festivus de optimo rei publicae statu, deque nova insula Utopia". The following edition was consulted for the text: Thomas More, *Utopia* (Trento: Timeo, 2023), I book, 81-83. This and the following translations were done by the author.

2 Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Internationaler Kongress Architekturtheorie*, Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur series, no. 14 (Berlin: Technische Universität, June 1968), 6.

3 "Die aufsässigen Studenten von Berlin," *Der Spiegel*, no. 24 (June 5 1967).

4 "Nein, nein, nein," in *Der Spiegel*, no. 24 (June 5 1967): 46-59.

such as mathematics, geometry and music. Their interest in the theoretical nature of science went so far as to prevent them from transposing these useful notions into the real world. For them that was such a vulgar act that, years later, their island found itself in a state of complete decay. Their houses were of very poor workmanship, with the walls of the rooms not even presenting a regular corner, a direct consequence of the very abstract and incomprehensible instructions the workers received, as Gulliver recounts "I had never seen such poorly cultivated land, such ruined and dilapidated houses, and people so wretched in dress and so gaunt in appearance"⁵. The intelligence of the inhabitants of Laputa is thus limited exclusively to the theoretical sciences; invention, imagination and fantasy remain alien to them.

And it is precisely the passage in which the causes of the kingdom's misery are made explicit that Ungers quotes almost literally:

"About 40 years ago, some people went to Laputa. After staying there for five days, they returned with very superficial knowledge but with a lot of fantastic ideas. After their return, these people began to find flaws in everything and made plans to re-found all the arts. To this end, they obtained a license to create an academy of designers. In this academy, the professors invented new rules of the art of building. The enterprise consisted of one man who would single-handedly do the work of ten men by constructing a palace in a week out of a material so strong that it would stand forever without the need for repair. Moreover, all the fruits of the earth would ripen in any season and one hundred percent more would be produced than at present. Such happy premonitions were given to the masses. The only misfortune is that none of these projects have been completed to date. In the meantime, all the land lies uncultivated and desolate, the houses are dilapidated and the inhabitants are without clothes or food. However, instead of being discouraged by this situation, they continue their projects with fifty times more vehemence, driven by hope and despair"⁶.

O.M. Ungers hopes that the consequences of the conference will not be the same as those resulting from the journey led by those five men to the land of Laputa. This concern revolves around the notion that intellectual speculations, if confined solely to a theoretical realm, may risk lacking tangible impacts in reality. The apprehension is that such speculations could potentially become mere exercises in chasing unattainable ideals, rather than offering valuable contributions to the pressing issues faced by contemporary society. Particular attention should be paid in Ungers' choice to quote a passage from Swift's text. In fact if analyzed at a deeper, perhaps more subtle conceptual level, this act provides a key that will play a pivotal role in this essay for re-reading the works of O.M. Ungers and Liselotte Ungers: the role played by Utopia.

⁵ Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, first complete Italian version edited by Aldo Valori (Rome: Formiggini, 1921), chap. IV, 264. For the first English edition see: Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, (London: Benjamin Motte, 1726).

⁶ Ungers, *Internationaler Kongress Architekturtheorie*, 6.

However, there was not even time to wonder what the consequences of this fateful meeting might have been as the conference was brutally interrupted by the entry of over 2,000 students into the lecture hall, who in protest unfurled a banner bearing the slogan “*Alle Häuser sind schön - hört auf zu bauen!//All houses are beautiful - stop building!*”⁷. It was precisely these same students, later united under the collective name *Aktion 507*, who wrote and published the manifesto *Diagnose zum Bauen in West-Berlin*⁸. The manifesto offers a well-founded critique of the architectural landscape in West Berlin during the 1960s. This era was marked by a close intertwining between architects, the senate, and the construction industry. This symbiotic relationship often subordinated urban planning to economic and political objectives, neglecting the needs and perspectives of the city’s inhabitants and contributing to a capitalist land policy.

It was as a direct consequence of this violent raid that O.M. Ungers decided to give up his professorship at the Technical University of Berlin and accepted the chair offered to him by Colin Rowe at Cornell University at Ithaca, in the United States of America.

American Lessons

This was the cultural background that Ungers left in ‘67 in order to travel with his family to Ithaca in the state of New York in April ‘68. Invited by Colin Rowe to take part in teaching activities at Cornell University, relations between the two deteriorated rapidly, mainly due to the divergence in their thinking: Ungers was interested in the great challenges dictated by the future and felt responsible for the world in the making, for Rowe, however, the situation was different. The divergent perspectives on urban development, architecture, and the architect’s role were discernible, and these disparities could already be glimpsed during 1967 *Internationaler Kongress Architekturtheorie*. During the seminar, Rowe presented a paper entitled “*The Crisis in the Cultural Cabinet*”. Rowe’s paper examined and analysed in a rather critical manner the imagined role of the modern architect within society, also discussing the opposition between technology and *Zeitgeist*.

The persistent prophecy of an impending crisis also constituted an eminently dramatic backdrop for the architect’s activity and offered modern architecture the opportunity to distinguish itself as a dynamic belief. Such insistence, in fact, gave the architect’s spatial decisions the persuasive force of a moral judgement, charged them with the fate of society and, because it gave an aesthetic preference the appearance of a prophetic insight into human destiny, could also give the impression of elevating architectural practice far beyond mere matters of personal taste⁹.

7 Oswald Mathias Ungers, Rem Koolhaas, Hans Ulrich Obrist, “Die Rationalisierung des Bestehenden,” *ARCH+*, no. 179, *O. M. Ungers – Berliner Vorlesungen 1964-65* (July 2006): 10.

8 *Aktion 507, Diagnose zum Bauen in West-Berlin*, (Berlin: Technische Universität, September 1968).

9 Colin Rowe, *Internationaler Kongress Architekturtheorie*, Veröffentlichungen zur architektur series, no.14, (Berlin: Technische Universität, June 1968), 187-188.

Statements of this kind highlight Rowe's position at the end of the 1960s, regarding both architects perceiving the profession as redemptive and the feasibility of social and political architecture. Over the years, Rowe's stance solidified, prompting Ungers to remark that "He did not understand the zeitgeist he talked so much about and preferred to retire to his "Monticello in Itacha"...He was disgusted by the vicious and aggressive political world outside. He was a completely apolitical man"¹⁰, but it is precisely because of this divergence of thought that Ungers saw Rowe as "an ideal counterpart for my own thinking in architecture"¹¹ stating to places itself in a completely different position to Rowe's. It is this feeling of being in some way responsible that makes Ungers' work more relevant than ever. From '63 onwards, using the possibilities offered to him by his teaching activity, Ungers confronted some of the greatest challenges of the time, probed possibilities, generated hypotheses, rationally weighed alternatives, and thus built up a remarkable design background. Even half a century ago, Ungers was able to perceive the problems generated by uncontrolled urban development, ruthless individualism, the logic of profit, and what would have been the direct consequence of an unrestrained consumption philosophy: the depletion and deterioration of natural resources, among them soil. Re-reading some of Ungers' passages and statements, these appear more prophetic today than ever before - precisely in the meaning given to this term by Sébastien Marot (2019) in *Taking the Country's Side: Agriculture and Architecture*¹² - and suggest that perhaps, after years of blind faith in technological progress, it is worth exploring some of the alternative models proposed.

It was precisely the U.S. period that allowed him to reflect and rethink much of his work, directly involved in the controversies that took place in Berlin¹³ [Fig. 1]. This phase proved particularly eclectic and fertile not only for O.M. Ungers but also for Liselotte Ungers, his intellectual and life companion. It was precisely during this period that two fundamental publications, still little known and studied to this day, within Ungers' oeuvre came to life. The first was *Kommunen in der Neuen Welt. 1740 - 1972*, published in 1972 by both authors and the second *Die Rückkehr des Roten Mannes: Indianer in den USA*, published in 1974 edited entirely by Liselotte Ungers [Fig. 2, 3].

10 Oswald Mathias Ungers, "He Who Did Not Understand the Zeitgeist," in *Reckoning with Colin Rowe: Ten Architects Take Position*, ed. Emmanuel Petit (New York: Routledge; 1st edition, March 4, 2015), 65-73.

11 Ungers, "He Who Did Not Understand the Zeitgeist", 65-73.

12 Sébastien Marot, *Taking the Country's Side: Agriculture and Architecture* (Barcelona: Polígrafa Ediciones, 2019), 7.

13 See the interview with Sarah Diamant on 22 July 1969. The interview is part of a larger series for the "Challenge to Governance Oral History Project". O. M. Ungers traces the political and student movements in Berlin by comparing them with those in America, as well as making his position explicit. Oswald Mathias Ungers, in *Challenge to Governance Oral History Project*, ed. Sarah Diamant (Ithaca, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Archives 13-6-1285, 22 July 1969).

Utopia Is the Reality of Tomorrow¹⁴

Kommunen in der Neuen Welt. 1740 - 1972 is a collection of the main utopian socialist communes settled from the 18th century onwards in the New World, the United States of America, and of all those communes that were emerging in the same years that found their roots in these previous experiences.

What emerges is an extremely concise overview, sometimes branded as superficial and lightweight, writes J.M. Carandell "But before indicating what is most interesting to learn from this work, I would like to dwell for a moment on two points, which may perhaps stem from the eminently panoramic nature of the work, or from a certain superficiality of the authors"¹⁵ and again Dolores Hayden, "Unfortunately the authors seem to have approached their material with more concern for style than for social purpose. The unique achievement of the communitarians was to unite societal and environmental innovation; a survey which fails to demonstrate this unity misses the point"¹⁶.

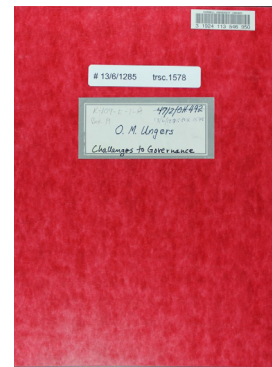
These complaints may prove well-founded if one gives the text the value of an essay with a historical-sociological framework, whose aim is to demonstrate through an analysis how political, social and ideological instances are reflected in the distribution and composition of architectural spaces, however, the text was not written with this assumption. Although the authors never specified their intent, one immediately notices the unusual disorganicity with which the topics are presented, the lack of notes and references to support the drafting of the publication, the scarcity of schemes and reworkings conducted by the authors, as well as the journalistic approach of the writings, which make it unthinkable to inscribe the text within the non-fiction genre. It should also be pointed out that, before being collected under a unique publication, the texts had been published by the Swiss magazine *WERK* in the form of six articles that came out in sequence from August 1970 until March 1971, and that the same had previously been published in October 1970 as a summary by another German magazine, *Baumeister*, corroborating the aforementioned statements. The articles were initially published under the title *Utopische Kommunen in Amerika 1800-1900*, representing one of the most evident and direct links between Ungers and the concept of utopia. For the authors communities earn the designation of utopias when they "derive their ideals not from what is, but from what could be"¹⁷. This assertion, directly excerpted from Karl Mannheim's influential work *Ideology and Utopia*, underscores Ungers' awareness of the theoretical foundations underpinning discussions on utopia.

¹⁴ In explaining the motivation behind the design of the Märkische Viertel, Ungers articulates a profound perspective: 'Utopia is tomorrow's reality'. This statement encapsulates his vision and underlines the principles behind his architectural discourse. See: Office national de radiodiffusion télévision française, *Interview with the German architect Oswald Mathias Ungers on the streets of Berlin*, Eurêka, September 23, 1969, Oswald Mathias Ungers | INA, video, 0:39, Oswald Mathias Ungers | INA.

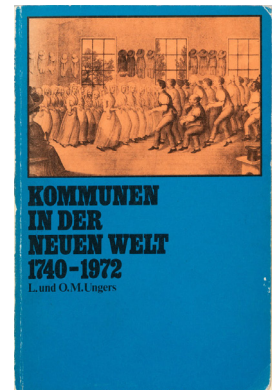
¹⁵ Liselotte Ungers, Oswald Mathias Ungers, Prólogo de J. M. Carandell, *Comunas* (Madrid: A. Redondo Beta, 1972), 5.

¹⁶ Dolores Hayden, "Hayden v. Ungers early communes in the USA," *Architectural Design*, no. 8 (1973): 123.

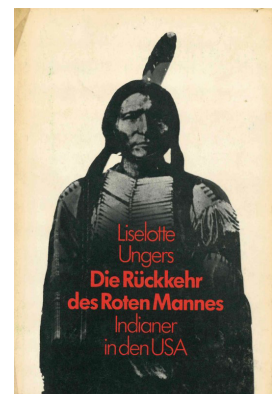
¹⁷ Liselotte Ungers, Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Communes in the New World, 1740 - 1972*, translated by Winston Hampel, edited by Winston Hampel and Jack Self (London: REAL Foundation, February 29 2020), 23. First Edition: Liselotte Ungers, Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Kommunen in der Neuen Welt, 1740-1971* (Colonia: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1972).



1



2



3

Fig. 1,2,3

Cover page of Challenge to Governance Oral History Project. © Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Archives 13-6-1285.

Cover page of Kommunen in der Neuen Welt. 1740 - 1972 © Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft (UAA).

Cover page of Die Rückkehr des Roten Mannes: Indianer in den USA © Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft (UAA).

However, this is not the first time that Ungers discusses Utopia, or that he tries to give his own personal definition of the term. The sentence that gives this paragraph its title is extracted from an interview conducted by Oswald Mathias Ungers for the *Office national de radiodiffusion télévision française* in September '69. In the interview Ungers asserts that "Utopia is the reality of tomorrow. It isn't science fiction, it isn't a world which would exist outside the world with which we are confronted"¹⁸.

This statement aligns with Karl Mannheim's exploration of the transformative nature of utopian thought, as evidenced in his analysis of Alphonse de Lamartine's words, "Les utopies ne sont souvent que des vérités prématurées"¹⁹, wherein Mannheim elaborates on the concept that "The utopias of today become the reality of tomorrow"²⁰. Furthermore, Mannheim observes a shift from a merely formal liberal conception of the future to a more concrete attitude stating:

Here we find ourselves faced with an increasingly concrete attitude. Although this implementation of the present by means of the future is, in principle, imposed by the will and an imaginative aspiration, nevertheless this finalistic launch acts as a selective element in research and action. According to this view, the future is always being assayed in the present²¹.

Given these considerations, it seems plausible that the intent of the collection *Kommunen in der Neuen Welt. 1740 - 1972* may be different, or at the very least, invites a nuanced understanding. The ultimate purpose of this publication is to acquaint with the existence, not of mere utopias but of concrete realities, encapsulating the myriad difficulties and imperfections that arise when, out of necessity, these experiences confront the real rather than the hypothetical [Fig. 4]. The essential orientation for interpreting this text extends beyond a mere compilation of documentation about the individual communes, an area for which more exhaustive and methodically structured bibliographies are certainly available²². Instead, the focus is on clarifying the processes underlying these communitarian experiences which, despite the interruptions and setbacks in certain historical periods, were never destined to disappear. As the authors claim, what links all forms of communes, past, present, and future, as well as those established in the new world and those belonging to the older one, is to reject the conventional norms of the current social reality and acting as concrete alternatives to it, in order to prove that "there is a possibility of

18 Office national de radiodiffusion télévision française, Interview with the German architect Oswald Mathias Ungers on the streets of Berlin, Euréka, September 23, 1969, Oswald Mathias Ungers | INA, video, Oswald Mathias Ungers | INA.

19 Utopias are often premature truths. See: Karl Mannheim, "La mentalità utopica", in *Ideologia e Utopia*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1957), 205.

20 Mannheim, "La mentalità utopica", 205.

21 Mannheim, "La mentalità utopica", 249.

22 For a more comprehensive knowledge of the history of utopian socialist communes, see Dolores Hayden's seminal text: Hayden, Dolores. *Seven American Utopias: The Architecture of Communitarian Socialism, 1790 - 1975* (Cambridge-MA: The MIT Press, 1979).

Fig. 4

Some significant frames from the Interview with the German architect Oswald Mathias Ungers on the streets of Berlin. © Office national de radiodiffusion télévision française.



co-existence of people which is not based on the ideology of profit and competition"²³.

During that specific period, the Ungers were not focused on rigorously reconstructing the history of communes. Instead, their primary interest lay in exploring alternative pathways for future development of potential solutions to design problems expected in both contemporary and future contexts. This is because Ungers strongly believed that "the task of the town planner is to foresee today this reality of tomorrow"²⁴.

It is here that O.M. Ungers' very personal *modus operandi* emerges once again, rooted in a more than rational approach when faced with the complexity of reality. What Ungers is doing is nothing more than beginning to catalogue, through what is intended to be a collection, an abacus, a series of case studies, the material to form the basis of future personal elaborations. From this standpoint, the reported experiences should be construed as a fundamental starting point. In essence, the text serves as a catalyst for broader reflections that will later have significant repercussions in his idea of urban design.

Utopia as a Tool

This is not the first time that Ungers deals with Utopia to solve design problems, but unlike many of his colleagues who see Utopia as the ultimate goal, Ungers glimpses the possibilities of what it could be: a tool. During April 1968, O.M. Ungers was a visiting critic at Cornell University where he worked for five weeks on a project with students for a small American city, *ITHACA N.Y.* A recurring theme in Ungers' research is undoubtedly that of "big numbers", as is evident from the publication of *Grossformen in Wohnungsbau* from December '66 or from his involvement in the construction of the building complex within *Märkische Viertel* from '63 to '76. At a time when demographic studies predicted a staggering increase in population in a few years, it is not strange that the most pressing question seemed to be how to design to accommodate more people and more products in the years to come.

Utopian models for architecture and urban development must of necessity be based on assumptions, but can never approximate the complexity of any 'reality', since that reality is never really able to be determined...When new models are proposed they invariably challenge the old system of order and often therefore evoke instant rejection. This has been the case with utopian schemes proposed in the past and is certainly a potential response to this proposal. One distinction should be pointed out, however. In relation to other recent utopias, if indeed there are any, and in relation to 'megastructure' proposals in particular, this case has a highly rational development of the argument implicit in its assumptions...This proposal has another distinction

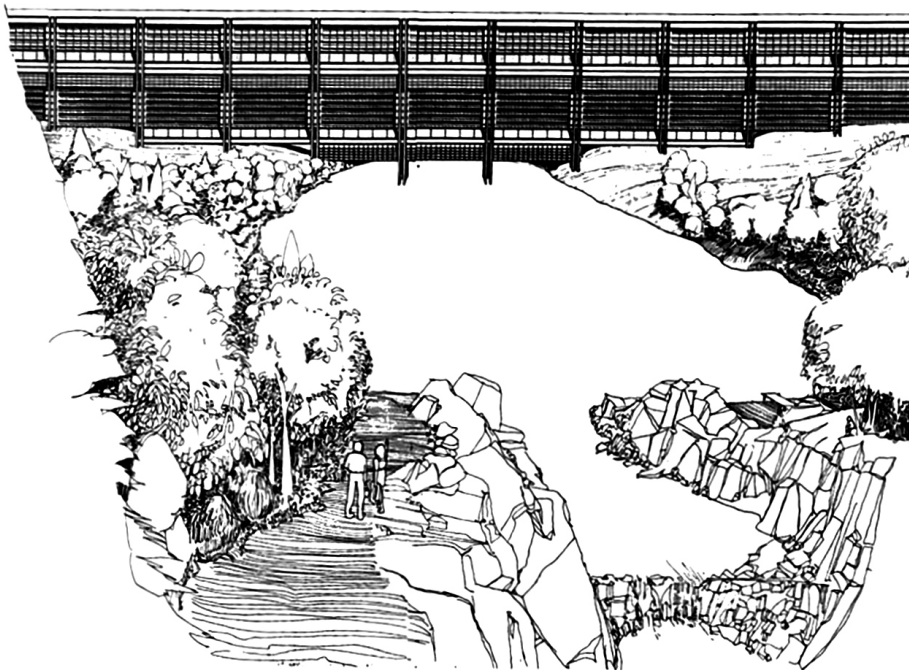
23 Liselotte Ungers, Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Communes in the New World, 1740 – 1972*, 25.

24 Office national de radiodiffusion télévision française, *Interview with the German architect Oswald Mathias Ungers on the streets of Berlin*, Eurêka, September 23, 1969, Oswald Mathias Ungers | INA, video, Oswald Mathias Ungers | INA.

in that it is more conceivable than utopian schemes which become a kind of science fiction built around inventions of technological fantasy²⁵.

As the opening comment by John P. Shaw points out, the proposed solution for *ITHACA N.Y.* uses utopia as a device to investigate some of the possibilities and alternatives, ultimately evaluating their feasibility within the realm of the real, in contrast with the utopian projects that saw their genesis in the same years. Despite the fact that this is the first time that Ungers is confronted with an urban reality that does not correspond to that of the European city, the *Genius loci*, is set as the basis for subsequent speculations. In this case the material to start from, the *As found*²⁶, becomes the topography of the site, which is taken to ensure a greater efficiency of the mega-structures. That is in contrast to the *tabula rasa* of all those utopian projects based on the standardisation and homogenisation of space, made possible by the use of a cartesian grid that aims to solve the same problems regardless of the different boundary conditions [Fig. 5].

Of this substantial difference Ungers is fully aware, as this short extract from *Berlin 1995* - a study conducted in September '69 by Ungers and his students - demonstrates,



5

25 John Preston Shaw, "Introduction II", in *Ithaca, N.Y.: Student Projects on a Small American City*, Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur series, no. 18 (Berlin: Technische Universität, November 1968), 5.

26 Alison Smithson and Peter Smithson, *With Hindsight... The 'As Found' in Architecture in The 'As Found' and the 'Found'* (Cambridge-MA: The MIT Press, 1990), 201.

Fig. 5

A perspective representation of the U2 Project within *ITHACA N.Y.'s* publication.
© Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft (UAA).

Starting with Yona Friedmann, a myriad of proposals for spatial building structures have been put forward. Most of them have attempted to combine construction and communication in such a way that structurally necessary building elements take over communication tasks at the same time. However, extensions or changes of use can only be made possible through the provision of huge superstructures, which can fulfill every type of use and every type of communication at any point. The waste incorporated in these structures requires enormous investments, of which only a part is used. Furthermore, terrestrial superstructures fix a unique state of development that can hardly be adapted to technical changes²⁷.

Many of these experiments, including Yona Friedman's *Paris Spatial City* ('59-'61) - which was inspired by the shortage of housing in France at the end of the 1950s and was never realised - contribute to such a detachment from the field of reality that they become true "sci-fi", whose results often turn out to be the opposite of what was hoped for: postponing the resolution of social and environmental criticalities to unspecified times, using models and technologies that are not yet, and perhaps will never be, available. Friedman's idea was to design what he described as "artificial topography"²⁸, a structure suspended in space that would delineate a new mapping of the territory by creating a homogeneous, continuous and indeterminate network, offering the city a prospect of unlimited growth designed to be built anywhere and to adapt to any climatic and environmental conditions.

It is precisely for this reason that the project for *Berlin 1995* sees the year 1995 as the choice for its future predictions. It is a statement against all those scenarios that placed the new millennium - the year 2000 - as a redeeming period, further contributing to the detachment from the current century, rejecting the connection between present and future and therefore dissociating themselves from reality. At the same time, the generalising manias of utopian projects deviate as much as possible from Ungers' characteristic *modus operandi*. As mentioned before his way of working always involves rigor, achieved firstly by gathering and cataloging information about the case study, such as its historical, political, social and cultural context. This information serves as the cornerstone for the ensuing design phase. Although inherently grounded in a Utopian approach, the design process consistently remains tethered to reality, thanks to the context generated by the analysis. This distinction sets it apart from other utopian projects proposed during the same period. In chapter four of the publication *Berlin 1995*, which goes under the name *Megastruktur*, Ungers tends to specify that the term megastructure "used in this work is not intended to indicate a universal super-development that is suitable for everything and "can" do everything, but rather to describe this new type of three-dimensional urban spatial planning"²⁹ placing a gap between itself and the utopian currents of the time.

27 Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Elemente der Bebauung in Berlin 1995 Planungsmodelle für eine Fünfmillionenstadt im Übergang zu den siebziger Jahren*, Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur, no. 25 (Berlin: Technische Universität, 1969), 91.

28 Yona Friedman, *Ville spatiale 1959-1960*, Frac Centre, collections.frac-centre.fr/collection-art-architecture/friedman-yona/rub-64.html?authID=72&ensembleID=164 (last access August, 2023).

29 Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Megastruktur in Berlin 1995 Planungsmodelle für eine Fünfmillionenstadt im Übergang zu den siebziger Jahren*, Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur series, no. 25 (Berlin: Technische Universität, 1969), 90.

We understand that Ungers is not looking for a panacea that can solve problems regardless of the context in which one finds oneself. Instead, he seeks principles that can inform the design process, aiming to create a more beneficial environment for both present and future inhabitants.

Throwaway Architecture

Ungers was aware of the numerous problems affecting the urban sphere as well as its periphery. More than fifty years later, we can confidently state that the announced crisis scenario has not been resolved, nor does it seem to have come to an end. Trends, already identified at the time, seem only to have been further confirmed. Since the 1960s, large cities have been experiencing permanent crises, due to the constant population growth and the attraction exerted by these large urban centers on neighbouring areas that contributed to the concentration of people, services, commodities, as well as cultural, political and social functions within a very small territory. This unhealthy form of accumulation had repercussions in the increasing precarious living conditions of the urban population, which faced increasing housing shortages, pollution, large-scale waste production within the city, and many other sociological problems of no less significance, such as the decay of human relations within communities and the dehumanisation of the self. A validation of Ungers' knowledge of these trends is the article written by Oswald Mathias Ungers in '71 for the German magazine *Transparent* entitled *Stadtprobleme in der pluralistischen Massengesellschaft*. Ungers placed the problem concerning the crisis of the city into a broader general framework, stating that "The crisis everyone is talking about does not seem to be limited to the city alone, it is rather the crisis of an extended continuum of decadence and excesses that has affected the entire arc from urban to rural areas"³⁰. Once again, the tout court thinker realises that the problem extends far beyond the boundaries of the metropolis and that, just as the causes cannot be solely traced back to erroneous urban planning, also the solutions must be sought using an interdisciplinary approach "the problems of the city are not limited to the city itself, as they have transformed into an environmental problem, therefore they can no longer be seen and addressed in isolation, but only in an integrated manner"³¹.

Although the focus of the writing is on American cities, the trend was the same in the settlements of large cities in Europe and elsewhere, as can easily be seen from some of the headlines of the time in the German magazine *Der Spiegel* of the time such as *Notstand im Verkehr. Sterben die Städte?/ Traffic emergency. Are cities dying?, Vergiftete Umwelt/ Poisoned environment, Sind die Städte noch zu retten?/ Can cities still be saved?, New York Tod einer Weltstadt?/ New York death of a global city?, Bedrohte Tiere - gefährdete Umwelt/Animals in*

30 Oswald Mathias Ungers, "Stadtprobleme in der pluralistischen Massengesellschaft," *Transparent Manuskripte für Architektur Theorie Kritik Polemik Umraum*, no. 5 (Vienna: Günther Feuerstein, 1971), 19.

31 Ungers, "Stadtprobleme in der pluralistischen Massengesellschaft," 19.

Danger - Environment in Danger, Wachstum - im Wohlstand ersticken?/ Growth - suffocating in well-being? offering an overview of the concerns that were already gripping public opinion in the early 1970s [Fig. 6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14]. After all, these were the same years during which a first ecological awareness began to emerge, the years of the oil crisis, the rise of the first environmental movements and the affirmation of the Greens in West Germany.

A similar cultural panorama could be also found in Italy, where the editorial *Lotus International* dedicated issues no. 8-9-10 to *the problem of the dwelling*. In particular, issue no. 8 entitled *Luogo e abitazione/The place of Houses* opened the renewal of the editorial which “resumes its journey, improved in its appearance and above all in the direction and rigour of its choices and investigations”³². The ambition of *Lotus*, as Bruno Alfieri stated, was to find a cultural synthesis with a precise reference to the “global situation that announced major disruptions as a result of demographic, social, technological, ecological reasons and the then barely hinted at scarcity of raw material resources”³³.

It is relevant to point out that one of the many contributions within the volume was the one by Oswald Mathias and Liselotte Ungers entitled *Le comuni del nuovo mondo*, in which appears - with a few pictures and illustrations added - an extreme summary of the homonymous publication translated into Italian. It becomes more and more evident how, in order to understand and attempt to solve the numerous problems caused by the consumer society, the study of alternative practices and experiences was considered essential not only by the authors, who have decided to collect these efforts under a publication, but also by many other exponents within the architectural debate of the time who have contributed to their dissemination.

As Ungers states:

Big cities are suffocating amidst the waste and discards of a consumerist and throwaway society. The ever-increasing and ruthless degradation of the environment, which an American scientist calls ... the landscape of ‘newness’, is ultimately the result of an ideology deeply absorbed in the acceptance of novelty for its own sake. Invention and rejection go hand in hand. Almost nothing is produced in the long run, and so many things end up in the trash, or are left as relics somewhere in the landscape³⁴.

It is precisely these relics, these scraps of consumer society, that are the main building material of many of the new communes described by Ungers, amongst which we can definitely remember the most popular *Drop City* but



32 Bruno Alfieri, “Luogo e abitazione/The place of Houses,” *Lotus International*, no. 8 (September 1974): 3.

33 Alfieri, “Luogo e abitazione/The place of Houses,” 3.

34 Ungers, “Stadtprobleme in der pluralistischen Massengesellschaft,” 9.

also other ones such as the lesser-known *Lama Foundation* and *Morning-Star*³⁵. Inside these communes geodesic structures, derived from the theorisations of Buckminster Fuller, are built using old sheet metal and metal cladding belonging to abandoned vehicles in the landscape [Fig. 15]. In this way, not only is the product of unrestrained industrialisation put back into circulation through an original work of recycling, but the myth of standardisation as a premise for future monotony is subverted, giving rise to unique and original artefacts that are able to become a shelter for those who decide to defect from the status quo. We can always refer to a sort of recycling model when we mention the so-called urban communes, which - unlike the prevailing imagery in which the commune is located within a locus amoenus, uncontaminated by the vices of the metropolis - settle right within the city. These communes, either due to the absence of vacant land within the urban fabric or for reasons of convenience and affordability, find themselves inhabiting old abandoned or disused houses within the city environment. Despite the fact that in this specific case the members of the communes have almost no power of decision regarding the conformation of the spaces they are going to inhabit, and therefore do not act on the actual composition of their living spaces, it is precisely through this act that they are able to activate a mechanism of reuse and care towards the existing that allows them to alter the prevailing order of things even within the metropolis itself.

Now that a broader overview highlights the insights at the margin of what surely remains the lesser-known and studied work of Oswald Mathias and Liselotte Ungers, we no longer struggle to contextualise the publication *Kommunen in der Neuen Welt. 1740 - 1972*, which has been seen until now as a foreign body within Ungers' organic work.



35 Wolf Gerischer, "Anti-industrializzazione: come crearsi un ambiente con le proprie mani rimettendo in ciclo prodotti industriali", *Lotus International* no. 8 (September 1974): 184-188. Also mentioned in the article: Liselotte Ungers and O.M. Ungers, "Neue Kommunen in den USA - Tendenzen und Trends," *Das Werk* 57 (September 1971): 627-631.

For a more extensive discussion of these realities see: Steve Baer, *Dome Cookbook*, (Corrales, NM: Lama Foundation, 1968). Peter Rabbit, *Drop City* (New York: The Olympia Press, 1971). Caroline Maniaque-Benton, *French Encounters with the American Counterculture 1960-1980* (Routledge, November 2011). Stewart Brand and Lloyd Kahn, *Whole Earth Catalog* (Fall 1969).

Fig. 6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14

Some of the front covers of the German magazine *Der Spiegel* published in the 1970s. © *Der Spiegel*.



The First American Communes

An almost unknown, though remarkable text, closely related to the previously discussed publication, published exactly two years later, is the essay *Die Rückkehr des Roten Mannes: Indianer in den USA*, totally edited by Liselotte Ungers. Through this text, Liselotte Ungers offers an overview of the violent events suffered by Native Americans as a result of their colonisation, while highlighting and exemplifying their culture, traditions and diverse social structures.

The two texts can be linked for several reasons, the first certainly is the geographical and cultural context from which they originate. They are both writings that probably would not have been published if the Ungers had not migrated to the United States of America between the 1960s and the 1970s. The material included within the two writings is in fact collected during the family's wandering journeys³⁶. Guided by curiosity and interest, the family began to visit the places where the old utopian communes, modern communes and Native American reservations were settled, collecting pamphlets and material for a better comprehension of those experiences. Many photographs were taken during these trips, mostly by O.M. Ungers, who in this research leaves more space to Liselotte Ungers' insights and follows her by documenting, through sketches and photographs, all the visited settlements. The second reason is the strong resonance that Native American stories acquire thanks to the rise of the student movement and the emerging counterculture. They became spokesmen for the rights of minority groups, thus giving new impetus to the Native struggle, of which movements such as *Red Power* or *Indian Power* became the representatives. In addition, it is precisely the New Communes that embrace Native American values and culture, as the authors themselves report "The desire to escape the meaningless consumer society and to find one's own values is mixed with various motivations...The image is the culture of the Indians based on nature, to which the 'hippie' generation is now giving a completely new value"³⁷.

It is quite clear from Liselotte Ungers' description that the very lifestyle, organisation and principles on which many of the American Indian tribes were based on corresponded to the fundamental points underlying the communes:

- the renunciation of any kind of violence and aggression, above all of wars;
- the abolition or limitation of private property;
- the rejection of competitive struggle, desire for profit, consumerism, inhumane mechanisation and exploitation³⁸.

The third reason linking the texts might be the most subtle of all, and is the a posteriori realisation that the utopian socialist communes, settled in the new world around the mid-1700s, were able to establish themselves - acquiring large

36 Alberto Geuna, Giulia La Delfa, and Niccolò Suraci, "Go West, Omu", *San Rocco* 66 (Spring 2018): 62-68.

37 Liselotte Ungers, Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Communes in the New World, 1740 – 1972*, 101.

38 Liselotte Ungers, Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Communes in the New World, 1740 – 1972*, 20.

Fig. 15

The wreckage of an abandoned car in the landscape. "Transparent" no. 5 (1971), 1. © Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft (UAA).

pieces of land at a good price - only because the land was made available as a result of the extermination and conquest of the native peoples, began in 1492 with the colonisation of the Americas. The different experiences of European utopian socialism are thus only possible thanks to the dystopia experienced by the Native Americans a few centuries earlier, in a similar manner to Thomas More's novel in which the island of Utopia is only made possible as a result of the colonisation and subjugation - by Utopo, after whom the island is named - of the inhabitants of Abraxa. The text can therefore be understood as an addition to the study of communes in the New World, a prologue, going on to mark the customs of the commune who first of all preceded the later ones: that of the American Indian people. In spite of years of abuse and oppression confined to small reservations "the 'communal' lifestyle of the Indians, in stark contrast to the 'American way of life' based on profit and competition, had survived. The Americans identified Indian collectivism as barbarism, while calling their way of life 'civilized'"³⁹.

All this was happening precisely at a time when, as Liselotte Ungers notes,

In their own country, progressive immigrants and Americans were testing and realising both the teachings of early Christianity and socialism in the form of communes, because they found the roots of selfishness in private property competition and social injustice, while at that same time, politicians and officials had not the slightest doubt about the exclusive correctness of the capitalist system⁴⁰.

Although to a lesser extent than the '72 publication, in which her husband was personally involved, once again the author seems interested in how certain ideologies or social structures are reflected in the physical construction of communities, as the following excerpt suggests

Pueblo - the Spanish word for village - serves as a designation for all small or large settlements found in New Mexico along the Rio Grande and in Arizona on the highlands, the mesas, although their inhabitants belonged to different Indian tribes and language families... Up to 5,000 people lived in these terraced buildings - America's first 'apartment complexes'⁴¹.

This is why, among the few pictures accompanying the book, we find some photographs depicting more or less typical native dwellings or some plans showing the urban distribution of the settlements brilliantly named as "America's first apartment complexes or siedlung"⁴² by Liselotte Ungers herself, in a similar way to what has been done with the publication *Kommunen in der neuen Welt*. The assumptions that fueled such a marked interest in the observation and

39 Liselotte Ungers, *Die Rückkehr des Roten Mannes: Indianer in den USA* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1974), 54.

40 Ungers, *Die Rückkehr des Roten Mannes*, 55.

41 Ungers, *Die Rückkehr des Roten Mannes*, 18.

42 Ungers, *Die Rückkehr des Roten Mannes*, 121-125.

cataloguing of these settlements, seen as future suggestions and models for the development of new urban prototypes, are thus confirmed, as Pierluigi Nicolini confirms:

There can be no doubt that the investigation of these collective enclaves—engaged in the laborious development of models of what they believed to be the perfect city - and the study of the interaction between ideology and architecture and between social planning and physical planning in the American utopian communities, stimulated the development of O. M. Ungers's architectural and urbanistic ideas⁴³.

A Retrospective for the Future

1977 was the year in which Ungers interrupted his teaching period in the United States and returned with his family to Germany, more precisely to Cologne. 1977 was also the year that saw the publication of what remains one of the most forward-looking and subversive urban manifestos of the last century *Die Stadt in der Stadt; Berlin, der Grüne Stadtarchipel*. The strength of the manifesto, and most probably the real reason why it is periodically rediscovered and studied, is that it lays the foundations for an alternative model of urban planning, in fact it was "One of the first manifesto projects to explicitly address the negative growth of cities, along with a number of other problems that have become only more pronounced since then"⁴⁴.

Ungers overturns the dominant paradigm of infinite growth - which is still at the basis of our economic, social and urban models today - and places the concept of degrowth, compression and reduction at the basis of his model of urbanism. This was the premise that allowed him to outline an alternative discourse to urban renewal, then at the core of the architectural debate, developing a model based on the contraction of the city that was diametrically opposed to that of urban sprawl or densification. "Any future "plan" for Berlin has to be a plan for a city in retrenchment"⁴⁵, this is how the manifesto laconically opens, once again the city of Berlin is chosen as a prototype for the development of future urban models. The real task of this proposal, however, lies in acting as a laboratory for future urban planning also in contexts that are different from the city of Berlin, since this is not the only city facing the dynamics of the so-called shrinking city. It is a model that stands as part of a scenario for a Zero-Growth- Europe.

And it is exactly this concept of degrowth planning that makes it, now more than ever, desirable as a contemporary model. As Ungers pointed out back in '77

43 Pierluigi Nicolini, "Kommunen in der neuen Welt: Looking for a New World," in *The Other Architect: Another Way of Building Architecture*, ed. Giovanna Borasi (Montréal: Canadian Centre for Architecture & Spector Books, 2015), 387.

44 Florian Hertweck and Sébastien Marot, *The City in the City Berlin: A Green Archipelago. A manifesto (1977) by Oswald Mathias Ungers and Rem Koolhaas* (Zurich: Lars Müller, 2013), 9.

45 Hertweck and Marot, *The City in the City Berlin*, 12. As reported by Florian Hertweck at that time Berlin could be defined as a shrinking city "The population numbers for Berlin fell only slightly between 1961-the year in which the Wall was built-and 1970 (from 2.187 million to 2.115 million), whereas the city lost approximately 219,000 inhabitants by the end of the 1970s. This equates to a population decline of more than ten percent".

The present idea that inner-city areas can only be rehabilitated through more construction that restores a primordial state is counterproductive and should be exorcised. On the contrary: in the context of a program of selective deflation of urban pressure, even of a partial dismantling of malfunctioning parts of the present city, Berlin's human shrinkage offers a clear and unique opportunity to identify and 'weed out' those parts of the city that are now substandard, for architectural or other reasons, and to intensify and even complete the fragments that would be preserved. The remaining enclaves that are thus saved and disengaged would lie like islands on the otherwise liberated plain of the city, and form an archipelago of architectures in a green lagoon of natures⁴⁶.

At first glance, this proposal might remind the models of naturalist town planning, and among them the one proposed by Frank Lloyd Wright, Broadacres City on which Wright began working in 1931 and which continued to be implemented until his death in '59, can be taken as an emblematic example. Although the word "city" remains embedded in the concept, in practice the model suppresses any idea of the city that has been built up over the centuries, just as it suppresses the idea of the countryside that has always participated, although dialectically, in the definition of the city itself. Even though in a different way to what happens in other models, such as the aforementioned Friedman's Spatial City, Wright's model also makes use of a super-imposed grid. Thus this time the grid aims to accommodate the topography of the territory, it does not abandon the cartesian matrix made of a rational geometric fragmentation, remaining a form of tabula rasa that in this particular case forgets to level, flatten and standardise the conformation of the territory. The grid is based on the minimum unit of the acre, an essential space that every citizen should be able to possess. Within this grid, what is proposed is a decentralised, dispersed and therefore diffuse urbanism, a model of suburbanism or disurbanism. The functioning of this model is thus based on the assumption of a universal transport and telecommunications network equally extended and reproducible over the entire globe, which allows the circulation of people, goods, ideas within an ever-expanding system, of which the machine becomes the privileged vector. Therefore, the network of civil infrastructural works is fundamental, since without these, there would be no contact between the inhabitants of the Broadacre "community", who in fact live isolated in comfortable fences - of an acre in size - symbolising more an extreme individualism than a democratisation of living. This vision of the ideal city, as Ungers himself reports, has allowed the emergence of a widespread urbanisation model that

supported a dream which never can be realized for all except a small privileged society minority and it probably generates more frustration than satisfaction. The golden days of suburbia promoted by the early naturalist movement, presented in the most extreme form by Frank Lloyd

46 Hertweck and Marot, *The City in the City Berlin* (Zurich: Lars Müller, 2013), 12.

Wright are gone...The traditional vision of Suburbia that once promised attractive homes and free life style for millions has reached a stage where it turned out to be: but an illusion"⁴⁷.

In the first instance, the plan for the city of Berlin proposed by Ungers is not a plan for a new city, but a plan for a city that already exists, a plan that speaks to us of care and reuse. In addition, the manifesto for the city of Berlin does not propose itself as universal, it does not propose a grid to superimpose on a territory, remaining anchored in a "concrete and creative temporality"⁴⁸. Offering itself as a laboratory experiment in a given space and time, removes the recourse to a unique model in the fertile intuition that there will not be a typical city of the future but there will be as many as the particular cases. Again, we see how Ungers' particular rapport with the utopian medium transforms the manifesto into a hybrid work "oscillating between an evocation of a contemplative Utopia and a strategic arsenal of arguments for a project developed for a specific city in a given set of circumstances"⁴⁹, resonating with Karl Mannheim's thoughts. Similarly, the cities within the city, the islands, or as O.M. Ungers prefers to call them *the enclaves* do not constitute "an open urban system, in which many different places together form a diversified and complex urban environment. It is also, from a political and social point of view, a pluralist concept, in which many different ideological visions find their own places next to one another"⁵⁰.

It is finally clear that the manifesto is nothing more than the conclusion of a path and the synthesis of all the reflections conducted during the American decade: it is his ultimate proposal, his *Rational Utopia*, the model that after years of hypothetical imagined scenarios chooses to favor, and within which one cannot deny the fundamental importance played by the study of the communard utopia in America and elsewhere [Fig. 16,17,18].

47 Oswald Mathias Ungers, "Biology and Society Lecture, January 4, 1971/Habitations: Alternatives in Mass Societies, or what is a home," Ungers-Archiv, 8-9.

48 Françoise Choay, *L'urbanistica in discussione, La città: utopia e realtà* (Turin: Einaudi, 1973), 58.

49 Hertweck and Marot, *The City in the City Berlin*, 25.

50 Hertweck and Marot, *The City in the City Berlin*, 96.



16 |



17 |



18 |

Fig. 16,17,18

Settlements in comparison.
All photos were taken by the Ungers.

Starting from the top:

The pueblo of Taos or as defined by Liselotte Ungers "America's first 'apartment complexes'" © Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft (UAA).

The Wolf Creek colony settlements of the Hutterites © Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft (UAA).

The Love Inn communal living © Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft (UAA).

Bibliography

- Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver's Travels*. First complete Italian version edited by Aldo Valori. Rome: Formiggini, 1921.
- Mannheim, Karl. *Ideologia e Utopia*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1957.
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias. *Grossformen im Wohnungsbau*, Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur series, no. 5, Berlin: Technische Universität, 1966.
- Die aufsässigen Studenten von Berlin, *Der Spiegel*, no. 24 (June 5, 1967).
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias. *Internationaler Kongress Architekturtheorie*, Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur series, no. 14, Berlin: Technische Universität, June 1968.
- Aktion 507. *Diagnose zum Bauen in West-Berlin*, Berlin: Technische Universität, September 1968.
- Baer, Steve. *Dome Cookbook*. Corrales, NM: Lama Foundation, 1968.
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias, and Jhon P. Shaw. *Ithaca, N.Y.: student projects on a small American city*, Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur series, no. 18, Berlin: Technische Universität, November 1968.
- Office national de radiodiffusion télévision française. *Interview with the German architect Oswald Mathias Ungers on the streets of Berlin*. INA.fr, Eurêka 23 September 1969. Video, 4:51. Oswald Mathias Ungers | INA.
- Brand, Stewart, and Lloyd Kahn. *Whole Earth Catalog* (Fall 1969).
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias. *Berlin 1995 Planungsmodelle für eine Fünfmillionenstadt im Übergang zu den siebziger Jahren*, Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur series no. 25, Berlin: Technische Universität, 1969.
- Friedman, Yona. *Ville spatiale 1959-1960*, Frac Centre, collections.frac-centre.fr/collection-art-architecture/friedman-yona/rub-64.html?authID=72&ensembleID=164, last access August 2023.
- Ungers, Liselotte, and Oswald Mathias Ungers. "Neue Kommunen in den USA - Tendenzen und Trends." *Das Werk* 57, September 1971.
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias. "Stadtprobleme in der pluralistischen Massengesellschaft", *Transparent Manuskripte für Architektur Theorie Kritik Polemik Umraum*, no. 5, (1971): 1-19.
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias. *Biology and Society Lecture, January 4, 1971/Habitations: Alternatives in Mass Societies, or what is a home*, Cologne: Ungers-Archiv, 1971.
- Rabbit, Peter. *Drop City*. New York: The Olympia Press, 1971.
- Ungers, Liselotte, and Oswald Mathias Ungers. *Comunas. Prólogo de J. M. Carandell*. Madrid: A. Redondo. Beta, 1972.
- Ungers, Liselotte, and Oswald Mathias Ungers. *Kommunen in der Neuen Welt, 1740- 1971*. Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1972.
- Hayden, Dolores. "Hayden v. Ungers early communes in the USA", *Architectural Design*, no. 8, (February 1973): 123.
- Choay, Françoise. *La città: utopie e realtà*. Turin: Einaudi, 1973.
- Alfieri, Bruno. "Luogo e abitazione/The place of Houses", *Lotus* no. 8, (Settembre 1974).
- Ungers, Liselotte. *Die Rückkehr des Roten Mannes: Indianer in den USA*. Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1974.
- Smithson, Allison, and Peter Smithson. *With Hindsight... The 'As Found' in Architecture in The 'As Found' and the 'Found'*, The MIT Press, 1990.
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias, Rem Koolhaas and Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Die Rationalisierung des Bestehenden*. Oswald Mathias Ungers in Gespräch mit Rem Koolhaas und Hans Ulrich Obrist, *ARCH+*, no. 179, (July 2006).
- Maniaque-Benton, Caroline. *French Encounters with the American Counterculture 1960-1980*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Hertweck, Florian, and Sébastien Marot, eds. *The City in the City Berlin: A Green Archipelago. A manifesto (1977) by Oswald Mathias Ungers and Rem Koolhaas*. Zurich: Lars Müller, 2013.
- Nicolin, Pierluigi. "Kommunen in der neuen Welt: Looking for a New World". In *The Other Architect: Another Way of Building Architecture*, edited by Giovanna Borasi. Montréal: Canadian Centre for Architecture & Spector Books, 2015.
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias. "He Who Did Not Understand the Zeitgeist." In *Reckoning with Colin Rowe: Ten Architects Take Position*, edited by Emmanuel Petit. New York: Routledge, March 4, 2015.
- Marot, Sébastien. *Taking the Country's Side: Agriculture and Architecture*. Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 2019.
- Ungers, Liselotte, and Oswald Mathias Ungers. *Communes in the New World, 1740-1972*. Translated by Winston Hampel. Edited by Winston Hampel and Jack Self. REAL, February 29, 2020.
- More, Thomas. *Utopia*, First book. Trento: Timeo, 2023.

Reviving Ungers' Visions: Catalyst for Architectural Innovation at IBA 87 among Postmodern Architects

Architectural Theory, Urbanism, O.M. Ungers, IBA 87, Postmodernism

/Abstract

This contribution explores the impact of architect Oswald Mathias Ungers and his innovative urban concepts on contemporary city planning. Ungers, whose career began in the 1960s, played a pivotal role in bridging the gap between modernism and postmodernism while fostering a rich exchange of ideas between American and European architectural circles. He developed significant urban experiments, including The Urban Villa, Urban Garden, Grossform, Archipel City, and City within the City. These projects often used Berlin as a testing ground, transforming the city into a laboratory for his visionary ideas. Ungers' influence extended beyond conventional architectural practice; this position granted him influence within a network of urban theorists who shaped the urban discourse of the late 20th century. A defining moment occurred in the 1980s with the IBA 87 exhibition in Berlin. This event provided a platform for Ungers' ideas to permeate the architectural community. Architects like Aldo Rossi, Peter Eisenman, John Hejduk, and Rem Koolhaas, who were working on adjacent projects, diverged from the rules of the competition and proposed innovative systems, fed by Ungers concepts. The architectural visions and methodologies that Ungers pioneered remain highly relevant today as cities grapple with a multitude of challenges. By revisiting Ungers' groundbreaking concepts and approaches, contemporary urban planners and architects can find valuable insights and inspiration to address the pressing issues facing our cities in the 21st century.

/Author

Simon Ganne
Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Lyon
Simon.ganne@hotmail.fr
Benjamin Chavardès
Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Lyon
Benjamin.chavardes@lyon.archi.fr

Simon Ganne is an architect from France. He attended the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Lyon and the Institut National des Sciences Appliquées de Lyon, from where he holds a professional Dipl.-Ing. (Arch.) degree. He participated in a one-year exchange program at Politecnico di Milano, during which he authored the paper "The Search for a Phenomenon for a Sustainable Architecture" for a course instructed by Andrea Canclini. His graduate research, titled "From Theory to the Block: The Influence of O.M.U in Postmodern Berlin", delved into architectural theory within the context of the IBA 87 exhibition in Berlin and garnered honors in the master's program "Architecture Heritage, Theory, and Creation".

Benjamin Chavardès is a professor at the Ecole nationale supérieure d'architecture de Lyon and a member of LAURE-EVS (Lyon architecture urbanism research). His research focuses on the history and theory of postmodern architecture, intervention in the built heritage and religious architecture. He holds the SACRES chair (Architectural solutions for the design and conversion of sacred spaces). He is coordinator of the international scientific and educational network "Architecture Heritage and Creation". He is the author of *Quand le post-modernise s'expose* (Éditions de l'Espérou, 2015) and *L'Italie post-moderne*. Paolo Portoghesi, architecte, historien, théoricien (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2022). He is co-author of *L'école d'architecture de Lyon. Un manifeste architectural* (Libel, 2020). He co-edited *L'avenir des églises. État des lieux, stratégies et programmes de reconversion* (Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2019), *Les enjeux théoriques de la réhabilitation* (Presses architecturales de Lyon, 2019), "Héritages Théoriques / Theoretical legacies" (2019) of *Cahiers de la Recherche Architecturale, Urbaine et Paysagère*, of which he is a member of the editorial board, *Ici par ailleurs* (Éditions du Patrimoine, 2020) and *Entre Rome et Las Vegas* (ENSA Paris-Malaquais, 2021).



<https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/18174> | ISSN 2611-0075
Copyright © 2023 Simon Ganne, Benjamin Chavardès

Introduction

The classification of architects and their architectural contributions in the postmodern era presents a multifaceted and subjective challenge. This complexity is particularly pronounced when examining the work of architect Oswald Mathias Ungers, a pivotal figure whose career spanned the transition between two architectural epochs. He occupies an ambiguous yet profoundly influential position in the architectural landscape, which can be traced back to his radical vision of the contemporary city and the development of concepts that nourished the theoretical debates of the 1970s. Ungers' architectural and theoretical contributions defy easy categorization, exemplified by the intricate debates surrounding his influence on contemporaries like Rem Koolhaas, as articulated by Lara Schrijver¹.

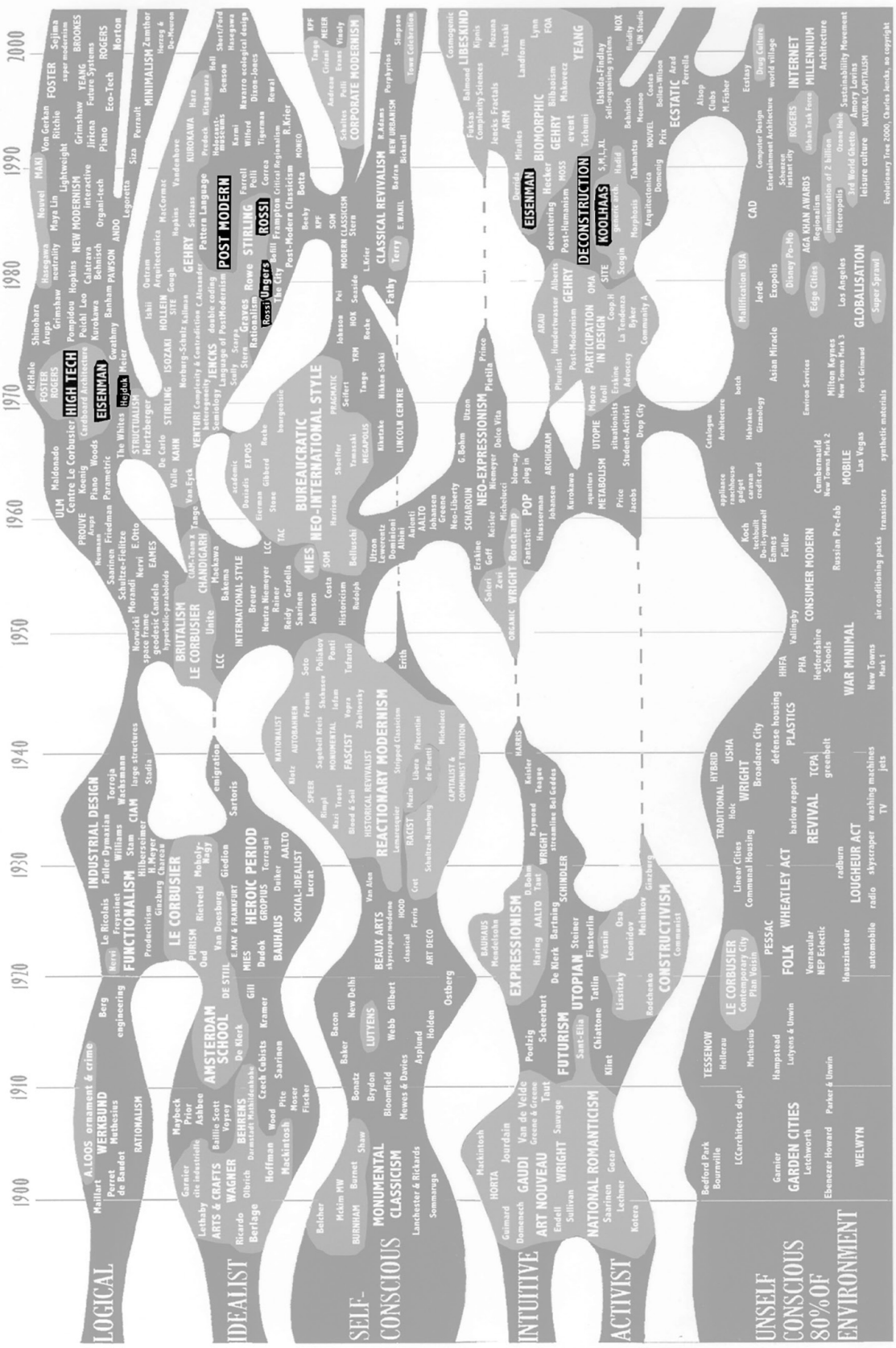
In the midst of a complex political environment, Ungers selected Berlin as his primary experimental ground. After the World War II, the city evolved into a crucible of urban experimentation, reaching its peak with the International Bauausstellung in 1987 (IBA 87). This landmark exhibition, directed by the architect Josef Paul Kleihues, aimed to reimagine social housing in West Berlin under the concept of "Critical Reconstruction" – a return to the pre-World War II city composed of places and streets through architectural constructions. This widespread competition attracted a cohort of architects eager to explore new urban paradigms. Among them, notable architects such as Aldo Rossi, Rem Koolhaas, Peter Eisenman, and John Hejduk converged in the vicinity of Checkpoint Charlie, deliberately defying competition guidelines to develop experimental projects.

This research focuses on elucidating the connections Ungers had with these architects before IBA 87, disseminating theories about the metropolis that bridged European and American contexts. Furthermore, by reassessing Charles Jencks' *Evolutionary Tree to the Year 2000* [Fig. 1] which accentuates the differences between each architect, this article seeks to establish the influence exerted by Ungers on the IBA 87 design projects of the four architects. While sharing a resonance of theoretical concepts, they exhibit diverse formal styles, challenging the "Critical Reconstruction" concept set by Kleihues.

Oswald Mathias Ungers emerges as a foundational figure², whose urban visions challenge established paradigms with an innovative analysis of the interplays of infrastructure, landscape, and the city.

1 Lara Schrijver, "OMA as tribute to OMA: exploring resonances in the work of Koolhaas and Ungers", *The Journal of Architecture* 13, no. 3 (July 2008): 235.

2 "Nevertheless, his presence at Team 10 meetings (and as organizer of the 1965 Team 10 meeting in Berlin and a seminar at Cornell in 1971-1972) as well as the Charlottesville meetings organized by Peter Eisenman, testifies to his wide-ranging influence and his transatlantic significance." in Lara Schrijver, *Oswald Mathias Ungers and Rem Koolhaas, Recalibrating architecture in the 1970s* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2021), 12.



Ungers' Visions

The search of a theoretical framework guiding architectural project is an invariant in Ungers' methodology. This research, mainly focused on interactions between architecture and its urban context, is illustrated by several influential concepts he developed and implemented. In 1963, following a period of designing residential houses, Ungers participated in the Grünzug Süd competition (Cologne), a significant project signaling his intention to integrate city planning with theoretical research. Through a linear sequence of various city fragments (high-rises, courtyard blocks, row houses), he formulated a robust morphological approach aimed at creating a harmonious complexity of architectural forms³. Despite not winning the competition, he established a process of "research by design," replicated in numerous urban design projects. Operating at various scales, he derived forms to achieve a multi-layered composition, meant to be autonomous from functionality, later theorized in *"The City as a Work of Art"*⁴.

Continuing his research with an analysis of Berlin, a city he described as a chaotic accumulation of objects contributing to its unique character, Ungers retained the principle of Grünzug Süd for creating a complex, densified city but introduced a more generic approach in a 1966 essay. In this significant year for urban theories⁵ he introduced the concept of *Grossform*⁶, a global theory of the concept he developed in Cologne. In 1973, Ungers designed the Landwehrkanal-Tiergarten District project in Berlin, proposing a sequence of monumental architectural interventions along the canal with various typologies punctuating the context. Starting with architectural elements, Ungers crafted complex environments, conceiving the city as a direct consequence of architecture⁷. Ungers' urban visions reached a radical pinnacle in 1977 when he collaborated with his assistant, Rem Koolhaas, to publish their seminal work, *"The City Within the City, Berlin, a Green Archipelago"*. Departing from the notion of a unified city, Ungers viewed Berlin as an enclosed and shrinking city, inspiring a re-evaluation of the city as an archipelago, a city within the city. Koolhaas later described the archipelago as one of the most powerful notions in urban thinking, a blueprint for the New European metropolis⁸.

This concept introduced the idea of city islands, each delineating blocks with a distinct identity, while the abstract metropolitan area would be transformed into a sea of vegetation. This vision advocates for strategic densification, reshaping

3 Oswald Mathias Ungers, "Grünzug Süd Competition, Cologne Zollstock 1962-1965", in *Team 10, 1953-81: In Search of a Utopia of the Present*, ed. Dirk Van Den Heuvel (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2005), 154-155.

4 Oswald Mathias Ungers, "The City as a Work of Art" (1963), in *Architecture Culture, 1943-1968: A documentary Anthology*, eds. Edward Eigen and Joan Oakman (New-York: Columbia Books of Architecture, Rizzoli, 1993), 361-364.

5 The same year, Aldo Rossi published *The Architecture and the City* and Robert Venturi published *Complexity and Contradiction in architecture*.

6 Oswald Mathias Ungers, "Grossformenim Wohnungsbau", *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur*, no. 5 (December 1966).

7 Neyran Turan, "Against Gross", *Think Space Pamphlets*, no. 1, Past forward, (2013).

8 Rem Koolhaas, "Imagining Nothingness", in *S,M,L,XL*, eds. Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau (New York: Monacelli, 1995), 198-203.

Fig. 1

Charles Jencks, diagram: 'Evolutionary tree 2000' (highlighting by the author).

the relationship between public spaces and buildings to create both collective and individual spaces. By establishing a framework that accommodates diverse enhanced identities, the City Within the City serves as an experimental endeavor aimed at implementing the concept of collectivity within a plural and individualized society.

Berlin, the Dialectic City

In the 1970s, Berlin is gearing up for an international architecture exhibition, positioning itself as a hub of architectural and urban innovation within the European context. To comprehensively grasp the dynamics of IBA 87, it is essential to analyze Berlin from different perspectives, considering its roles as a city, a capital and a laboratory.

The decision of Berlin to host an international architecture competition stems from its recognition as a city, with its districts, its population and its local politics. The early 1980s marked a transformative phase for West Berlin, characterized by population shifts away from the Wall's proximity and the lingering impact of World War II's bombings on the city's buildings⁹. Housing shortage in Berlin led to social policies for IBA 87, while the city's political influence vanished in comparison to East Berlin, accentuating its isolation within the Western bloc. As a capital, regaining political prominence in the Europe was a central challenge for the exhibition. The city's 750th anniversary was seen as the perfect opportunity to make a significant impact on the European political and cultural scene¹⁰. This unique confluence of cultural, political, social and economic issues, coupled with ten years of massive communication about a potential major competition to redefine Berlin's identity, resulted in a fertile ground for innovation, a laboratory and an international showcase for the architects of the time.

Amidst the emergence of new visions of the city in Europe and America, this paradigm shift found embodiment in Berlin through the distinct visions of two influential architects in Germany, Joseph Paul Kleihues and Oswald Mathias Ungers. Both architects, with singular perspectives on the city, played pivotal roles in shaping the architectural discourse in Berlin during this period. Josef Paul Kleihues, a successful West German architect and professor at the TU Dortmund, established himself as a key figure through articles questioning the city's urban policies¹¹, writing in the daily Berlin Morgenpost articles entitled "Models of a city"¹² and inviting specialists on various urban issues. With provocative titles such as "The brutality of buildings has disfigured Berlin", he placed the urban issues of the city at the center of architectural, public and

9 Ilaria Maria Zedda, "Beyond Façades: The Berlin block and the housing issue at IBA 87", *Studii de istoria si teoria arhitecturii* (2021).

10 Wallis Miller, "IBA's Models for a City: Housing and the Image of Cold-War Berlin", *Journal of Architectural Education* 46, no. 4, (May 1993): 202.

11 Walter Grunwald, "Berlin, Modelle für eine Stadt", *Berlin Morgenpost* (January 1977).

12 Josef Paul Kleihues, "Berlin, Programmvorschläge für eine internationale Bauausstellung zur Wiederbelebung des alten", *Berlin Morgenpost* (January 1977).

political debate. Moreover, he directly promoted the idea of an international exhibition as early as 1977, in order to “act as a catalyst to transform Berlin’s image”. His media presence facilitated international collaborations, enabling him to spearhead the Neubau section of IBA 87. With this section, concerning the new constructions of the exhibition¹³, he developed the theory of “Critical Reconstruction”. This strategy aimed to preserve the pre-war urban layout of Berlin’s historic city center, emphasizing the conservation and rebuilding of nineteenth-century urban fabric. By choosing the block as the unit of intervention, he also ensures that the impact of a single architect is reduced, thereby increasing the quantity and diversity of projects. As for the guidelines for intervention, he adopts a conservative approach that “follows the historic traces of the city, aligns with the heights of the old fabric and preserves the existing buildings”¹⁴.

In contrast, Ungers vehemently stood up against Kleihues and his vision of the city. As he was firstly invited to lead the IBA with Heinrich Klotz and Kleihues, the latter booted him out, only to invite him years afterward as a participant, when Ungers wanted to re-establish himself as a practitioner. The divergence in their visions and Ungers’ exclusion fueled his public criticism against his rival’s theory. In his eleven-point manifesto of *The City within the City*, published in 1977, Ungers challenged Berlin’s urban policy, specifically those advocated by Kleihues, proposing an alternative model for a city in decline that diverged from the prevailing planning theories.

The pluralistic project for a city within the city is in this respect in antithesis to the current planning theory which stems from a definition of the city as a single whole.¹⁵

At the core of the architectural and urban debates of the 1970s, Berlin became a major case study and a focal point for diverse opinion - a dialectical laboratory where multiple voices emerged. The IBA 87 provided a platform for a generation of architects to experiment with new theories on architecture and the city.

A Transatlantic Bridge

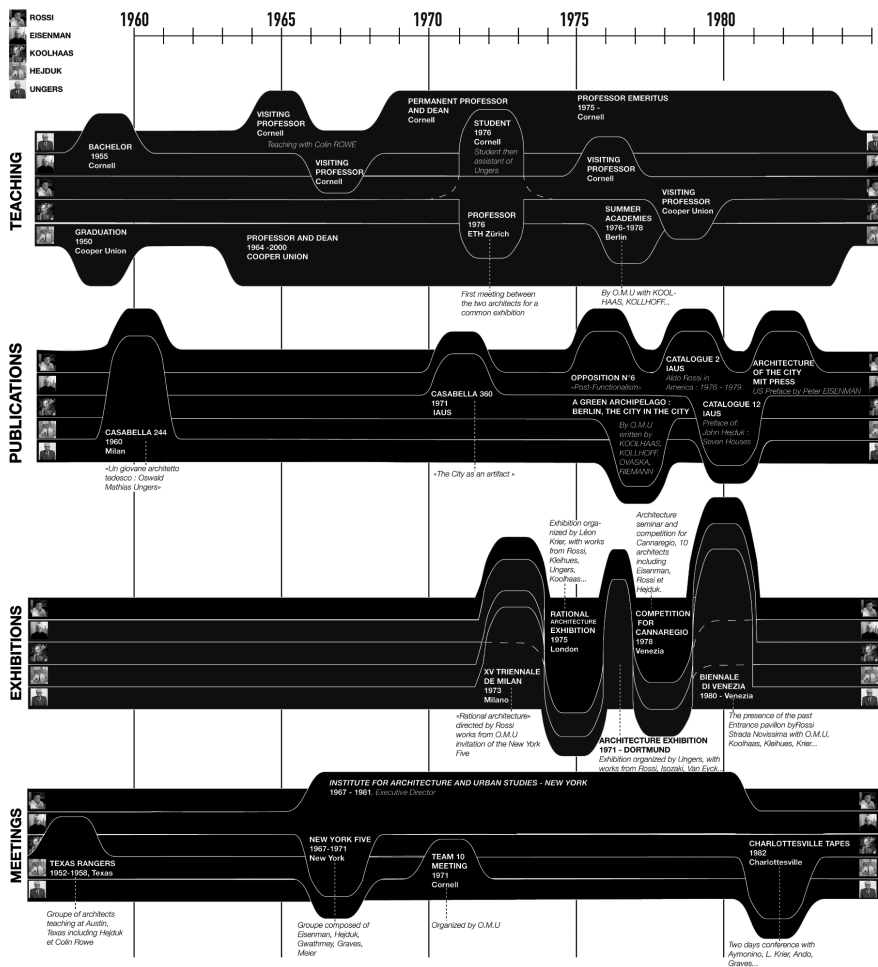
The concept of the metropolis as an intricate mosaic of fragments emerges as a prevailing theme in the architectural discourse of the latter half of the 20th century. Ungers’ colleague at Cornell Colin Rowe published *Collage City* in 1978, while Rossi, Hejduk, Koolhaas and Eisenman engaged in research on new ways of understanding the city and its architecture. Aldo Rossi’s seminal book, *L’architettura della Città* in 1966, and his conceptualization of the *Città Analoga* in the 1970s, showcased at the Venice Biennale in 1976, laid the groundwork for

13 The Altbau section, directed by Hardt-Waltherr Hämer, being about refurbishing the existing buildings.

14 Josef Paul Kleihues, „Zielsetzungen für Südliche Friedrichstadt“, in *Städtebaulicher Rahmenplan, Südliche Friedrichstadt Berlin-Kreuzberg* (Berlin: Bauausstellung Berlin GmbH, 1984) 18.

15 Ungers, Oswald Mathias, Rem Koolhaas, Peter Riemann, Hans Kollhoff, and Arthur Ovaska (eds.) / Hertweck, Florian and Sebastian Marot. *Die Stadt in der Stadt Berlin: Ein grünes Archipel*, Ithaca, N.Y. and Cologne: Arnold Printing Corp. and Studioverlag für Architektur (Zürich: Lars Müller Verlag, 2013).

his contributions to IBA 87. Rossi's work, with themes such as the interaction between nature and architecture in reference to Garden Cities¹⁶, gained international recognition through numerous translations and expanded contacts beyond Italy.



2 |

Koolhaas' early work - with Elia Zenghelis, Madelon Vriesendorp and Zoe Zenghelis - also, as the Exodus project on the Berlin Wall, reveals the exploration of architectural form and its meaning. His time in New York with Ungers and encounters with Peter Eisenman resulted in his influential work *Delirious New-York*¹⁷, an original city analysis. Later on, in the 1990s, reinterpreted even more literally Ungers' Grossform essay with his text *Bigness*. In 1967, the professor Peter Eisenman founded the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS), creating the journal *Oppositions* and contributing significantly to architectural debates in New York and bridges with Europe.

The 1970s marked a period of intellectual ferment and critical success for architects such as Rossi, Koolhaas, Hejduk, and Eisenman. During this era, encounters and exchanges of ideas were facilitated, particularly in New York,

Fig. 2
Document by the author.
Chronological map of
interactions between Ueno,
Rossi, Eisenman, Koolhaas,
Hejduk.

16 Rossi Aldo, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1984), 100-105.

17 Koolhaas Rem, *Delirious New-York, a retroactive manifesto for Manhattan* (Oxford: The Oxford Press, 1978).

where Ungers and these architects converged through lectures, teaching roles, publications, exhibitions, and debates at Cornell, the Cooper Union or Eisenman's IAUS. A chronological map [Fig. 2], illustrates connections among these architects across four channels: education, writings, exhibitions, and discussions. This period of intellectual interchange, as noted by Peter Eisenman, facilitates cross-continental bridges and exerted lasting influence, particularly between Italy and the United States, with implications lasting for many years¹⁸.

Eisenman and Hejduk both studied in New York and later taught at Cornell and the Cooper Union, respectively. Rem Koolhaas, in 1972, spent a year studying at Cornell to join Ungers, while Aldo Rossi was a professor at Cornell in 1976 and at the Cooper Union in 1979¹⁹. Beyond their architectural practice, they all contributed as writers, and their publications reveal numerous links between them. Then the editor of the Italian magazine *Casabella Continuità* with Vittorio Gregotti and Giorgio Grassi, encountered Ungers and published an article titled "Un giovane architetto tedesco" recognizing Ungers' work²⁰. In New-York, Eisenman's journal *Oppositions* operated numerous links with the same magazine and with Rossi²¹. Eisenman also maintained a relationship with John Hejduk, leading to their collaboration as members of the New York Five.

Finally, while these architects began to achieve critical success in the 1960s through various individual publications, they experienced greater exposure between the 1970s and the 1980s, leading to encounters among them. The resonance of architectural exhibitions in both Europe and America during this period served as perhaps the most significant vector of influence among these architects. Between 1974 and 1980, at least seven exhibitions were held, bringing together at least two architects from the corpus²², with some of them being founding events of architectural movements and provided opportunities for initial encounters²³.

Upon observing these exchanges, we can identify the ubiquitous presence of Ungers to many debates and exhibitions. In his influential role as a teacher and a practitioner, Ungers served as a conduit for the transfer of ideas between modern and postmodern ideologies, bridging the gap between American and European architectural perspectives. This role is underscored by Ungers himself, as he vehemently answers Léon Krier during the Charlottesville Tapes event organized by Jaquelin Robertson - which gathered architects such as

18 Peter Eisenman, "John Quentin Hejduk (1929 - 2000)", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 330 (Septembre 2000).

19 Peter Eisenman, *Aldo Rossi in America, 1976-1979* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1980).

20 Aldo Rossi, "Un giovane architetto tedesco", *Casabella Continuità*, no. 244 (October 1960): 22-25.

21 The American edition of Aldo Rossi's *The Architecture of the City*, for which Eisenman wrote the preface, is a case in point. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 3-12.

22 Drawings by Rossi and Hejduk, ETH Zürich, 1973. XV Milan Triennale, 1973. Leon Krier's Rational Architecture Exhibition, London, 1975. Architecture Exhibition, Dortmund, 1976. SIAC Compostela, 1978. Competition for Cannaregio, Venice, 1978. First Venice Biennale, directed by Paolo Portoghesi, 1980.

23 This was the case at ETH Zurich in 1973, where Aldo Rossi, then a teacher, met John Hejduk at a joint exhibition of their drawings. According to Peter Eisenman himself: "[...] it was his meeting with Aldo Rossi at ETH Zurich in 1973 that paved the way for exchanges between Italians and Americans throughout the 1970s." Eisenman, "John Quentin Hejduk (1929 - 2000)", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 330 (Septembre 2000).

Rem Koolhaas, Tadao Ando, Carlo Aymonino, and many others²⁴ :

Why should we not get involved in doing a building that has 45-square-meter rooms to show products? Should I say, 'No, I am artist, I don't want to get my fingers dirty?' I spent ten years theorizing, and many people profited from that work. You know it perfectly well. You came as a little boy to my office and you profited too. You admitted it. But you know what? I decided to go back to practice, get my fingers dirty, and work with those big developers²⁵.

The Formal Influence of Oswald Mathias Ungers

Ungers' aspiration to reengage with practice materialized through his involvement in the IBA 87, securing a commission within Block 1, one of the 158 urban blocks under consideration. His proposal consisted of a nine-by-nine square grid building enveloping a verdant collective space, embodying key tenets of his theoretical framework and a rational aesthetic. If Critical Reconstruction dictated conservative interventions, this event provided architects an opportunity to assert their visions for the city's future, resonating with Ungers' method. Notably, in the Südliche Friedrichstadt district, Aldo Rossi, Rem Koolhaas, Peter Eisenman, and John Hejduk designed singular urban block projects coupled with theoretical radicalism²⁶. They seized the opportunity to articulate their distinct urban visions, yielding innovative and radical projects. An examination of these endeavors reveals several elements bearing the imprint of Ungers' influence.

For instance, analyzing Rossi's project reveals affinities between him and Ungers, encompassing conceptual and formal realms. In their respective IBA projects, they proffered distinct scales yet interconnected approaches, both centered on enclosing urban blocks with a rational facade, intensifying the urban fabric while offering internal gardens [Fig. 5]. Rossi proposed an architecture as a wall, completing the perimeter of the block to create unity, establishing a threshold between the city, a mineral and hectic exterior space, and the heart of the block, a calm, planted space — a sequence from public to private space. This thematic aligns directly with Ungers' Urban Garden theme explored during the 1978 summer academy, which unfolded in the Südliche Friedrichstadt district²⁷. Rossi conceived an urban block as an autonomous island, evoking the concept of an archipelago, as a means to structure the city. He declared that "The edges of

24 The participants included Tadao Ando, Carlo Aymonino, Henry Cobb, Peter Eisenman, Frank Gehry, Michael Graves, Charles Gwathmey, Hans Hollein, Arata Isozaki, Toyo Ito, Philip Johnson, Rem Koolhaas, Léon Krier, Richard Meier, Rafael Moneo, Cesar Pelli, Jaquelin Robertson, Kevin Roche, Paul Rudolph, Robert Siegel, Robert A.M. Stern, Stanley Tigerman, and O. M. Ungers. Jacquelin Roberston, *The Charlottesville Tapes* (New-York: Rizzoli, 1985).

25 Oswald Mathias Ungers toward Léon Krier at the Charlottesville Tapes, 1982.

26 Bauausstellung Berlin GmbH, *Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1987. Exhibition Areas. Extract from the list of projects*. Berlin, 1987.

27 Oswald Mathias Ungers, *The Urban Garden: Student Projects for the Südliche Friedrichstadt* (Cologne: Studio Verlag für Architektur, 1978).

the block seem more important than the architecture”²⁸, sharing with Ungers a common vision of the city as a work of art²⁹.

Rem Koolhaas’ project shares notable parallels with Ungers’ concept of *Grossform*. He perceives the urban context as a complex repository of architectural heritage, proposing to organize this historical core through a range of typologies disseminated across the four blocks [Fig. 3], ranging from high-rises to Urban Villas - a theme previously developed in collaboration with Ungers during the 1977 summer academy³⁰. Koolhaas adopts a dual-scale strategy: urban morphologies to precisely define urban blocks or islands, fostering communal spaces for the district as an archipelago, while diverse architectural typologies provide a multitude of individual spaces.

Similarly, John Hejduk’s project exhibits multiple connections to Ungers. Both architects, owing to their esteemed academic careers, delved into formal exercises that intersected, exemplified by Hejduk’s nine-square grid and the diamond house³¹, that Ungers discovered with Colin Rowe³², inspiring the expansion of his Quadratherstrasse residence library³³. In Berlin, Hejduk initiates his Berlin Masques series, emerging two years after Ungers introduced the Archipel City manifesto. Drawing inspiration from Carnival rituals, he conceives buildings and imparts upon them individual roles, as if they were theatrical characters, each endowed with a unique form and demeanor [Fig. 6]. It results in sixty-seven individual masks, which Berliners would assemble as they wished. He frees himself completely from the rules of the exhibition, and creates strong formal architecture, as markers of the city³⁴. These structures operate autonomously yet engage in mutual interaction, at every scale, even in the housing plans³⁵, embodying Hejduk’s vision of a city, “as the accumulation of dynamic individuals”³⁶. Ungers’ 1976 summer academy, titled “Cornell Summer Session The Urban Block and Gotham City Metaphors and Metamorphosis: Two Concurrent Projects”, resonates with similar ideas—acknowledging architecture’s cultural significance in society as a means for individuals to find meaning within their intricate environments. Both Ungers and Hejduk emphasize the paramount

28 Aldo Rossi, “Premise: The Architecture of Berlin and the Project”, *Details of entries for the competition for Kochstrasse/Friedrichstrasse*, CCA, 1981.

29 Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 34; Jasper Cepl, Sam Jacoby and Valerio Massaro, “Oswald Mathias Ungers and the “City as a Work of Art”: The “Neue Stadt” in Cologne, 1961–64”, in *The Renewal of Dwelling: European Housing Construction 1945–1975*, eds. Elli Mosayebi and Michael Kraus (Zurich: Triest Verlag, 2023), 158-167.

30 Oswald Mathias Ungers, *The Urban Villa: a multi-family dwelling type* (Cornell: Summer academy, 1977).

31 Alexander Caragone, *The Texas Rangers: Notes from an Architectural Underground* (Cambridge-MA: MIT Press, 1995).

32 Colin Rowe and John Hejduk are previous members of the Texas Rangers.

33 Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Quadratische Häuser* (Stuttgart: Gerd Hatje, 1986) based on Bruno Munari, *Discovery of the Square* (New York: George Wittenborn, 1962).

34 “And those towers... there are some early sketches I did of the «Cannaregio» that look like those towers. Of course, Kahn and I both were in Italy, right? I mean, we both looked at San Gimignano”. John Hejduk, *John Hejduk. Works, 1950-1983* (Zürich: ETH, 1983).

35 “The house for the inhabitant who refused to participate is a programmatic statement of an architecture of pessimism. Each function has its separate room. Human needs have been reduced to the minimal. There is a dining room and a chair. They have their own room.” John Hejduk, *Mask of Medusa* (New-York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1989), 63.

36 Mark Lee, “Two deserted islands”, *San Rocco*, no. 1, (Winter 2011).

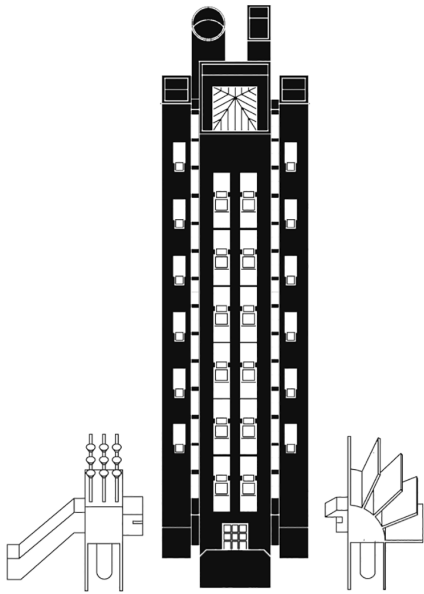
importance of architectural form in providing a language that informs the structure of our cities³⁷.

Finally, Eisenman and Ungers shared a lot of mutual interests in the search of a formal logic of architecture. In Berlin, Eisenman's project engages with abstract notions, such as the city's memory, the Wall's boundary, or the historical stratification pointed out by postmodern ideas, translating them into formal constructs [Fig. 4]. He aims to create a monument rather than a simple housing building for IBA. He uses an international image, the Mercator grid, which he adapts formally by comparing it with the Berlin grid. The form is thus derived from the image, and the architecture of the building expresses a Berlin base with a global reach. He combines grids, corridors, blocks and voids to create a complex whole, a variety in unity reminiscent of Ungers' *Grossform*. Within the boundaries of an urban block, Eisenman's endeavor echoes the influence of Ungers' *City within the City*, densifying within a defined perimeter, executed through a methodical process based on the repetitive variation of a model. It generates interactions that he interprets as spaces of contradiction conducive to the project, bringing a degree of complexity specific to the city, and conferring a distinct identity of monumentality upon the site³⁸.

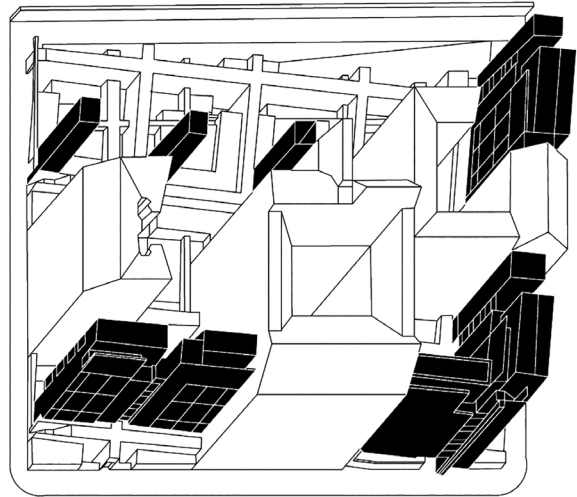
The participation of various architects in a shared competition within the same geographical context led to significant theoretical exchanges. Moreover, Oswald Mathias Ungers held a prominent position, as his influence extended not only through the connections he established decades prior but also in the architectural endeavors of his contemporaries for the IBA 87. The experimental field present at the time in Berlin, coupled with the emergence of new visions about the city, represented by the critics of Ungers toward IBA 87's policy, result in series of radical projects, fed by Ungers' concepts rather than the Critical Reconstruction motto.

37 Schrijver, "Oswald Mathias Ungers and Rem Koolhaas", 99.

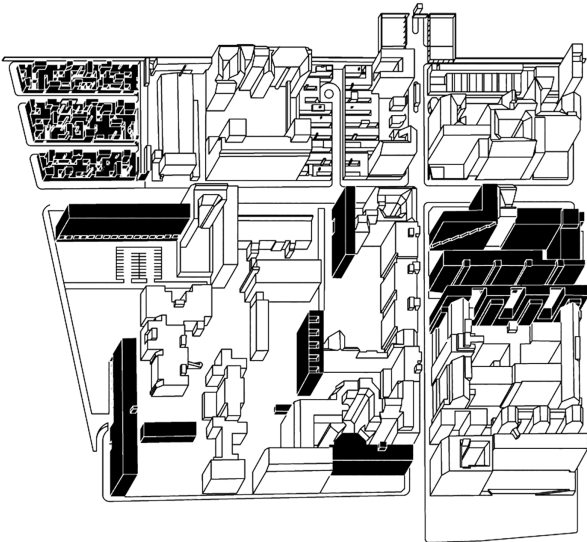
38 He precises: "The act of memory obscures the reality of the present in order to restore something of the past. Anti-memory makes a place that derives its order by obscuring its past. Memory and anti-memory work oppositely but in collusion to produce a suspended object, a frozen fragment of no past and no future, a place." Peter Eisenman, «IBA social housing», *Eisenman Architects*, 1981.



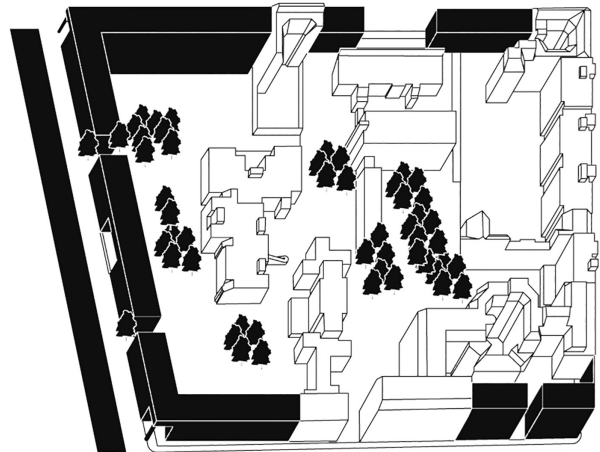
3



4



5



6

Fig. 3,4,5,6

Documents by the author.
 From upper left to lower
 right, axonometries of IBA
 87 projects by Koolhaas,
 Eisenman, Rossi and Hejduk.

Conclusion

In the course of his career, Oswald Mathias Ungers developed several concepts shaping analysis and perception of the city and its architecture. His concepts of the city as an archipelago, the Urban Garden, the complexity generating the *Grossform* emerged through a process of theoretical exploration within architectural and urban projects. Historically, he serves as a bridge between prewar and postwar generations of architects, wielding influence accentuated by transatlantic connections forged through his teaching role.

As the postwar period witnessed a critique of Modernism, The IBA 87 projects of Rossi, Hejduk, Koolhaas and Eisenman become pivotal in understanding the criticism directed at a conservative vision of the city, anchored in the historicization of past images represented by Kleihues' Critical Reconstruction motto. Conversely, Berlin appears as a complex city, serving as a laboratory for architects eager to design with the city "as found," avoiding the replication of past images.

This article unveils the dense network of influences during the 1970s. However, a comparison with Charles Jencks' family tree, mapping architectural currents and their protagonists, reveals that all architects in the corpus are present, attesting to their significant impact on the architectural scene. Yet, their dispersion on the map also underscores their distinctiveness. This contrast prompts a critical consideration: What criteria should be considered when classifying architectural currents or their protagonists?

Jencks's cartography predominantly considers the architectural language of buildings constructed during a specific period, aligning with our observation of formal architectural diversity. However, the research presented here suggests the need for a new classification for so-called postmodern architects, considering shared considerations about the city, personal interactions, and the development of theoretical themes underlying architectural projects.

Amid contemporary urban planning challenges, Ungers' innovative ideas from the 1960s offer a compelling framework. When viewed alongside current urban crises, Ungers' themes seem less unconventional and more relevant. Beyond his formal experiments, his vision provides a profound understanding of the city in the globalization era, emphasizing strategies like densification, well-defined boundaries, stable frameworks, and the integration of urban gardens.

This study underscores the evolution of theoretical thinking and formal experimentation within society. While conceptual work endures and undergoes reinterpretation over decades, architects play a crucial role in designing spaces deeply rooted in their contemporary societal context. By bridging the gap between visionary concepts and practical applications, architects continue to draw inspiration from enduring principles and innovative strategies proposed by pioneers like Oswald Mathias Ungers.

Bibliography

Caragonne, Alexander. *The Texas Rangers: Notes from an Architectural Underground*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995.

Cepl, Jasper. *Oswald Mathias Ungers: eine intellektuelle Biographie*. Cologne : Buchhandlung Walther König GmbH & Co. KG. Abt. Verlag, 2007.

Eisenman, Peter. *Aldo Rossi in America, 1976-1979*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1980.

Eisenman, Peter. "John Quentin Hejduk (1929 - 2000)", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 330, Paris, (September 2000).

Hejduk, John. *John Hejduk. Works, 1950-1983*. ETH Zürich; 1983.

Hejduk, John. *Mask of Medusa*. New-York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1989.

Kieren, Martin. *Oswald Mathias Ungers*. Zürich: Artemis, 1994.

Koolhaas Rem. *Delirious New-York, a retroactive manifesto for Manhattan*. Oxford: The Oxford Press, 1978.

Koolhaas, Rem, and Mau Bruce. *S,M,L,XL*. New York: The Monacelli Press, 1995.

Koolhaas, Rem, and Hans-Ulrich Obrist. "An interview with O.M. Ungers". *Anyone Corporation*, no.16, (Spring/Summer 2009): 50-95.

Neumeyer, Fritz, and Francesca Rogier. *OMA's Berlin: The Polemic Island in the City*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990.

Plà Maurici, Mascaras. *John Hejduk. House for a Poet*. Barcelona: ETSAV/UPC, 2000.

Schrijver, Lara. "OMA as tribute to OMU: exploring resonances in the work of Koolhaas and Ungers", *The Journal of Architecture* 13, no.3 (July 2008).

Schrijver, Lara. *Oswald Mathias Ungers and Rem Koolhaas, Recalibrating architecture in the 1970s*, Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2021.

Robertson, Jacquelin. *The Charlottesville tapes*. New York: Rizzoli, 1985.

Rossi, Aldo. *A Scientific Autobiography*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981.

Rossi, Aldo. "Aspetti della tipologia residenziale a Berlino", *Casabella Continuità* (June 1964).

Rossi, Aldo. *The Architecture of the City*. Translated by Ghirardo Diane and Joan Ockman. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1982.

Rossi, Aldo. "Un giovane architetto tedesco", *Casabella Continuità*, no. 244 (October 1960).

Ungers, Oswald Matthias. *Architecture comme thème*, Paris: Electa Moniteur, 1983.

Ungers, Oswald Matthias, and Rem Koolhaas. *La ville dans la ville, Berlin : un archipel vert - une édition critique de Florian Hertweck et Sébastien Marot*. Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2013.

Ungers, Oswald Matthias, *The urban villa, A multi family dwelling type*. Cologne: Studio Press for Architecture, 1977.

Ungers, Oswald Matthias, *The urban garden, Summer academy for architecture*. Cologne: Studio Press for Architecture, 1978.

Ungers, Oswald Matthias. *The urban block and Gotham City, Metaphors and Metamorphosis*. Cologne: Studio Press for Architecture, 1978.

From the Urban Island to the Insula. Morphological Variations around a Theme

City in the City, Icon, Insula, Morphology, Urban Island

/Abstract

Starting with *The City in the City*, the manifesto that Ungers wrote in 1977 together with Rem Koolhaas during the Berlin Summer School on the Urban Villa, the article analyses its critical influence on the theorization of the city, referring to its recent critical reissue (Hertweck, Marot 2013).

In an in-depth analysis of the various versions of this text, common elements in the two authors' thinking – Ungers and Koolhaas – emerge, but also differences, particularly on the notions of city within the city, green archipelago and urban island. Through interviews made with Ungers' collaborators, come out different impressions of this experience: for Koolhaas, "the most fascinating aspect of that undertaking was its site-specificity, the simple fact that Ungers had taken Berlin, West Berlin, as a laboratory"; for Hans Kollhoff, it was "an interesting exercise, but it was clear to him [Ungers] that it had no chance of being converted into reality."

Considering other parallel design and theoretical experiences carried out by Ungers at almost the same time, it emerges how the radical nature of this manifesto – which sought to provide a solution to Berlin's shrinking condition through a green archipelago of formalized islands – had to confront the historic layout, which still existed despite its fragmented situation. The scale of the urban block is experimented with in different experiments, based on morphological variations. The urban island is slowly transformed into an urban *insula*, as practiced in the critical reconstruction introduced during the Berlin IBA by Kleihues, in which Ungers will be one of the main protagonists.

/Author

Michele Caja
Politecnico di Milano
michele.caja@polimi.it

Michele Caja (1968) is associate Professor in Architectural and Urban Design at Politecnico di Milano. PHD in Architectural Composition at IUAV, Venice (2005). He has taught at ETH Zürich, 'Aldo Rossi' Faculty of Cesena and FHP Potsdam. He has collaborated with various architectural firms in Italy and abroad, as in Dortmund (J. P. Kleihues, 1990), Vienna and Milan (G. Grassi, 1994-96). Since 1993 he has been practising as a freelancer in Milan. His field of research focuses on the relationship between theory and contemporary design, particularly in the Italian and German context. He has organised conferences and exhibitions, including: Heinrich Tessenow. *La ricchezza della semplicità* (Parma/Milan, 2005); *New Realism and the Architecture of the City* (Turin/Naples, 2012); *Mies van der Rohe. An Idea of the City* (Milan, 2019/Porto, 2020). He has participated in several national and international architecture competitions, including: *IX MIBA - International Biennale of Architecture Cracow, NowaHuta* (2003); *Humboldt Forum Berlin* (2008); *Prix de Rome - Villa Adriana* (2018).

Among his publications, as author and editor: *Berlino 1990-2010. La ricerca sull'isolato e sul quartiere* (2009); *Tipologia architettonica e morfologia urbana. Il dibattito italiano* (2010/2012); *Nuovi architetti berlinesi* (2011); *Berlino anni Venti. Progetti urbani per il centro 1921-1933* (2012); *Potsdam&Italien. Die Italienrezeption in der Potsdamer Baukultur* (2014); *Hans Stimmann, The Berliner Townhouse. A Typological Experiment* (2015); *Tipo forma figura. Il dibattito internazionale* (2016); *Ricostruzione critica come principio urbano e altri scritti* (2017); *Neue Projekte in historischen Deutschen Städten* (2019); *Progetti per Milano. Garibaldi, Isola, Gioia* (2020); *Urban Projects. I Berlin* (2020); *Von der Urban Villa zur vorstädtischen Villa* (2021); *Moder- sohn & Freiesleben: Wirklichkeit* (2022); *Urbane Projekte. Neue Ideen für das Projekt der europäischen Stadt* (2023).



Introduction

Perhaps few other urban architecture manifestos of the second half of the last century have had so much influence on the ideas that are discussed today regarding the possible models for the future of our cities – from shrinking cities to their renaturalization, from iconic architecture to the relationship with pre-existences and finally the notion of *cultural landscape* – as *The City in the City*.

Taking the city of Berlin as a reference, Ungers develops an urban model as a response to its shrinking condition. Within the fragmented structure, the proposal envisages a process of urban thinning through autonomous nuclei configured as islands within a green archipelago, rediscovering a new dimension between man and nature. Deconstructing the overall form of Berlin – which was already the historical result of several cities added over time –¹ Ungers rediscovers form within its individual parts. Where each of these parts finds its own character from precise references. These references take on the role of true icons able to generate analogical links to other cities and architectures. They give rise to a double level, in which the idea of natural landscape coexists with that of cultural landscape inside Berlin's historical urban fragments.

The City in the City

The proposal originated during a summer school in Berlin attended by American students, while Ungers was teaching at Cornell (1977). The international critical fortune of this short text, drafted with Koolhaas and of which several versions exist, is initially linked to its first English and Italian edition published in Lotus International in 1978.² The in-depth study of this text, however, dates to more recent years, particularly to its critical re-edition by Florian Hertweck and Sébastien Marot.³ Applying careful philological methodology, this anastatic re-edition shows the different existing versions of the text – from the first draft written by Rem Koolhaas, after he had worked with Ungers in Ithaca. The book is enriched by interviews with other collaborators of the Summer School – Arthur Ovaska, Hans Kollhoff and Peter Riemann –, from which the close collaboration between the two authors is deepened.

Marot underlines the importance for this manifesto to be focused on a specific city, something it shares with other more or less coeval topical texts of urban theory: from Boyarsky's *Chicago a la carte* (1970), to the Los Angeles of *Four Ecologies* by Reyner Banham (1971), to the Las Vegas of Venturi, Scott-Brown and Izenour (1972), to the Rome of Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter in *Collage City*

1 Berlin's first settlement cores include: Berlin, Cölln, Friedrichswerder, Friedrichstadt, Dorotheenstadt.

2 Oswald Mathias Ungers, Rem Koolhaas, Peter Riemann, Hans Kollhoff, and Arthur Ovaska, "Cities within the city. Proposals by the Sommer Akademie for Berlin," *Lotus International*, no. 19 (June 1978): 82-97.

3 Florian Hertweck and Sébastien Marot, critical ed., *The City in the City. Berlin: A Green Archipelago. A manifesto (1977) by Oswald Mathias Ungers and Rem Koolhaas with Peter Riemann, Hans Kollhoff and Arthur Ovaska* (Köln: UAA Ungers Archives for Architectural Research, Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2013).

(1978) and the *Delirious New York* by Rem Koolhaas (1978).⁴

As Koolhaas also confirms in his interview, “the most fascinating aspect of that enterprise was its site-specificity, the simple fact that Ungers had taken Berlin, West Berlin, as a laboratory.”⁵ This close connection to the place where he was teaching had impressed Koolhaas since the accidental discovery of Ungers through his first publications. He had found them in a bookstore during his first trip to Berlin as a student, from which he had returned thrilled by the Wall dividing the two parts of the city, which was to be the inspiring object of one of his famous projects for London, *Exodus, or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture* (1972-74).⁶ The entire series of Ungers’ *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur* (a total of 27, published between 1965-1971), in addition to the lectures and research papers given as part of his courses, also included the didactic exercises done with his students during his teaching period at TU Berlin in the 1960s. The importance of these early research and theoretical works – which would be reflected in his future theorizing on the city – has now been highlighted by their partial republication in two monographic issues of the journal *Archplus* devoted to Ungers as an educator in the 1960s.⁷ According to Jasper Cepl⁸ – as underlined by Lara Schrijver⁹ – these *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur* could be present in London in the studio of James Stirling, maybe brought them to his attention by Léon Krier.

Already from these early exercises, Ungers took Berlin as a paradigmatic case-study due to its condition of “enclosed nature”, turning it into a design research laboratory investigated through specific themes, including: the relationship between *Schnellbahn* and building, the composition of residential building complexes, the redevelopment of blocks and parking lots, the *Brandwände* (firewalls) of houses remaining within fragmented blocks cut by the wall between the two cities.

4 Alvin Boyarsky, *Chicago à la carte, The City as an Energy System*. Special Issue of *Architectural Design* (December 1970); Reyner Banham, *The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (London: Allen Lane - The Penguin Press, 1971); Robert Venturi, Denise Scott-Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, Mass./London: MIT Press, 1972); Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge Mass./London: The MIT Press, 1978); Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York. A retroactive manifesto for Manhattan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

5 Rem Koolhaas, “Ghostwriting. Rem Koolhaas in conversation with Florian Hertweck and Sébastien Marot,” in *The City in the City*, ed. Florian Hertweck and Sébastien Marot (Köln: UAA Ungers Archives for Architectural Research, Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2013), 133.

6 On the relation between Koolhaas’ proposal for London and Berlin see: Fritz Neumeyer, “OMA’s Berlin: The Polemic Island in the City,” *Assemblage*, no. 11 (April 1990): 36-53.

7 Erika Mühlthaler, ed., *Lernen von O.M. Ungers*, *Archplus*, no. 181/182 (December 2006). The previous volume is: Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft, ed., *Oswald Mathias Ungers. Architekturlehre. Berliner Vorlesungen 1964-65*, *Archplus*, no. 179 (Juli 2006).

8 Jasper Cepl, *Oswald Mathias Ungers. Eine intellektuelle Biographie* (Köln: Verlag Walter König, 2007), 295, and note 495.

9 Lara Schrijver, “OMA as Tribute to OMA: Exploring Resonances in the Work of Koolhaas and Ungers,” *The Journal of Architecture* 13, no. 3 (June 2008): 235, and note 2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602360802214927>.

Ungers & Koolhaas

From such critical re-reading of *The City in the City* today, emerges, on the one hand, the close relationship existing at the time between Ungers and Koolhaas,¹⁰ the two actual authors of the manifesto, among the major protagonists of the architectural debate in the years to come; on the other hand, emerge also the more or less declared divergences – especially regarding the notions of *archipelago*, *city within the city* and *urban island*.¹¹ These divergences are found through Ungers' annotations and corrections to the first short version of Koolhaas's six-page text, for which he "mainly collaborated with him as a ghostwriter",¹² in the Summer School held by Ungers in Berlin on the topics of the *Urban Villa*, within which the plan for Berlin archipelago was ideated.¹³

If the *city in the city* stands out as a happy formula, used and partly abused in those years to define the otherwise so-called principle of the polycentric city, the urban island within an archipelago seems instead to figuratively reinterpret that theory of *parti urbaine* that had been widely debated, according to more or less divergent facets, in the Italian context, by architects such as Carlo Aymonino, Aldo Rossi and others since the 1960s.¹⁴ Alongside the initial title of *Green Archipelago* given to the text by Koolhaas, according to a notion not devoid of a certain exoticism that seems to go back to his childhood spent with his family in Indonesia – as he writes: "I think that was when the archipelago established itself, in my mind, as an implicit model" –¹⁵ Ungers had put before that of *The City in the City*, a formula frequently employed by other authors close to him, such as Léon Krier and Koolhaas himself. The former had employed it the previous year to define a new urban part at the Villette in Paris,¹⁶ understanding it as an individually connoted neighborhood on the edge between city and country. The second, on the other hand, understood it according to an entirely different meaning, as a recognizable architectural complex within the urban fabric – such as the Rockefeller Center, investigated in his book *Delirious New York*, which was to be published the following year.

If Koolhaas was in fact interested in the notion of the archipelago for the insertion within the consolidated historical fabric of Berlin of "in-between spaces" in which it was possible to experiment new forms of living and new building types, for Ungers what was instead fundamental was the presence of "islands" to which

10 About the relation between Ungers and Koolhaas in this project, see also: Lara Schrijver, "City within the City," in Oswald Mathias Ungers and Rem Koolhaas. *Recalibrating Architecture in the 1970s* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2021), Chapter 2: 63-68.

11 See also: Pier Vittorio Aureli, "The city within the city. Oswald Mathias Ungers, OMA, and the project of the city as archipelago," in *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011), Chapter 5.

12 Koolhaas, "Ghostwriting," 134.

13 Oswald Mathias Ungers, Hans Kollhoff, and Arthur Ovaska, *The Urban Villa: A Multi Family Dwelling Type*, Köln: Studioverlag für Architektur L. Ungers, 1977.

14 For the theorization about the city made by single urban parts see: Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, Oppositions Books, (Cambridge, Mass. / London: The MIT Press, 1982), Chapter 2: *Primary Elements and the Concept of Area*. Carlo Aymonino, *Lo studio dei fenomeni urbani* (Roma: Officina Edizioni, 1997). As an example of urban part can be intended the Gallarate residential unit realized by Aldo Rossi and Carlo Aymonino in the Milanese suburb at the beginning of the '70s.

15 . Koolhaas, "Ghostwriting," 131.

16 Léon Krier, "A City within the City," *A + U*, no. 84 (November 1977): 69-152.

an autonomous form could be given through the analogical use of references.¹⁷ Inside the fragmentary existing structure of West Berlin, the intention of this experiment was not intended as “a master plan for the inner part of the city”, but an attempt “to replace the missing brick in a wall; you had to paste, to repair the city.” About the methodology they followed he adds: “it was the whole West Berlin map, as a figure ground plan, which we deconstructed [...] The ‘philosophical’ approach was first to decompose the city in order to reassemble it later”.¹⁸

Urban Islands

As far as Ungers is concerned, the notion of archipelago is charged with a strong symbolic and cultural value, associated with the theme of memory. Referring to Karl Friedrich Schinkel’s Glienicke Park, archipelago is understood as a *cultural landscape*, made up of fragments capable of evoking iconic moments of history.

From here we can deduce an idea of a city made up of pieces of existing fabric – taken as *found* according to the meaning given to this formula by the Smithsons¹⁹ (and not far from Ernesto Nathan Rogers’ idea of *environmental pre-existences* as elements to be involved inside the project).²⁰ These fragments are integrated by architectural and urban references ranging from individual buildings (Leonidov’s Palace of Culture, Mies’s prismatic skyscraper) to entire parts of the city (Central Park, Leonidov’s design for the linear city of Magnitogorsk), assembled within specific places, and thus isolating them from the urban *continuum* of the existing fabric and inserting them into a new green archipelago. In the final version of the first draft, corrected by Ungers, the repertoire of examples expands: Hannes Meyer’s Building for the United Nations, Adolf Loos’s Chicago Tribune, El Lissitzky’s *Wolkenbügel*, Bath’s Royal Crescent, Le Corbusier’s plan for Algiers, and the two towers of the World Trade Center in New York become concrete references to be grafted into Berlin’s fragmented structure. If urban models served to give shape to existing urban parts, individual architectural references gave Berlin the role of a city of memory [Fig. 1].

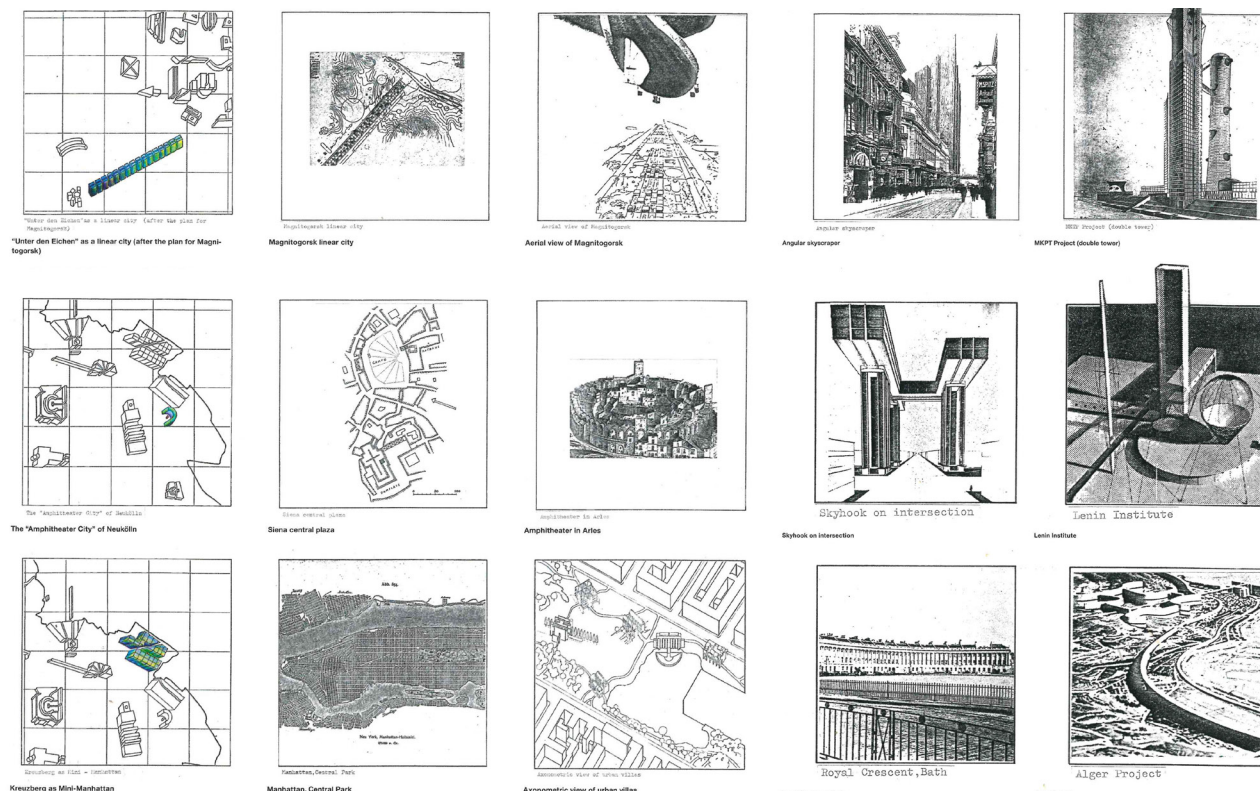
The form to be given to islands can refer to this wide repertoire of urban patterns in history, transforming the natural landscape into a cultural landscape, like Glienicke’s *Havellandschaft*. A city in which new community forms could coexist between nature and culture, and where architectural quotations recalled to memory archetypes through the powerful tool of imagination – as theorized

17 Florian Hertweck, in Koolhaas, “Ghostwriting,” 136.

18 Peter Riemann, “A symbiotic Operation: Rem Koolhaas in conversation with Florian Hertweck and Sébastien Marot,” in *The City in the City*, ed. Florian Hertweck and Sébastien Marot (2013), 162, 164.

19 Dirk van den Heuvel, “As Found: The Metamorphosis of the Everyday. On the Work of Nigel Henderson, Eduardo Paolozzi, and Alison and Peter Smithson (1953-1956),” *Scratching the Surface*, OASE, no. 59 (2002): 52–67. Retrieved from <https://www.oasejournal.nl/en/Issues/59/AsFoundTheMetamorphosisOfTheEveryday>

20 Ernesto Nathan Rogers, “Le preesistenze ambientali e i temi pratici contemporanei,” *Casabella-Continuità*, no. 204 (1955): 3-6.



in Designing and Thinking in Images, Metaphors and Analogies.²¹ These reflections would be later elaborated in a text written for another celebrated exhibition, *City Metaphors*.²² Regarding this attitude, Fritz Neumeyer explains how Ungers always relied on a way of thinking by “contrasting images” in order to find metaphorical analogies and differences to re-thematize the city according to new meanings.²³

The *island* metaphor thus lends a naturalistic connotation to the elements that make up the idea of an urban archipelago. Instead of being immersed in an endless sea, this island landscape is held together by a complex system of parks and gardens, in which formalized portions of the city coexist – defined by Ungers as islands or even *minicities*, not simple *Viertels* as Koolhaas wrote in the first version of the paper – new infrastructures, collective equipment. Within these *in-between spaces* it could have been possible to experiment with new forms of living, such as those related to a nomadic dimension.

This archipelago of formally connoted islands scattered within a landscape continuum recalled, on the other hand, the *Stadtlandschaft* proposed by Hans Scharoun – the one who had invited Ungers to teach at TU in the early 1960s –²⁴

21 Oswald Mathias Ungers, “Designing and Thinking in Images, Metaphors and Analogies,” in *Man trans-Forms* (New York: Cooper-Hewitt Museum, 1976), 98-113. The text was written for the *Man trans-Forms* exhibition held in New York in 1976.

22 Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Morphologie – City Metaphors* (Köln: Verlag Walter König, 1982).

23 Fritz Neumeyer, “Lenigma dell’architettura. Un tutto a sé stante e un’unità di particolari,” in *Ungers. Architetture 1951-1990* (Milano: Electa, 1991), 18.

24 Sébastien Marot, “The Genesis of a Hopeful Monster,” in *The City in the City* (ed. 2013), 27.

Fig. 1

The City in the City, Urban and Architectural References (Hertweck, Marot 2013).

to rebuild a war-torn Berlin. Scharoun intended the urban landscape to be made up of old and new parts of the city, compact and open, divided from one another by wide swaths of greenery and connected by large urban highways, following the principles of the American city based on automobile and functionalist zoning. Ungers partially takes up this model but rethinks it in relation to the pressing issues of his time. The city in the process of depopulation was in a state of ruins and fragments – because of the war’s damages still present and above all the consequences of the division – and now could open the imagination to new settlement forms. Within this open dimension of the existing landscape, the remaining fragments could be recomposed according to images and figures taken from history, in an ideal collection of iconic projects that transformed the city into an open-air museum.

Between Analogy and Icon

The theme of the icon, in fact, will be used years later in the title of the proposal developed by Ungers for *Berlin Morgen*, the exhibition held in 1991 at the DAM in Frankfurt curated by Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani and Michael Mönninger following the reunification of Berlin and the research of his future *heart*.²⁵ Compared to the other proposals presented on that occasion by a varied panorama of the major protagonists of the time – oscillating between reconstruction and deconstruction – Ungers’ *Ikonenstadt* remains faithful to the concept of cultural landscape set out in *The City in the City*. Here too, famous unrealized Modern projects reappear – from Adolf Loos’s *Chicago Tribune* to Mies’s prismatic skyscraper and El Lissitzky’s *Wolkenbügel* – assembled in the fragmented fabric of the historic center of Berlin [Fig. 2].

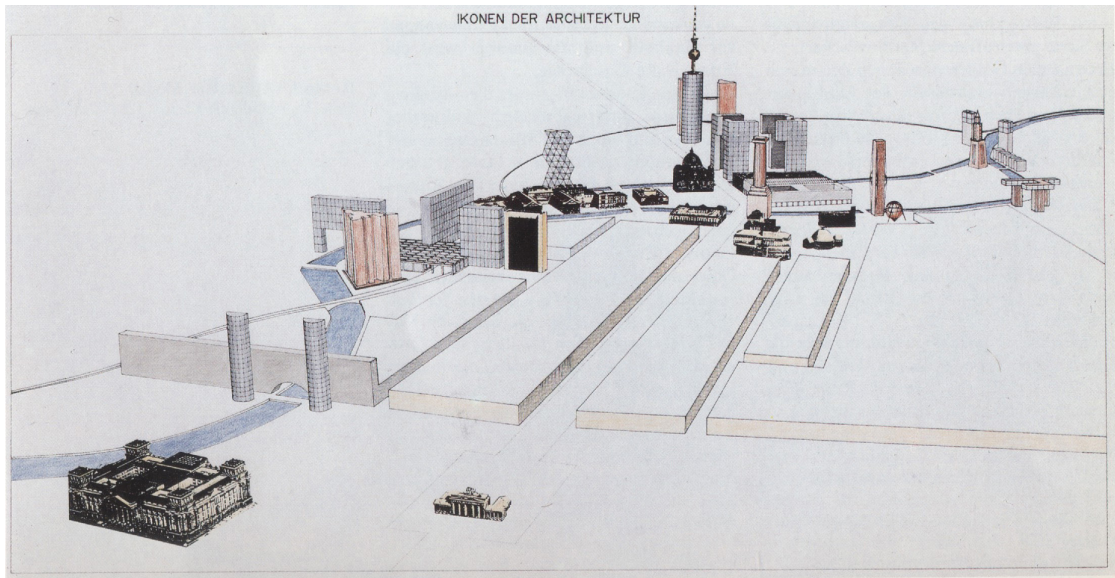
This idea of the icon as a tool adopted to embellish the Berlinese context, which allowed to accommodate reproductions of projects designed for other places went beyond the initial site-specific dimension and opened the city to a new analogical dimension, as already theorized by Aldo Rossi years earlier.²⁶ If in Rossi the *analogous city* is composed of fragments and projects taken from different eras and places to create a new city founded on memory, in Ungers’ *City in the City* – and later with greater demonstrative force in *Ikonenstadt* – these same quotations coexist within the stratified fabric of Berlin, transfiguring it into a visionary dimension, which is the result of imagination rather than of the principles proper to urban reconstruction as understood in those years. Compared to the latter, which was fundamentally based on reconfirming not only the traces but also the structure of the pre-war *parcellarium*, this hypothesis followed two different modes: on the one hand it re-proposed iconic unrealized projects of Berlin’s Modern on the site for which they had been conceived; on the other hand, it implanted in the urban fabric Modern icons for other cities, also

25 Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani and Michael Mönninger, eds., *Berlin Morgen. Ideen für das Herz einer Stadt* (Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1991).

26 Aldo Rossi, “La città analoga,” *Lotus*, no.13 (December 1976): 4-7.

Fig. 2

Ikonenstadt (Lampugnani, Mönninger, 1991).



2

remained on the paper. In this way he was opening the city to a dimension other than what it had been, superimposing a new iconic layer on top of the historic one. This idea of the city as an overlapping of layers would later be formally theorized by Ungers in his book *The Dialectic City*.²⁷

Similarly, Koolhaas would reuse this principle a few years later in the proposal he developed for Kochstrasse/Friedrichstadt in Berlin (1980-81), where some projects of Berlin's Modernism – Hilberseimer's City, Mies's skyscraper, and Mendelsohn's Haus des Deutschen Metallarbeiter-Verbandes – were assembled on the site of their original destination, superimposing themselves on the existing situation. It is no coincidence that it was precisely the choice to recall Hilberseimer's project – fundamentally based on the principle of *tabula rasa* – that anticipated Koolhaas's future anti-contextualist choices²⁸. Compared to Ungers' *dialectical* attitude,²⁹ this project shows a more radical will, opposite to the choices made a few years later by Josef Paul Kleihues' IBA.

Ungers & Schinkel

If these urban proposals aspired to disrupt the historical fabric – as fragmentary as it remained – of streets and squares, blocks and individual buildings surviving on individual plots, the fate of the city of Berlin would follow other paths. Contrary to Koolhaas' claims, Hans Kollhoff confirms how *City in the City* was for Ungers "an interesting exercise, but it was clear to him [Ungers] that it had no chance of being converted into reality." And he also considers, regarding the following direction of the IBA, "that it was a piece of good fortune that Kleihues got the job" instead of Ungers.³⁰ Because Kleihues' approach towards the urban history and its actual possibility of a critical reconstruction, unlike Ungers', was not an artistic one, but a pragmatic one. On the contrary, the *City in the City* accepted the fragmentary condition of downtown Berlin as an existing situation to be assumed *as found*, thus avoiding the danger of restoring the artificial unity of an alleged past, now permanently erased by the historical events. An idea poised between realism and romanticism – the aesthetics of ruins and the fragment – that, if it could fit in Glienicke's idyllic landscape, it would have proved wholly inadequate with respect to Berlin's concrete aspirations to return as capital of the reunited country.

Ungers' reference to Schinkel will remain constant, especially in his urban-scale projects within the historical fabric of Berlin. In these projects Schinkel adopted –³¹ a way of intervening punctually within the city's baroque layout,

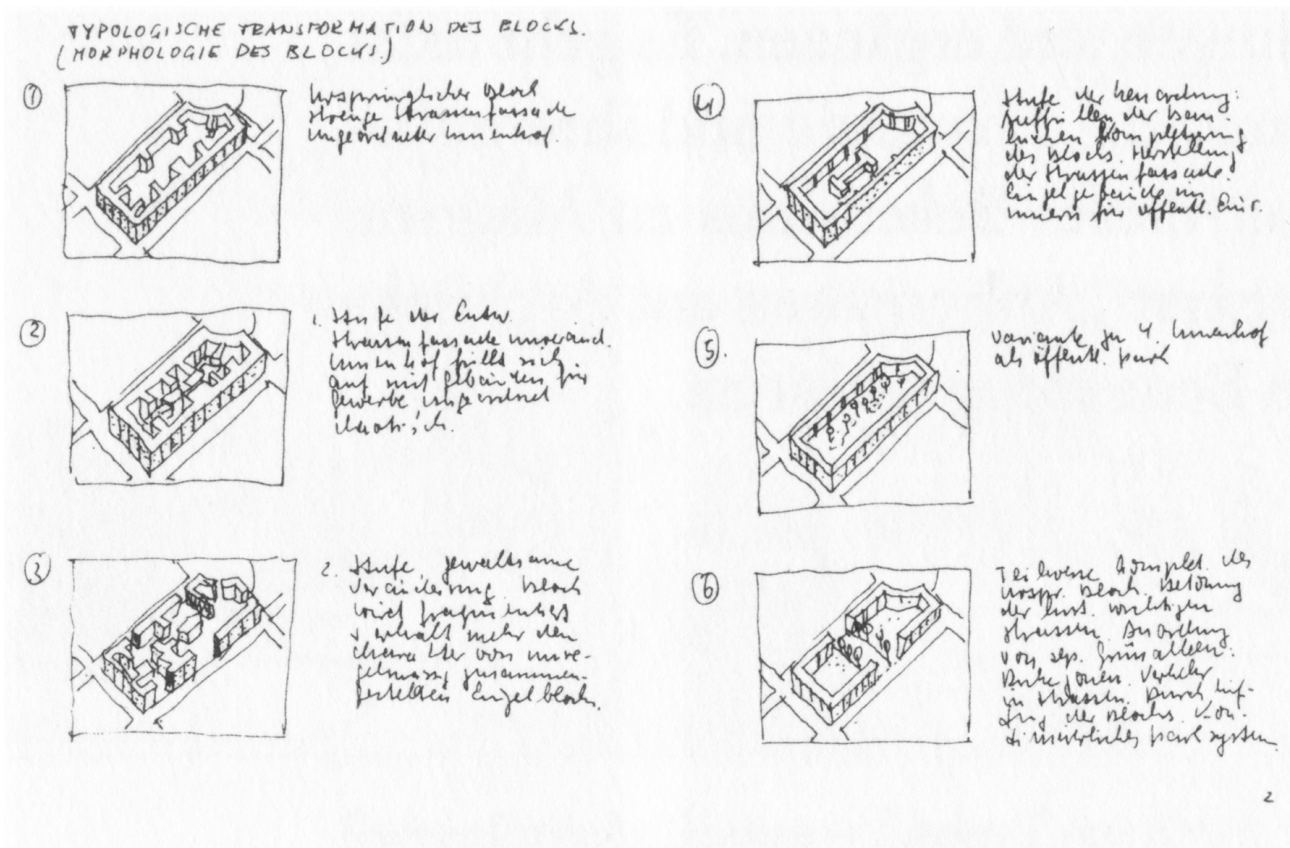
27 Oswald Mathias Ungers and Stefan Vieths, *The Dialectic City* (Milano: Skira, 1997).

28 François Chaslin, *Architettura@ della Tabula rasa@. Due conversazioni con Rem Koolhaas, ecc.* (Milano: Mondadori Electa, 2003).

29 Sam Jacoby, "Oswald Mathias Ungers: dialectical principles of design," *The Journal of Architecture*, 23, no. 7-8 (2018): 1230-1258, DOI: 10.1080/13602365.2018.1513415.

30 Hans Kollhoff, "An exciting Exercise. Hans Kollhoff in conversation with Florian Hertweck and Sébastien Marot", in *The City in the City*, ed. Florian Hertweck and Sébastien Marot (2013), 155-156.

31 Hermann G. Pundt, *Schinkels Berlin* (Frankfurt a.M.: Propyläen, 1981). See also: Kurt Forster, "Schinkel's Panoramic Planning of Central Berlin," *Modulus*, no. 16 (1983): 62-77.



2

3

transforming it from within according to the ideal of a new Greco-Roman classicism. As Pier Vittorio Aureli writes: "Ungers derived this approach from Karl Friedrich Schinkel's work as the city architect of Berlin. In Schinkel's Berlin the capital of Prussia was punctuated by singular architectural interventions, rather than being planned along the baroque principles of cohesive spatial design for the entire city. Ungers thought that this approach would be able to overcome the crisis of the city by turning the crisis itself (the impossibility of planning the city) into the very project the architecture of the city."³²

Abandoning the idea of transforming Berlin in an archipelago of islands, Ungers finds through Schinkel's punctual projects the right scale to intervene inside the fragmentary urban blocks of the Berlin of the '70s. From the scale of the quarter – reformatized through references in urban island – many of his future projects will thematize the scale of the urban block.

Block as *insula*

Compared to a more utopian approach, other projects and educational proposals of the same years developed by Ungers show a very different approach,

32 Pier Vittorio Aureli, "Toward the Archipelago. Defining the Political and the Formal in Architecture," *Log*, no. 11 (Winter 2008): 91-120, here: 114. See also: Id., "The city within the city. Oswald Mathias Ungers, OMA, and the project of the city as archipelago." in *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011), Chapter 3, on Schinkel: 178.

Fig. 3
Blockmorphologie, IDZ, 1975
(Cepl, 2007).

no longer influenced by Koolhaas's disurbanist aesthetic, with whom he would have no further occasion to collaborate after the *City in the City* experience. Ungers focuses on other issues, after careful consideration regarding the scale of the urban block. This had already been used in the American context in the now famous project for Roosevelt Island (1975) – a real island in this case – which reproduced the blocks of Manhattan in miniature, adopting for the first time the type of the Urban Villa, then widely experimented, around a repropoed Central Park.

The following year, the *Urban Block* would become the theme of the first Summer School held in Ithaca in 1976 with Cornell students, parallel to the project for *Gotham City*.³³ The didactic intent of the project is evident: as a sort of core sample extracted from the fabric of Lower Manhattan, a transversal strip of blocks extending between one bank and the other of the two rivers is taken to show the variational grammar of its settlement principles, according to the morphological method assumed by Ungers as the basis of his compositional procedure. In order to understand the richness and variability of the urban block, one must consider – as Jasper Cepl pointed out –³⁴ his contribution at the seminar held in Berlin in 1975 on the relationship between new interventions and the historic city at the IDZ (Internationale Design Zentrum), under the direction of Heinrich Klotz.³⁵ With the aim of proposing a “vocabulary” appropriate to the topic, Ungers illustrates with a sequence of tables “several morphological criteria” capable of covering “a whole spectrum of possible solutions,” ranging from the simplest to the most complex case, with respect to the theme of the urban block. Starting from the investigation of the existing “Blockmorphologie,” a block, which is for different reasons incomplete, can undergo different morphological processes of transformation. On the one hand, it can be reintegrated to its previous state through the reproposal of the original built perimeter. In this case, the continuity of the street curtain may or may not be adopted, with the possibility of using the urban villa, each individually defined. This type can also be used to densify and introduce new functions within the block, according to the theme of the *block within the block*. On the other hand, the block can be opened to the street, especially with a view to leaving the existing fragments *as found*, creating a *park* passing between one block and another³⁶ [Fig. 3].

Even if not directly used by Ungers, the term *insula* can be considered as the correspondent German term of *Stadtblock*, developed in his idea of *Blockmorphologie*. The term goes back to the Roman city and refers to a particular typology of houses organized around a central courtyard.

33 Oswald Mathias Ungers, Hans Kollhoff, Arthur Ovaska, *The Urban Block and Gotham City. Metaphors and Metamorphosis. Two Concurrent Projects*, Cornell University (Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell University, 1976).

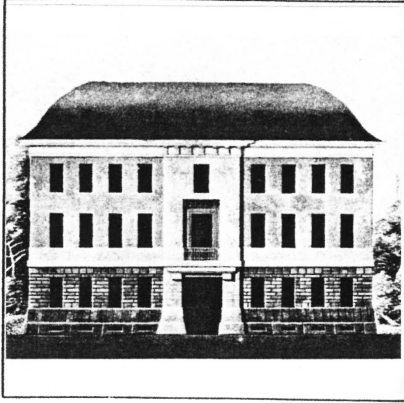
34 Jasper Cepl, *Oswald Mathias Ungers. Eine intellektuelle Biographie*, 324-331.

35 Martina Schneider, ed., *Entwerfen in der historischen Straße. Arbeiten des IDZ Symposiums im Herbst 1975 zur baulichen Integration Alt-Neu* (Berlin: Abakon, Edition Lichtenfelde, 1976).

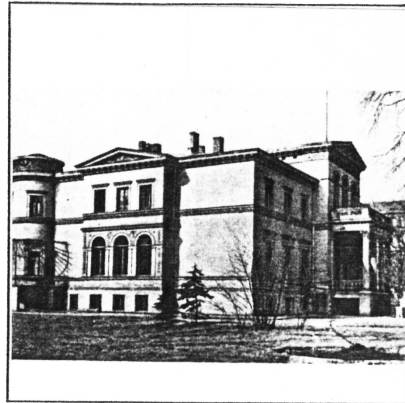
36 Oswald Mathias Ungers, “Untitled lecture on his morphological studies,” in Martina Schneider, ed., *Entwerfen in der historischen Straße*, 82-97.

Fig. 4

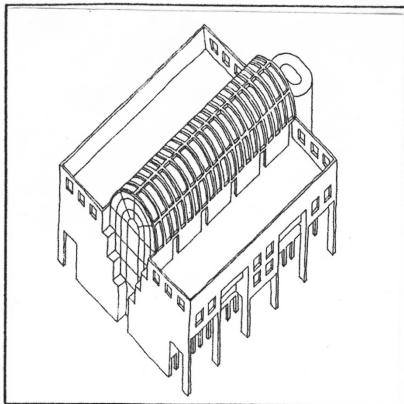
Urban Villa, references and design variants (Hertweck, Marot 2013).



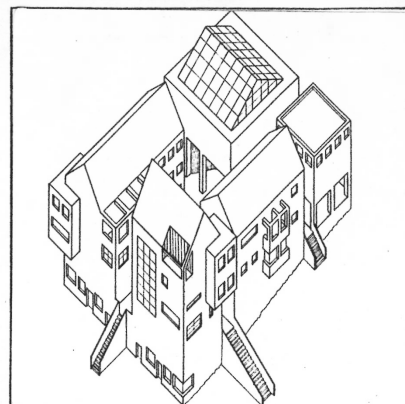
Wohnhausentwurf K.F.Schinkel 1798



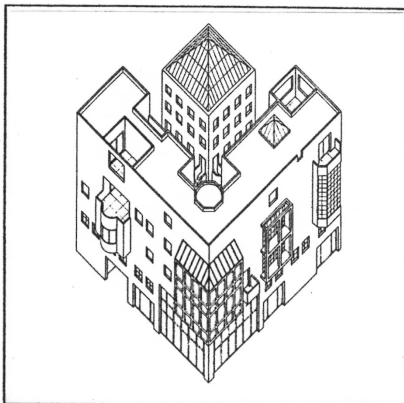
Villa Pflug von E. Knoblauch 1859



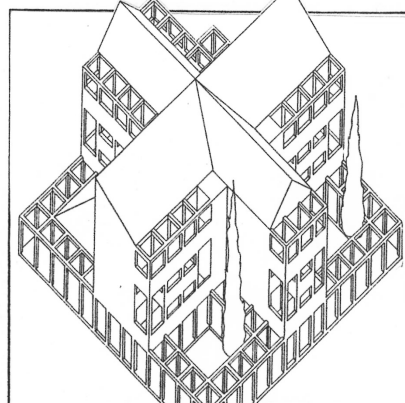
Villa mit Kaufpassage



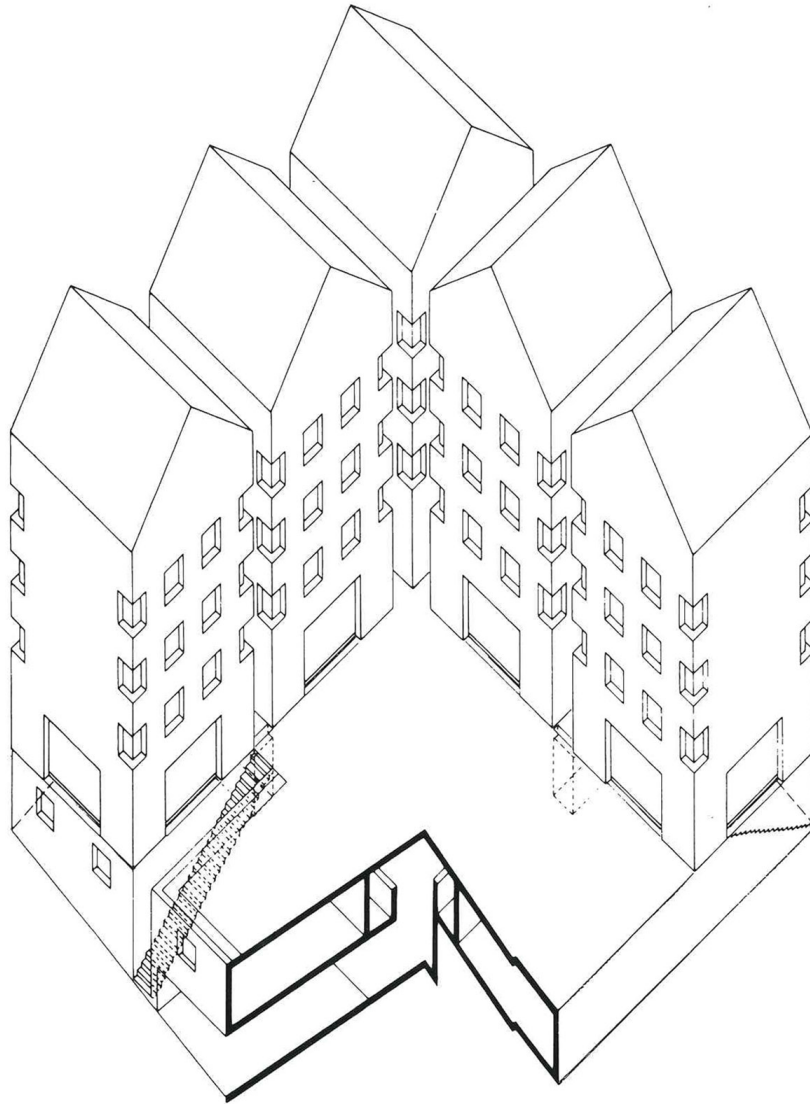
Villa mit internem Platz



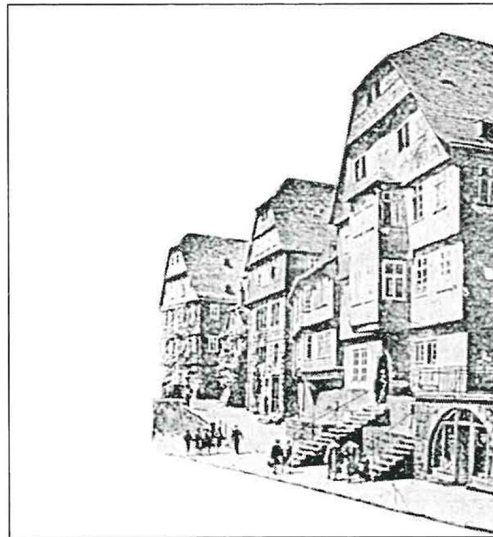
Eckvilla



Kreuzvilla Pergola



5 |



6 |

Some examples of *insulae romanae* were used by Aldo Rossi in his discussion about typology in *The Architecture of the City*.³⁷

The direct reference to the roman *insula* will be in the same years used by another architect – Léon Krier – for his IBA - proposal for a residential block in Berlin-Tegel (*Insula Tegeliensis*, 1980).³⁸ The proposal foresaw a regular urban block, built through isolated block houses – shaped in the form of ancient *palaZZi* around an inner courtyard, and accessible to the public from narrow passages.

After having shared with Rem Koolhaas the idea of a city made of formalized *urban islands*, Ungers works with a different morphological scale, as found inside the small dimension of historic blocks – not far from what at that time theorized and put into practice by the Krier and Kleihues during the IBA Berlin.³⁹

It is no coincidence that the *Lotus International* no. 19 in which *Cities within the city* was published was entirely dedicated to the theme of the *Urban Block*. Among the various contributions, Léon Krier presented the didactic experiences made with a group of international students on the Cerdà block in Barcelona – rethought from the type of the Urban Villa – as well as an extensive text devoted to the historical evolution of the urban block and its morphological variations.⁴⁰ This was followed by the presentation of Block 270, realized in the same year by Josef Paul Kleihues in Berlin-Wedding.⁴¹

Townhouse & Urban Villa

It is following this intention – the development of a specific “vocabulary” for different morphological variations inside the urban block – that Ungers will come into perfect harmony with Heinrich Klotz, who will later invite him to make a proposal for the completion of an urban block in the historic center of Marburg, the city where he was teaching. Later he offered him the opportunity to realize the new Frankfurt Museum of Architecture (DAM), placed – it is no coincidence – within a block of pre-existing urban villas.

The experience of Marburg was, de facto, the first opportunity for Ungers to measure himself within the consolidated limits of an historic texture. Ungers’ proposal for Marburg clearly shows his conception of architectural morphology

37 See the *Insula with the House of Aurighi and Serapide*, and the *House of Diana* in Ostia Antica, after the reconstruction drawings by the archaeologist Italo Gismondi (1940), in: Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 42-43.

38 *Insula Tegeliensis, Berlin; 1980; Krier, Leon 1946- ; Sanin, Francisco*. https://quod.lib.umich.edu/u/ummu/x-07-04853/07_04853. University of Michigan Library Digital Collections. Accessed January 14, 2024.

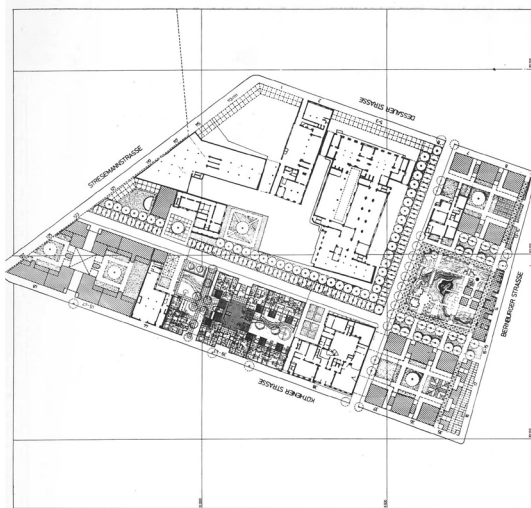
39 The *critical reconstruction* of the historic urban layout – put into practice during the 1984/87 IBA coordinated by Josef Paul Kleihues for the new-build sector of Friedrichstadt Süd, in particular – is based on three common principles: the repairing of the urban blocks, the completion of the urban voids, and the perimeter building along the street curtain. Thanks to these principles, it has been possible to reintegrate – albeit in an incomplete form – the compact fabric of the historic urban blocks, as they were before the devastations caused by the war and the subsequent urban planning strategies. See also: Hardt-Waltherr Hämer, Josef Paul Kleihues, eds., *Idee Prozess Ergebnis. Die Reparatur und Rekonstruktion der Stadt*, Berlin: IBA 1987 (Berlin, Fröhlich & Kaufmann, 1984).

40 Léon Krier, “Revision of the 19. Century Block. In the Ensanche – Barcellona”; “Fourth Lesson. Analysis and project for traditional urban block,” *Lotus International*, no. 19 (June 1978): 33-41; 42-55.

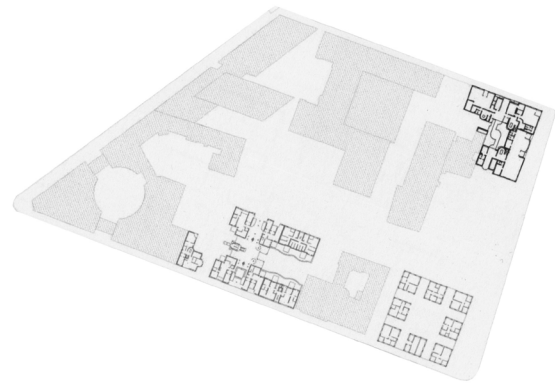
41 Josef Paul Kleihues, “Closed and open housing blocks. Notes on the case of Berlin and comments on the block 270 at Wedding,” *Lotus International*, no. 19 (June 1978): 56-74.

Fig. 5.6

Marburg, morphological variations and references (Ungers, Electa 1991).



7



8

through the different variations he offers on the type of the urban *Townhouse*, whose historical examples are found on the site. Just as he would experiment with his students shortly thereafter in the Summer School on the *Urban Villa*, here too the *repertoire* of historical references becomes fundamental in defining the variations of individual houses.

If the *Townhouse* refers typologically to the traditional block houses connected each other, to be found in the dense medieval blocks of German city centers – which can vary from the *Traufenhaus* to the *Gaubenhaus*, depending on the main orientation of their roof with respect to the street or the depth of the plot⁴² – the *Urban Villa* – as isolated block type – represents a historical reference traceable above all to the neo-classical city.⁴³

Indeed, in both of these experiences, the role of references – in this case found on the site, and not iconic buildings imported from elsewhere as in the *City in the City* project – is crucial in defining the morphological variations around the adopted type. The references are collected in photographic abacuses, taxonomically ordered within frames and compared with design proposals, usually axonometric views of the different design variants. To do these – Kollhoff recalls – Summer School students were sent around in the Südliche Friedrichstadt “walking around, making sketches and photographs of everything that might be interpreted as an urban villa (...) Then we collaged these villas into the plan”⁴⁴ [Fig. 4].

42 About the difference between *Traufenhaus* and *Gaubenhaus*, see: Robert E. Dickinson, *The west European City. A geographical interpretation* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951).

43 To the four different typologies of urban houses and the distinction between isolated and connected houses see: Jean Tricart, *Cours de Géographie Humaine, Fas. II – L’habitat urbain* (Paris: Centre de Documentation Universitaire, Sorbonne). To this way of typological classification directly referred Aldo Rossi: “From here derive four types of houses: 1. a block of houses surrounded by open space; 2. a block of houses connected to each other and facing the street, constituting a continuous wall parallel to the street itself; 3. a deep block of houses that almost totally occupies the available space; 4. Houses with closed courts and small interior structures”. Aldo Rossi *The Architecture of the City*, 49. See also: Giorgio Grassi, “Caratteri dell’abitazione nelle città tedesche (1966),” in Id., *L’architettura come mestiere e altri scritti* (Milano: FrancoAngeli), 11-25.

44 Kollhoff, “An exciting exercise”, 158.

Fig. 7.8

IBA - Block 1, ground floor plan: Plan elaborated by O.M. Ungers/B.F. Faskel/H.C. Müller (IBA, 1981).

Actual state (drawing: Silvia Grassi).

In the Project for Marburg, the *repertoire* of historical references – small Townhouses inserted along the street inside the building curtain – becomes fundamental in defining the morphological variations of the individual houses, distinguished according to five identified themes: regular or composite form, masonry outer shell around transparent inner core, direct quotations from historic examples, use of anthropomorphic forms. This gives rise to thirteen typological alternatives, all founded on the same square plan (6.5 by 6.5 meters). In the final version, the five houses bordering the corner of the block, next to two pre-existing historic houses, rest on a common two-story basement containing parking and other common facilities [Fig. 5].

Urban Garden

The City in the City reappears in reduced forms in the theme of the third and final Summer School, also held in Berlin, entitled *The Urban Garden*, which concludes the triad of the three themes addressed with the American students: the Block, the Villa, the Garden.⁴⁵ The theme of the urban garden is also associated with that of memory which takes on a central role in motivating the idea of *cultural landscape*, already anticipated previously, but now theorized in the text *Architektur der kollektiven Erinnerung*. If collective memory was one of the inspirational cornerstones of Rossi's theories of the 1960s – taken from the notion of *mémoire collective* introduced by French geographer Maurice Halbwachs –⁴⁶ the meaning given here by Ungers is rather inspired by the relationship between past and future as debated by the two protagonists – Marco Polo and Kublai Khan – in Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*.⁴⁷ The two asked each other, in an imaginary conversation, if the meaning of the journey undertaken in search of the past did not have as its objective that of finding motivations for the future. In another sense, the architecture of memory was found by Ungers in the exemplarity of Villa Adriana, understood as a “miniaturized universe” and as a humanistic city in which to preserve the knowledge of the Ancients. But also, as a model for the future, based on a pluralistic idea in which different places clash and enrich each other.⁴⁸

In this third Summer School, as Arthur Ovaska recalls, “a new concept for a city in a garden, in what was probably one of the most ruined and fragmented areas of West Berlin,” was developed. The subject of the seminar was to deal with the topic of “the ruined city, working with the existing fragments” and not with “a clean state approach like the Hansaviertel or Le Corbusier's and Smithsons’

45 Oswald Mathias Ungers, Hans Kollhoff, Arthur Ovaska, *The Urban Garden. Student Projects for the Südliche Friedrichstadt Berlin* (Köln: Studioverlag für Architektur L. Ungers, 1977).

46 Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1949).

47 Italo Calvino, *Le città invisibili* (Torino: Einaudi, 1972).

48 Oswald Mathias Ungers, “The Architecture of Collective Memory: The Infinite Catalogue of Urban Forms,” *Lotus International*, no. 24 (1979): 5-11.

Berlin proposals".⁴⁹ Not, therefore, the logic of the *tabula rasa* inherited from the Modern, but a realistic approach to the city as it was in its actual state and the involvement of the remaining fragments within the project proposals. Such an approach, however, did not coincide with that of urban renewal then *in vogue* and later put into practice by the IBA. The distinction concerned above all the freedom Ungers still took with respect to the multiple morphological possibilities of resolving a fragmentary block, sometimes inserting continuous gardens between different blocks, thus partially undermining the pre-existing order defined by the street layout and the continuous street's building curtain.

Block & Court

The possibility of working with isolated elements, making use of historical types such as the courtyard building – unsatisfactorily used by him for the first time in the House on Schillerstrasse in Berlin (1978-82) – would later be put into practice in the IBA-Block in the Friedrichsvorstadt. Compared with the morphological varieties of the Townhouses in Marburg or the Urban Villas designed with students, the extreme geometric regularity of the building – which is entirely defined by the square module – inaugurates a new phase in Ungers' work, aimed at geometric abstraction as a fundamental element of design, both at the urban and architectural scale. The three houses built on Block 1 between Köthener-, Bernburger- and Dessauer Strasse – along with Ungers, the other architects involved were Hans Christian Müller and the Baumeister/Richter group – are based on a unified plan he had coordinated together with Bernd Faskel and H.C. Müller on behalf of the IBA in 1981⁵⁰ [Fig. 6].

This plan did not follow the usual principle of continuous perimeter building (*geschlossene Randbebauung*) but completed the block with the addition of autonomous courtyard buildings, based on the depth of the pre-existing building volumes. In the plan conceived by Ungers the permeability of the block was guaranteed by public passages that gave access to the internal courtyard of each of the three buildings, with which they shared the same height and street-alignment. At the same time, the block was defined thanks to the individualization of each building in the single architectural choices and the morphological system, in which the continuity of the building curtain was secured through the definition of the two corners involved.

Compared to the morphological variations on the theme of the urban *insula* proposed at the conference organized by Klotz, a solution partially in line with the guiding principles proposed by Kleihues for Berlin's critical reconstruction is evident here.

49 Arthur Ovaska, "An Exhibition Concept: Arthur Ovaska in conversation with Sébastien Marot. August 2010", in *The City in the City* (ed. 2013), 151.

50 Josef Paul Kleihues, Gesamtleitung, *Schriftenreihe zur Internationalen Bauausstellung Berlin 1984/87: Die Neubaugebiete. Südliche Friedrichstadt 1987 Dokumente Projekte 3* (Berlin: IBA 1984/87, 1981), 83.

Far from the islands of the *City in the City*, Ungers now seems to focus on the individual building and its coherent insertion within the pre-existing block. In this way Ungers shows again his ability in adapting his projects to different ideas of the city, without losing their internal coherence.

Conclusions

If the idea of the urban archipelago understood as an *in-between* empty space is easy to trace in other urban-scale projects of the same years for new *Urban Gardens*, the principle of critical reconstruction theorized by Kleihues is based by Ungers on a geometrical layout which gives an unambiguous order to the structure of the block. In doing so, Ungers is always taking into account the existing situation, since he “does not intend to substitute the old for the new, but always seeks to contemplate, complete and reinforce the sense of what already exists”.⁵¹ On the other hand, this geometric order that overlaps with that of the pre-existing *parcellarium* will allow him to regain a relationship of continuity with the historic city while avoiding any nostalgic relapse into the forms of the past.

In the space of just a few years, Ungers tackles different urban and architectural scales, always with the intention of proposing solutions of a general nature, capable of presenting themselves as possible models for the future city, without forgetting that of the past, like Kublai Khan in his journey. In *City in the City* he makes use of iconic references – taken from other contexts according to analogical procedures – to give shape to urban parts set within a new context. In coeval projects on a smaller scale, he shows the ability to reuse typologies found on site – the Townhouse, the Urban Villa, the Court House – as possible models to be subjected to morphological experimentation.

Apart from the concrete results, it is precisely in this typological and morphological process – constantly put to the test with that notion of *genius loci* taken from Schinkel's architecture understood as both spatial and temporal rootedness to a place –⁵² that the full topicality of his work seems to be revealed, especially in relation to the current theme of designing within the inherited heritage of our historic cities.

51 Annalisa Trentin, “Ungers come educatore”, in Id, ed., *Oswald Mathias Ungers: una scuola* (Milano: Electa, 2004), 20 (Translation by the author).

52 Oswald Mathias Ungers, “Fünf Lehren aus Schinkels Werk,” in *Karl Friedrich Schinkel. Werke und Wirkungen*, edited by Senat von Berlin (Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1981), 245-249. Then in: *Die Thematisierung der Architektur* (Stuttgart: DVA-Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1983).

Bibliography

- Aureli, Pier Vittorio. "Toward the Archipelago. Defining the Political and the Formal in Architecture." *Log*, no. 11 (Winter 2008). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41765186>
- Aureli, Pier Vittorio. "The city within the city. Oswald Mathias Ungers, OMA, and the project of the city as archipelago." In *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 2011, Chapter 5.
- Aymonino, Carlo. *Lo studio dei fenomeni urbani*. Roma: Officina Edizioni, 1997.
- Calvino, Italo. *Le città invisibili*. Torino: Einaudi, 1972.
- Cepl, Jasper. *Oswald Mathias Ungers. Eine intellektuelle Biographie*. Köln: Verlag Walter König, 2007.
- Chaslin, François. *Architettura@ della Tabula rasa@. Due conversazioni con Rem Koolhaas, ecc.* Milano: Mondadori Electa, 2003.
- Dickinson, Robert E. *The west European City. A geographical interpretation*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951.
- Forster, Kurt. "Schinkel's Panoramic Planning of Central Berlin." *Modulus*, no. 16 (1983): 62-77.
- Grassi, Giorgio. "Caratteri dell'abitazione nelle città tedesche" (1966). In Id., *L'architettura come mestiere e altri scritti*. Milano: FrancoAngeli: 11-25.
- Hämer, Hardt-Waltherr, and Josef Paul Kleihues, eds. *Idee Prozess Ergebnis. Die Reparatur und Rekonstruktion der Stadt*. Berlin: IBA 1987/ Fröhlich & Kaufmann, 1984.
- Halbwachs, Maurice. *La mémoire collective*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1949.
- Hertweck, Florian, and Sébastien Marot, critical ed. *The City in the City. Berlin: A Green Archipelago. A manifesto (1977) by Oswald Mathias Ungers and Rem Koolhaas with Peter Riemann, Hans Kollhoff and Arthur Ovaska*. Köln: UAA Ungers Archives for Architectural Research, Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2013.
- Kleihues, Josef Paul. "Closed and open housing blocks. Notes on the case of Berlin and comments on the block 270 at Wedding." *Lotus International*, no. 19 (June 1978): 56-74.
- Kleihues, Josef Paul. *Gesamtleitung, Schriftenreihe zur Internationalen Bauausstellung Berlin 1984/87: Die Neubaugebiete. Südliche Friedrichstadt 1987 Dokumente Projekte 3*. Berlin: IBA 1984/87, 1981.
- Krier, Léon. "A City within the City." *A + U*, no. 84 (November 1977): 69-152.
- Krier, Léon. "Revision of the 19. Century Block. In the Ensanche – Barcellona." *Lotus International*, no. 19 (June 1978): 33-41.
- Krier, Léon. "Fourth Lesson. Analysis and project for traditional urban block." *Lotus International*, no. 19 (June 1978): 42-55.
- Jacoby, Sam. "Oswald Mathias Ungers: dialectical principles of design." *The Journal of Architecture*, 23, no. 7-8 (2018): 1230-1258.
- Magnago Lampugnani, Vittorio, and Michael Mönninger, eds. *Berlin Morgen. Ideen für das Herz einer Stadt*. Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1991.
- Mühlthaler, Erika, ed. *Lernen von O.M. Ungers*. Archplus, No. 181/182 (December 2006).
- Neumeyer, Fritz. "OMA's Berlin: The Polemic Island in the City." *Assemblage*, no. 11 (April 1990): 36-53.
- Neumeyer, Fritz. "L'enigma dell'architettura. Un tutto a sé stante e un'unità di particolari." In *Ungers. Architetture 1951-1990*. Milano: Electa, 1991.
- Pundt, Hermann G. *Schinkels Berlin*. Frankfurt a.M.: Propyläen, 1981.
- Rogers, Ernesto Nathan. "Le preesistenze ambientali e i temi pratici contemporanei." *Casabella-Continuità*, no. 204 (1955): 3-6.
- Schrijver, Lara. "OMA as Tribute to OMA: Exploring Resonances in the Work of Koolhaas and Ungers." *The Journal of Architecture* 13, no. 3 (2008): 235-61. doi:10.1080/13602360802214927.
- Schrijver, Lara. *Oswald Mathias Ungers and Rem Koolhaas: Recalibrating Architecture in the 1970s*. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2021.
- Trentin, Annalisa. "Ungers come educatore." In Id., ed., *Oswald Mathias Ungers: una scuola*. Milano: Electa, 2004.
- Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft, ed. *Oswald Mathias Ungers. Architekturlehre. Berliner Vorlesungen 1964-65*. Archplus, No. 179 (Juli 2006).
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias. "Designing and Thinking in Images, Metaphors and Analogies." In *Man trans-Forms*. New York: Cooper-Hewitt Museum, 1976, 98-113.

Ungers, Oswald Mathias. "Untitled lecture on his morphological studies." In Martina Schneider, ed. *Entwerfen in der historischen Straße. Arbeiten des IDZ Symposiums im Herbst 1975 zur baulichen Integration Alt-Neu*. Berlin: Abakon, Edition Lichterfelde, 1976.

Ungers, Oswald Mathias. "The Architecture of Collective Memory: The Infinite Catalogue of Urban Forms." *Lotus International*, no. 24 (1979): 5-11.

Ungers, Oswald Mathias, Hans Kollhoff, and Arthur Ovaska. *The Urban Block and Gotham City. Metaphors and Metamorphosis. Two Concurrent Projects*. Cornell University. Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell University, 1976.

Ungers, Oswald Mathias, Hans Kollhoff, and Arthur Ovaska. *The Urban Villa: A Multi Family Dwelling Type*. Köln: Studioverlag für Architektur L. Ungers, 1977.

Ungers, Oswald Mathias, Hans Kollhoff, and Arthur Ovaska. *The Urban Garden. Student Projects for the Südliche Friedrichstadt Berlin*. Köln: Studioverlag für Architektur L. Ungers, 1977.

Ungers, Oswald Mathias, Rem Koolhaas, Peter Riemann, Hans Kollhoff, and Arthur Ovaska. "La città nella città: Proposte della Sommer Akademie per Berlino." *Lotus International*, no. 19 (June 1978).

Ungers, Oswald Mathias. „Fünf Lehren aus Schinkels Werk.“ In *Karl Friedrich Schinkel. Werke und Wirkungen*, edited by Senat von Berlin, Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung 1981: 245-249.

Ungers, Oswald Mathias. *Morphologie – City Metaphors*. Köln: Verlag Walter König, 1982.

Ungers, Oswald Mathias. *Die Thematisierung der Architektur*. Stuttgart: DVA-Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1983.

Ungers, Oswald Mathias, and Stefan Vieths. *The Dialectic City*. Milano: Skira, 1997.

Van den Heuvel, Dirk. "As Found: The Metamorphosis of the Everyday. On the Work of Nigel Henderson, Eduardo Paolozzi, and Alison and Peter Smithson (1953-1956)." *Scratching the Surface, OASE*, no. 59 (2002): 52-67.

Oswald Mathias Ungers and the Concept of the Open City: Grünzug Süd and the Beginnings of Ungers' Urban Thinking

Oswald Mathias Ungers, Urban Planning, Post-war Architecture, Team 10, Architecture History

/Abstract

In 1962 the German architect Oswald Mathias Ungers submitted his proposal for the competition Grünzug Süd. The project, which is an urban planning study on the reconstruction of a southern district of the city of Cologne, was the beginning of Ungers' engagement with questions concerning urban planning. After submitting the project, Ungers continued working on the design for three more years, evolving his design methodology and delving into the field of urban planning. Thus, the project plays a pivotal role in the evolution of Ungers' design thinking. He gained international recognition for his seminal projects of the 1970s, above all *The City in the City*. Berlin: A Green Archipelago, but the concepts he applied in these projects have their origin in the work on Grünzug Süd during the first half of the 1960s.

Investigating the genesis of Ungers' urban planning projects means also to investigate his connection to members of Team 10, with whom Ungers collaborated from 1964 onwards. This text will carve out correlations between Grünzug Süd and projects conceived by Alison and Peter Smithson at the same time, thereby shedding light on urban planning concepts which are still relevant today. The projects are not only case studies for the interplay between architecture and urban planning in the development of new and existing city quarters, but also for a thorough analysis – and thus understanding – of the urban environment, meaning the built and unbuilt condition of an urban context planners engage with.

/Author

Dipl.-Ing. Dr.techn. Eva Sollgruber
Graz University of Technology
eva.sollgruber@tugraz.at

Eva Sollgruber is an assistant professor at the Institute for Building Typology and Design at Graz University of Technology. After studying architecture at TU Graz and Aalto University Helsinki, she worked in various architectural offices in Graz as well as in Amsterdam. Since 2013 she has been working in design teaching. She completed various research and teaching stays abroad and is co-editor of the publication "Trofaia. Architectural Concepts for a Future Coexistence". Her dissertation focused on the work of German architect Oswald Mathias Ungers and his concept of Großform. Her research includes historical investigations on post-war modernism as well as design research with the focus on circularity, refurbishment and building typologies.

[H]is architectural work nearly always functions on the level of urban design¹

Introduction

This quote by Italian architect Vittorio Gregotti is taken from a text published in 1976 in *Lotus International* introducing a series of projects which German architect Oswald Mathias Ungers and his team had conceived in prior years.² As Gregotti implies, the projects presented³ are architectural and urban at the same time, foreshadowing Ungers' design for *The City in the City. Berlin: A Green Archipelago*, published in *Lotus International* one year later, in the summer of 1977.⁴

In the issue of 1976, alongside his projects, Ungers himself delivers the text *Planning Criteria*⁵ in which he lays down five principles that are formative for his design methodology and which build the theoretical frame for the projects presented: (1) "the dialectical process with a reality as found", (2) "the problem of planning and accident", (3) "the plurality of solutions or the wide spectrum of the architectural interpretation of one and the same element", (4) "the concept of architecture as an environment or [...], the urban characteristics of architecture, (5) "the problem of choosing between precision and adaptability".⁶

Elaborating on the fourth criterion, Ungers states: "The projects demonstrate in several cases how the object-character of architecture can be diminished in favor of an architecture concept, which accomplishes a higher degree of quality than only a simple organization of a given program. Under this aspect architecture can become an urban element, which is conditioned to incorporate environmental functions."⁷

1 Vittorio Gregotti, "Oswald Mathias Ungers," *Lotus International*, no. 11 (1976): 12.

2 Employees and collaborators of Ungers in the 1960s and 70s, among others: K. L. Dietzsch, Ulrich Flemming, Peter Riemann, Jürgen Sawade, Harmut Schmetzer, Michael Wegener. Rarely mentioned but crucial to his work was Ungers' wife Liselotte Ungers. "Not only did she edit many of his texts, she was financially involved in the office and also kept an eye on the designs as well as the selection of competitions in which the office participated." (Daughter Sophia Ungers about her mother in a conversation with the author, Cologne, 15.04.2019). In the preface to the publication *Architecture as Theme* from 1982, Ungers himself describes his wife's influence on his work: "After many delays, I finally decided to write down my thoughts and ideas in a few days in seclusion with my wife. In a painstaking and admirable piece of detailed work, she revised the spontaneously formulated manuscript, organized the thoughts, clarified them by constant questioning, and wrote them again. For many years she has been the only constant interlocutor, condenser and mediator of my thoughts. Her advice and suggestions are an indispensable part of my work. She is not only a passive, but also an active co-author of this book." Translated by the author, original in German: Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Die Thematisierung der Architektur*, (Stuttgart: Dt. Verl.-Anst, 1983). Liselotte Ungers also founded the *Studioverlag für Architektur* in Cologne and thus made it possible for Ungers to pursue his publishing activities during his tenure at Cornell University, Ithaca, USA. She also published several books herself in the 1970s.

3 Kuhgassenviertel Düren (1973), Landwehrkanal-Tiergartenviertel Berlin (1973), 4. Ring Berlin-Lichterfelde (1974), Wallraf-Richartz-Museum Köln (1975).

4 Cf. Oswald Mathias Ungers et al., "Cities within the city: Proposal by the Sommer Akademie for Berlin," *Lotus International*, no. 19 (June 1978): 82-97.

5 Oswald Mathias Ungers, "Planning Criteria," *Lotus International*, no. 11 (1976): 13. The text, with minor differences, was originally the German transcript of a lecture held by Ungers in 1975: Oswald Mathias Ungers, "Projekte als typologische Collagen," in *Dortmunder Architekturtag 1975. Das Prinzip Reihung in der Architektur*, ed. Josef Paul Kleihues (Dortmund: Universität Dortmund, 1977), 169-171.

6 Ungers, "Planning Criteria," 13. The German description of the five criteria are: (1) "die Auseinandersetzung mit der vorgefundenen Realität", (2) "[das] Problem von Planung und Zufall", (3) "die Vielfältigkeit des Angebotes oder die Bandbreite des architektonischen Spektrums", (4) "die Interpretation der Architektur als ein gestalterischer Organisator der Umwelt, [...] [der] Urbanitätscharakter der Architektur", (5) "Präzisierung und Anpassung". Ungers, "Projekte als typologische Collage," 170.

7 Ungers, "Planning Criteria," 13.

Ungers hereby advocates for an architecture which not only takes urban planning aspects into consideration, but becomes an urban element itself, trying to overcome the notion of architecture as a planning discipline dealing solely with the organization of functions and incorporating ideas in his arguments which are widely debated during the 1960ies and 1970ies.⁸

Further on, Ungers clarifies his statements and proposes examples of an “architecture as an environment”: “a street, a bridge, a plateau, a wall, a hole in the ground, a plaza, a stair, a terrace, a pedestrian system, a roof: in more general terms it can become an urban organizational element of a higher order.”⁹ These terms and way of thinking allude to Ungers’ concept of *Großform* he developed ten years before in 1966, in which he classifies selected projects in categories like street, bridge, or plateau, and pleads for a “Vorhandensein eines Ordnungsprinzips” (presence of an ordering principle) and an architecture which has to reach a “höhere Entwicklungsstufe” (higher level of development).¹⁰

Not only does the text of 1976 refer to theories Ungers developed in the 1960s, but also to a project: drawings of a building block of the urban planning study *Grünzug Süd* from 1962 are shown alongside Gregotti’s introductory text.¹¹ Without commenting on the project itself or its connection to *Planning Criteria* or the other projects presented, the drawings of *Grünzug Süd* stand for themselves. The project seems to function as an introduction to the whole article and as a reference point for the other projects. And indeed, several years later, Ungers called *Grünzug Süd* a “Schlüsselmodell”¹² (key model) for his design methodology, in which he incorporated many of the ideas he would develop throughout his career.

This paper aims at investigating the beginnings of Ungers’ urban thinking by examining the project *Grünzug Süd* thereby focusing on Ungers’ career between 1963 – the year he took up a professorship at TU Berlin – and 1967, when Ungers left Berlin for Cornell University in the USA. This time span in Ungers’ career is characterized by contemplation, experimentation and learning, and *Grünzug Süd* accompanied him during that stage of his life: after submitting it to the competition in 1962, Ungers continued to work on the project until 1965, the

8 Especially during the 1960ies, Ungers was very much influenced by architectural concepts that can be summarized by the broadly defined term of structuralism. The focus on urban planning and the emphasis on its importance for the future development of architecture and society as a whole was one of the prevalent themes in the theoretical debates of the 1960ies, be it the idea of Group Form put forward by Fumihiko Maki in 1960 (published in German in 1963: Fumihiko Maki, “Group Form,” *Das Werk: Architektur und Kunst* 50, no. 7 (1963): 258-263), or the concept of polyvalence introduced to architecture by Hermann Hertzberger in 1962: Hermann Hertzberger, “Flexibility and polyvalency,” *Forum* 16, no. 3 (1962): 115-121. The latter being an important influence for Ungers’ architectural thinking: cf. Eva Sollgruber, “Die Idee der Großform. Eine neue Sicht auf das Werk des Architekten Oswald Mathias Ungers und die Frage nach einem möglichen Entwurfswerkzeug” (PhD diss., Graz University of Technology, 2020), 133-138.

9 Ungers, “Planning Criteria,” 13.

10 Cf. Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Großformen im Wohnungsbau* (Berlin: Universitätsverlag der TU Berlin, 1966), no p.

11 An axonometric drawing and a plan, both of the so-called “Zitadelle”, are shown. Cf.: Gregotti, “Oswald Mathias Ungers,” 12.

12 Oswald Mathias Ungers, “Vielfalt, die nicht auf Einheit gründet, ist Verneinung. Einheit die nicht auf Mannigfaltigkeit beruht, ist Tyrannei (Blaise Pascal). Oswald Mathias Ungers im Gespräch mit Nikolaus Kuhnert,” *ARCH+* 19. no. 85 (1986): 34.

year he presented it at a Team 10 meeting in Berlin, finally publishing it in 1966.¹³

Ungers focused on morphological and architectural aspects while working on the project over the years, but this text will show that the analysis and identification of specific characteristics of the urban context, and in particular of existing green spaces, are key elements of the project and Ungers' approach towards urban planning. In order to investigate this thesis and get a deeper understanding of the project, *Grünzug Süd* will be compared with the concept of the *Open City* developed by Alison and Peter Smithson at the same time. During the 1960ies Ungers was in close contact with members of Team 10, especially with Peter Smithson and Shadrach Woods, whose projects had an enormous influence on his work.¹⁴

The Beginnings – Start at the TU Berlin and Contact to Team 10

In an interview from the 1980s, Ungers refers to his appointment as professor at the Technical University Berlin in 1963 as a “prägendes Erlebnis”¹⁵ (formative experience) in his career due to the fact that he is forced to theoretically articulate his approach – in practice as well as in teaching – for the first time. 1963 marked the beginning of Ungers' phase of introspection concerning his design practice and intensive theoretical research.

In 1965, Ungers began to publish the results of his teaching in a series of booklets entitled *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur* (VzA). The projects and topics presented in these brochures are a manifestation of his reflections, focusing on questions of urban infrastructure and mass housing, with the city of Berlin as a testing ground. Ungers not only documented the work of students produced in his seminars, but also presented his own designs, transcripts of various lectures, and contributions by invited guests. One of the guest lecturers was Team 10 founder Peter Smithson.¹⁶

Ungers first became acquainted with the work of Team 10 as a spectator at the ninth CIAM in 1953 in Aix-en-Provence, where the group caused an upheaval with their rebellion against the founders of CIAM and their idea of a functional city. For Ungers, the congress represented “the first ever confrontation with the question of ‘urban architecture’”¹⁷. He was particularly impressed by Shadrach

13 He first published the project in the third edition of his own series of booklets called *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur* (VzA) which were produced at his institute at the TU Berlin. Oswald Mathias Ungers et al., *Team X Treffen* (Berlin: Universitätsverlag der TU Berlin, 1966). One month later, the project was published in *Deutsche Bauzeitung*: Oswald Mathias Ungers, “ein Beitrag zur Architektur,” *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 71, no. 7 (July 1966): 579-584.

14 Cf. Eva Sollgruber, “Die Idee der Großform. Eine neue Sicht auf das Werk von Oswald Mathias Ungers,” *Wolkenkuckucksheim | Cloud-Cuckoo-Land | Воздушный замок*, *International Journal of Architectural Theory* 25, no. 41 (2021): 117-133. Here the role of the city of Berlin, as an important subject, or source of inspiration, of many of the projects conceived by the Smithson and Ungers in the 1960ies has to be mentioned. The urban condition of Berlin with its open city center, coined by the destruction of World War II and the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961, sparked many theoretical debates on urbanism and reconstruction at that time and can be understood as fundamental for conceiving concepts like the Open City.

15 Oswald Mathias Ungers, “Das war eine ungeheuer kreative Situation ... Thomas Sieverts, Oswald Mathias Ungers, Georg Wittwer im Gespräch mit Nikolaus Kuhnert,” *Bauwelt* 73, no. 48 (December 1982): 1958.

16 Cf. Peter Smithson, *Without Rhetoric. Some thought for Berlin* (Berlin: Universitätsverlag der TU Berlin, 1965).

17 Translated by the author, original in German: “die erste Konfrontation mit der Frage ‘Städtebau-Architektur überhaupt.’ Ungers, “Das war eine ungeheuer kreative Situation ...,” 1957.

Woods and the projects by his office Candilis-Josic-Woods.¹⁸

Another pivotal moment for Ungers' career was the seminar and symposium *Sanierung der Spandauer Altstadt* (Redevelopment of the Old Town of Spandau) in 1964 at TU Berlin, which had a lasting effect on Ungers' work. Team 10 members Jerzy Soltan, Gioncarlo De Carlo, Shadrach Woods and others were invited to the symposium. Ever since then, Ungers collaborated with Team 10, becoming a loose member of the group in 1965.

In the seminar, renowned German urban planners like Fritz Eggeling and Thomas Sieverts worked alongside Ungers. This was a difficult situation for Ungers, since, up to that point, he had considered himself a beginner in questions concerning urban planning: "When it came to matters of urban planning, I was practically an amateur. I only got involved with urban planning via architecture, but not as a professional, but rather as dilettante."¹⁹

Jasper Cepl, Ungers' biograph, considers the Spandau seminar as the starting point for Ungers to reconsider his previous understanding of architecture and turn to questions of urban planning.²⁰ On the one hand, this new approach manifests itself in the topics Ungers discusses in his seminars, and on the other, in his own projects he conceives from the mid-1960s onwards, *Grünzug Süd* being their precursor.

Grünzug Süd

Grünzug Süd is an urban planning study on the reconstruction of parts of Zollstock and Raderthal districts to the south of Cologne which had been widely destroyed in the Second World War. The overall plan of those districts goes back to Fritz Schumacher's urban development plan for the City of Cologne from the 1920s, projecting these two districts as a green corridor connecting the city center with the outer green belt.²¹

Ungers worked on the project for several years, from 1962 to 1965.²² Within these four years, the project underwent several alterations and Ungers put a special emphasis on different aspects of the design: according to documents from the *Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft* (UAA) in Cologne, the plan-

18 Woods, who lived in Berlin from 1963 onwards to manage the local construction supervision for two projects of his office – the extension of the Free University of Berlin and a residential building in the Märkische Viertel – became a good friend and important interlocutor of Ungers. Cf. Jasper Cepl, Oswald Mathias Ungers. Eine intellektuelle Biographie (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2007), 192.

19 Translated by the author, original in German: "In städtebaulichen Fragen war ich praktisch ein Amateur. Ich kam erst über die Architektur zum Städtebau, aber nicht als Professioneller, sondern gewissermaßen als Dilettant." Ungers, "Das war eine ungeheuer kreative Situation ...," 1958.

20 Cf. Cepl, *Oswald Mathias Ungers*, 184.

21 Cf. Plan des künftigen Systems der Grünanlagen und Freiflächen, in: Fritz Schumacher, Köln. Entwicklungsfragen einer Großstadt (Köln: Saaleck-Verlag, 1923), 112.

22 Different dates of the project circulate in various publications on Ungers' work. In order to shed light on the confusing data available about the project, this text takes its sources only from the original material available at Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft (UAA) in Cologne, and from the plans and texts of the project presented by Ungers himself in 1965 at the Team 10 meeting in Berlin: Ungers et al., Team X Treffen.



1

ning phase of the general plan of the area dates from 1962 to 1964.²³ After this period, Ungers drew his attention to the design of specific buildings, above all a building block called “Zitadelle” (citadel) dominating the center of the site, and a row of single-family houses at the south end of the project area.²⁴ In the archive, the project descriptions of these two buildings dated 1965 are accompanied by a multitude of detailed plans.²⁵

Ungers divided the project area into five segments, thus trying to strengthen the existing identity of each zone with his design [Fig. 1]. He thereby established various spatial characteristics of existing public green spaces as the foundation of his proposal. Most of the project description is devoted to depicting the specific spatial qualities of the project’s urban green areas: Zone 1 is characterized by the existing *Volkspark*, which takes the form of an English landscape garden. Zone 2 accommodates sports facilities for competitive sports. The green areas in this zone are designed as artificial slopes. Zone 3 functions as a recreational area for the districts, incorporating the existing *Vorgebirgspark*. Zone 4 contains playgrounds cut into a sloping terrain level. Here, Ungers conceived the green as part of the new architecture. Finally, Zone 5 connects the district to the outer green belt. The planting and paths are laid out loosely.²⁶

The conditions of existing green spaces were Ungers’ source for carving out the urban identity of each segment, which led him to suggestions for new buildings in each zone (except Zone 1 which is dominated by the *Volkspark*):

23 Cf. project description “Projekt: Köln, Grünzug Süd,” Rotpunktordner 28/I, UAA.
 24 Contrary to usual practice, the plans of the project are presented in a west-east orientation.
 25 Cf. project description “Projekt: Köln-Zollstock, Grünzug Süd,” Rotpunktordner 28/I, UAA.
 26 Cf. “Erläuterungen zum Projekt Grünzug Süd in Köln”: Ungers et al., *Team X Treffen*.

Fig. 1
 Zoning of the planning area of Grünzug Süd. Ungers, Oswald Mathias: Architektur 1951-1990, edited by Fritz Neumeyer. Mailand/Stuttgart: Dt. Verlags-Anstalt 1991, 51. © Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft Köln (UAA).

for Zone 2 he proposed a new sports hall, while in Zone 3 Ungers designed the so-called *citadel* or “Haus der offenen Tür” (open house), which he planned in detail during the further processing of the project. In Zone 4 he added a row of single-family houses to the existing situation, and in Zone 5, a perimeter building to function as a closure for the district.²⁷

The newly built structure of the project was hereby developed from, and determined by, the condition of the existing environment. For each of the zones, Ungers developed specific characteristics for the open green spaces as well as distinct building typologies, both rooted in the spatial conditions and history of the planning area.

After his competition entry in 1962, Ungers specified his design by trying to articulate “themes” for the new buildings inserted in the area. His aim was to develop a “neue größere Ordnung”²⁸ (new greater order) for the region which would tie the new buildings to the existing heterogeneous structure. This was the starting point of Ungers’ reflections on morphological transformation and a design method he developed in the following years.²⁹

In 1963, Ungers produced a diagram depicting the themes of the design: “wall”, “block” and “street” [Fig. 2],³⁰ again a reference to his concept of *Großform* which he would formulate in 1966 and which would accompany his architectural thinking throughout his career.³¹ These themes extend over several street sections, depicting an architectural conceptual frame for the urban connection of Cologne’s inner city with the suburbs and the outer green belt. The variations within each theme coincide with the distinct zones Ungers defined for his design. Essentially, the project becomes a collection of variations of these themes which can be read along the north-south axis of the project area, manifesting themselves in different urban housing building types [Fig. 3].

In an interview from 1982, it became apparent how important the project was for Ungers’ work and for his approach to urban design: “The decisive work in this area, which had a certain theoretical basis and was not just an intuitive search, or a process of trial and error, was [...] the work for the Grünzug Süd in Cologne. This work was an important step for me towards an urban design based on three criteria.”³² One of these criteria is the method of morphological transformation. The other two criteria are the analysis of the context and the history of

27 Cf. “Erläuterungen zum Projekt Grünzug Süd in Köln”: Ungers et al., *Team X Treffen*.

28 “Erläuterungen zum Projekt Grünzug Süd in Köln”: Ungers et al., *Team X Treffen*.

29 In Ungers’ seminal publication *Thematisierung der Architektur*, Grünzug Süd is used as an example for the topic of “Transformation” alongside the designs for Museum Morsbroich (1976-80) and the student housing in Enschede (1964). Ungers, *Thematisierung*, 17-34.

30 In *Thematisierung der Architektur*, Ungers and his wife themselves date the diagram to 1963. (Ungers, *Thematisierung*, 32) In publications about Ungers, the diagram is mostly dated to 1965. It can be assumed that 1963 is the correct date. This is relevant because it means that Grünzug Süd is the start of Ungers’ work on the design method of morphological transformation and projects like the student housing in Enschede from 1964 build on this project.

31 Cf. Sollgruber, “Die Idee der Großform”.

32 Translated by the author, original in German: “Die entscheidende Arbeit auf diesem Gebiet, die eine gewisse theoretische Grundlage hatte und nicht nur ein intuitives Suchen, Probieren war, war [...] die Arbeit für den Grünzug Süd in Köln. Diese Arbeit war für mich ein wichtiger Schritt zu einem Städtebau, der auf drei Kriterien basiert.” Ungers, “Das war eine ungeheuer kreative Situation ...”, 1957.

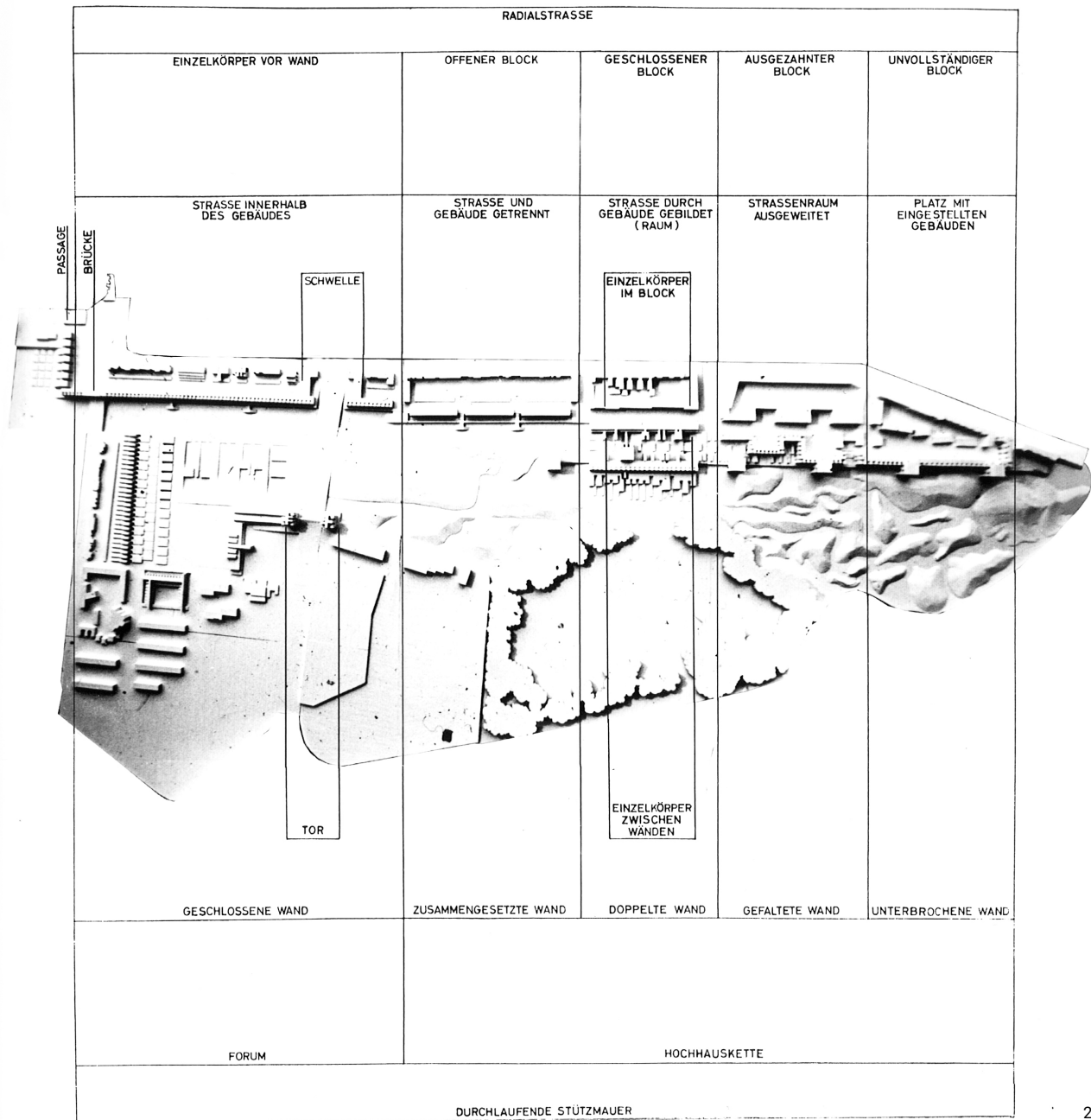
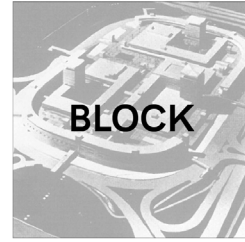
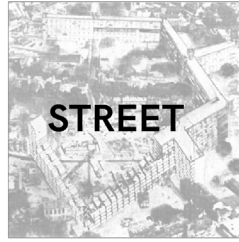


Fig.2

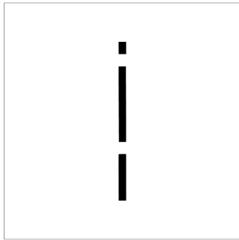
Thematic site plan

ARCH+, 181/182 (2006), 53.

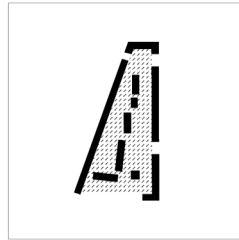
© Ungers Archiv für
Architekturwissenschaft Köln
(UAA).



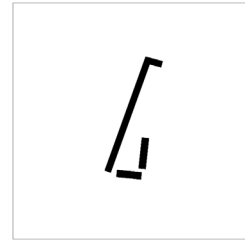
broken wall



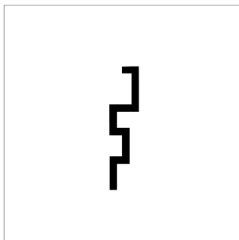
square with buildings



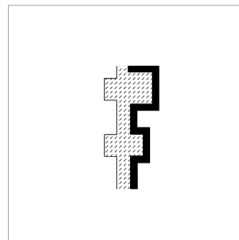
incomplete block



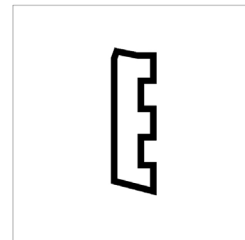
folded wall



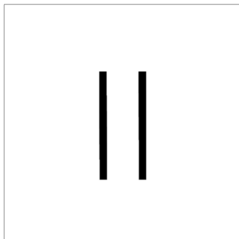
street expanded



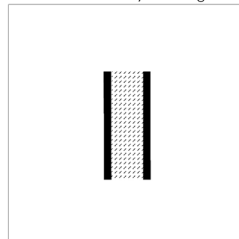
toothed block



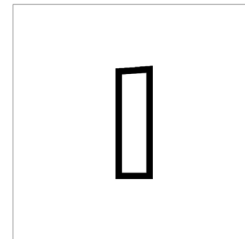
double wall



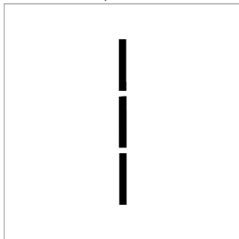
street formed by buildings



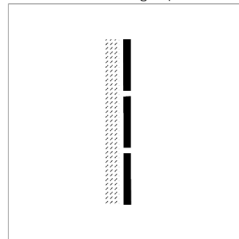
closed block



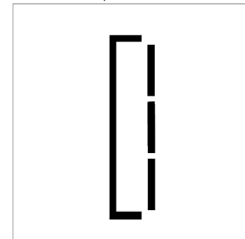
composite wall



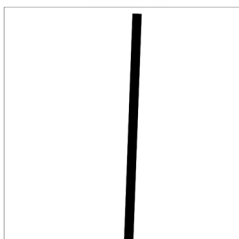
street and building separated



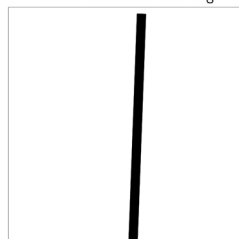
open block



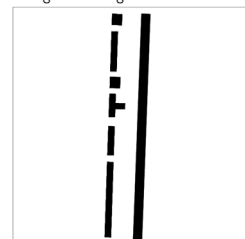
closed wall



street within the building



single buildings in front of wall



a specific place, all implemented in *Grünzug Süd*.³³

The Open City

In 1963, the same year Ungers started his professorship at the TU Berlin, continuing his work on *Grünzug Süd* following the competition entry, Alison und Peter Smithson published their project *Greenways and Landcastles*. They proposed a system of greenways and paths in West London, interspersed with residential areas called “landcastles”. This greenway structure is based on existing paths through parks and fallow land which are conceived as “open spaces”³⁴ within the city structure. In the project, these existing green areas connect to each other, creating a “green linkage system”³⁵ that functions as a route system for pedestrians and cyclists as an alternative to the city’s street pattern, and which also connects to existing housing areas in West London as well as to public buildings like schools and hospitals.³⁶

Landcastles scattered within the green areas, on the other side, are city quarters, residential districts, connected to the network of greenways, which also protect them from the city’s noise and pollution. These areas function as new city districts and are intended to mitigate the pressure on the historical city center: “the city as a whole has become a cluster of pressure points”³⁷.

With this project, the Smithsons envision an image of the city, the *Open City*, which is no longer organized as concentric and hierarchical, but flat and pluralistic. A sketch accompanying the project’s description and plans depicts this idea of a city showing *landcastles*, clusters of buildings, within an open green field [Fig. 4]. The Smithsons use this drawing one year later in 1964 to support their arguments in the article *The Open City Centre*³⁸. The text combines concepts conceived in *Greenways and Landcastles* with their project *Mehringplatz* from 1962.

In the text, they focus on the city of Berlin with its rather unique – in the European context – open city center and reflect upon new guiding principles of urban planning thinking: “The availability of space enables a new conception of urban design.”³⁹ Their proposal focuses on the area around *Mehringplatz*, a city square in the district of *Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg* which was heavily destroyed in the Second World War and subject to many development proposals and controver-

33 Cf. Ungers, “Das war eine ungeheuer kreative Situation ...,” 1957.

34 Alison Smithson and Peter Smithson, *The Charged Void* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2005), 113.

35 Smithson and Smithson, *The Charged Void*, 113.

36 Cf. Smithson and Smithson, *The Charged Void*, 113.

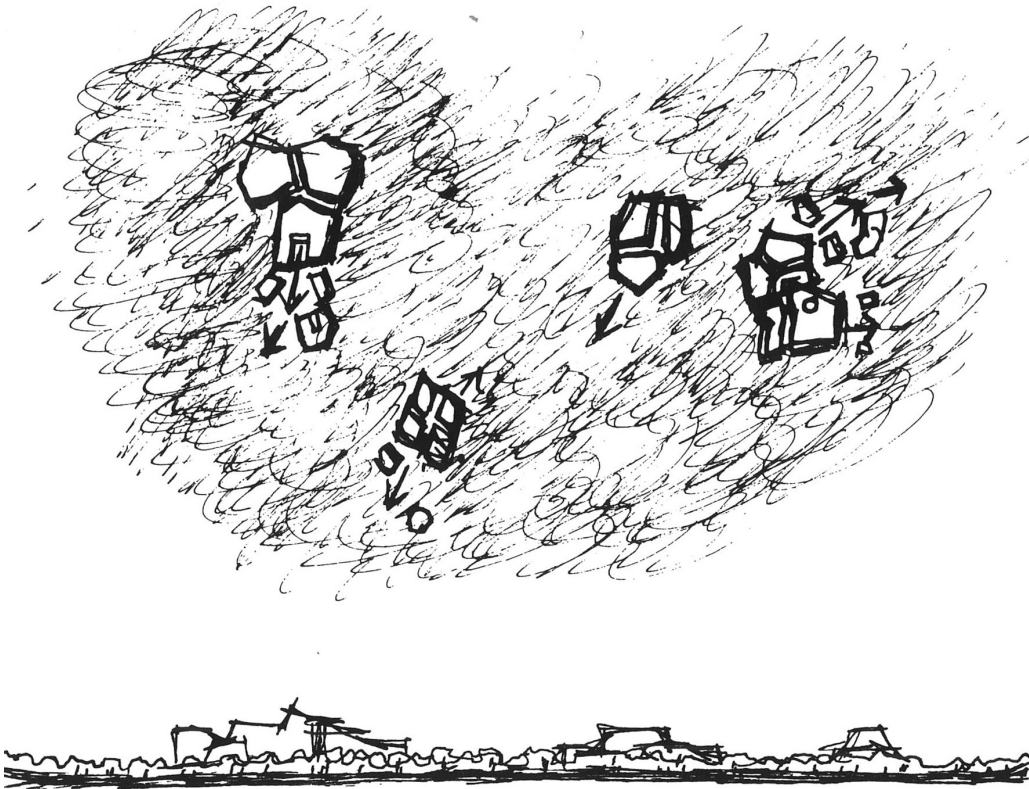
37 Smithson and Smithson, *The Charged Void*, 113. The idea of the Open City is reminiscent of concepts put forward by German urbanist Johannes Göderitz and Austrian architect Roland Rainer in 1957 under the title *Die gegliederte und aufgelockerte Stadt*. They developed a concept of the city as “an organic structure of more or less independent urban cells with their own local centers”. Translated by the author, original in German: “ein organisches Gefüge mehr oder weniger selbstständiger Stadtzellen mit eigenen örtlichen Mittelpunkten”. Johannes Göderitz, et al., *Die gegliederte und aufgelockerte Stadt* (Tübingen: Verlag Ernst Wasmuth, 1957), 19.

38 Cf. Alison Smithson and Peter Smithson, “Die offene City,” *Bauen + Wohnen* 18, no. 1 (1964): 18-19.

39 Translated by the author, original in German: “Die Verfügbarkeit von Raum ermöglicht eine neue Auffassung des Städtebaus.” Smithson and Smithson, “Die offene City,” 18.

Fig.3 (opposite page)

Transformation of the themes “wall”, “street”, and “block”
© Eva Sollgruber, 2019.



sies, especially during the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. *Internationale Bauausstellung* 1987).

The Smithsons' strategy for the new conception of the square was that of re-naturalization, with *Mehringplatz* planned as a park, as an open space within the city's tissue, with single buildings clustered to *landcastles* implanted in the green space. The reconstruction of old street blocks was to be abandoned in favor of a heterogeneous building structure held together by green areas. According to the Smithsons, unlike projects like the Hansa district in Berlin, this model of the *Open City* can function as a role model for a new urban thinking for the future.⁴⁰

“Place-Making”

Analyzing Ungers' *Grünzug Süd* in conjunction with urban concepts conceived by Alison and Peter Smithson at the same time, one cannot but recognize conceptual commonalities between the projects. Similar to Ungers' proposal for the districts in Cologne, the Smithsons' starting point for *Greenways and Landcastles* was the analysis of existing green public spaces in the projected neighbor-

⁴⁰ Cf. Smithon and Smithson, “Die offene City,” 18. The Smithsons also mention Scharoun's contribution to the competition of Hauptstadt Berlin in 1957 as a reference point for their arguments. Based on the fragmented structure of Berlin, Scharoun does not propose a coherent city plan, but rather a differentiated urban structure with specific architectural structures within nature, which function as carriers of central urban functions. Cf. Bundesministerium für Wohnungsbau Bonn and Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen Berlin, Berlin. *Ergebnis des internationalen städtebaulichen Ideenwettbewerbs Hauptstadt Berlin* (Stuttgart: Karl Krämer Verlag, 1960) 43-48.

hoods, from which they developed their concept for the built structure and the urban plan.

Furthermore, in both projects, the architects tried to put forward a strategy for creating cohesion in an otherwise heterogeneous and dispersed urban environment. The major difference between these projects were the means creating the cohesion: Ungers' unifying elements were architectural, that is, the new buildings inserted in the existing structure. The Smithsons, on the other hand, conceived the green spaces themselves as cohesive elements: "These strips of greenery are kinds of seams in areas that otherwise have no quality of cohesion."⁴¹

In addition, the concept of *landcastles* refers to the idea of the *Cluster City* the Smithson put forward in 1957⁴². According to the Smithsons, clusters represent "meaningful groupings of housing"⁴³ which are "able to give identity"⁴⁴ and are "responsive to place, to topography, to local climate"⁴⁵. Clusters, e.g. *landcastles*, are new neighborhoods developed out of the understanding of the existing context and at the same time have a distinct spatial quality in order to create identity. "[...] landcastles are quality-effective sites chosen for their power of renewal of a community [...]."⁴⁶ The same subject motivated Ungers in his work on *Grünzug Süd*: "The built structure, developed out of and determined by the situation, attempts to bind the heterogeneity of the existing structure into a new, larger order and to give the district its own physiognomy."⁴⁷ This "physiognomy", or identity, manifests itself in the formulation of various building typologies paired with distinct urban green spaces for the planning area.

This conjunction of the issues, the question of urban cohesion and of architectural specificity, was applied and taken to extremes by Ungers and his team more than ten years later in the seminal project *City in the City. Berlin: A green Archipelago* of 1977. As the architect and theorist Wilfried Kühn argues, *Grünzug Süd* and *The Open City* were prerequisites to Ungers' idea of the archipelago: "With this background in mind Ungers' Urban Archipelago project (1977) proposes the superimposition of the Grünzug Süd theme, the heterogeneous characterization of the local latent identities, onto the Open City theme of concentrated islands of built form in a re-naturalized urban landscape."⁴⁸

These projects are demonstrations of a design thinking and planning method which engages in urban and architectural matter at the same time, with the aim

41 Smithson and Smithson, *The Charged Void*, 112.

42 Cf. Alison Smithson and Peter Smithson, "Cluster City: a new shape for the Community," *Architectural Review* (November 1957): 333-336.

43 Smithson and Smithson, *The Charged Void*, 20.

44 Smithson and Smithson, *The Charged Void*, 19.

45 Smithson and Smithson, *The Charged Void*, 19.

46 Smithson and Smithson, *The Charged Void*, 113.

47 Translated by the author, original in German: "Die aus der Situation heraus entwickelte und durch sie bestimmte Bebauung versucht, die Heterogenität des Bestehenden in einer neuen, größeren Ordnung zu binden und dem Stadtteil eine sich im Ansatz zeigende eigene Physiognomie zu geben." "Erläuterungen zum Projekt Grünzug Süd in Köln": Ungers et al., Team X Treffen, no p.

48 Wilfried Kühn, "Archipel Stadt. Archipelago City," in *Örbanism. Texte aus Österreich. Approaches to urbanism in Austria*, ed. Elise Feiersinger et al. (Vienna: edition selene, 2002), 23.

Fig. 4

Sketch of the image of the Open City – landcastles scattered in a green field. Smithson, Alison and Peter Smithson. *The Charged Void: Urbanism*. New York: The Monacelli Press, 2005, 113.

of focusing on “place-making” rather than “object-making”, as Peter Smithson put it in 1963: “Place-making is more difficult than object-making for it requires us rid [sic] ourselves of the idea of architecture as buildings and of urbanism as the arrangement of buildings.”⁴⁹ This attitude towards the formation of the environment of our cities could be a model for today’s building industry⁵⁰ and induce a much-needed change, which leads away from the notion of revenue-generating objects, but towards a practice in architecture and urban planning which provides the framework for “places to walk, play, sit, cycle, rush about, sledge, burn bonfires. In order to be able to enjoy each other, enjoy just doing things [...]”⁵¹.

By confronting Ungers’ *Grünzug Süd* with the concept of the *Open City* by the Smithsons and placing these urban-architectural ideas next to each other, fundamental themes in urban planning and architecture are revealed. The proposals Ungers and his contemporaries developed in the 1960s and 1970s still provide food for thought on current challenges today: not only the question of interplay between architecture and urban planning in the development of new and existing city quarters, but also of the identity and collectivity of a neighborhood, including the significance of green space in the urban environment.

49 Peter Smithson, “Form above all,” in *The Space Between*, ed. Alison Smithson and Peter Smithson (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2017), 25. The article is first published in 1963 in the March issue of the Architectural Association Journal.

50 Referring here to the German term *Bauwesen* and Lucius Burckhardt’s definition: “The building industry encompasses the narrower field of architecture together with its superstructure, the universities, the journals, the ideologies of the architects’ associations [...]. The building industry encompasses the entire construction process, including supply by the construction business, material suppliers and the processing industry. However, it also includes financing, mortgaging, property trading, the associated bureaucracy and jurisdiction. Last but not least, it encompasses large parts of the state [...] as an intensively interwoven authority via legislation and standardization.” Translated by the author, original in German: Lucius Burckhardt, *Der kleinstmögliche Eingriff* (Berlin: Martin Schmitz Verlag, 2013), 14.

51 Smithson and Smithson, *The Charged Void*, 113.

Bibliography

- Cepl, Jasper. *Oswald Mathias Ungers. Eine intellektuelle Biographie*. Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2007.
- Gregotti, Vittorio. "Oswald Mathias Ungers." *Lotus International*, no. 11 (1976): 12-13.
- Kühn, Wilfried. "Archipel Stadt. Archipelago City." In *Örbanism. Texte aus Österreich. Approaches to urbanism in Austria*, edited by Elise Feiersinger, Joost Meuwissen and Heide Pretterhofer, 11-27. Vienna: edition Selene, 2002.
- Smithson, Alison and Peter Smithson. "Die offene City = Le cite verte = The Open City Centre." *Bauen + Wohnen* 18, no. 1 (1964): 18-19.
- Smithson, Alison and Peter Smithson. *The Charged Void: Urbanism*. New York: The Monacelli Press, 2005.
- Smithson, Peter. *Without Rhetoric. Some thoughts for Berlin* (= Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur 2). Berlin: Universitätsverlag der TU Berlin, 1965.
- Smithson, Peter. "Form above all." In *The Space Between*, edited by Alison Smithson and Peter Smithson, 23-25. Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2017.
- Sollgruber, Eva. "Die Idee der Großform. Eine neue Sicht auf das Werk des Architekten Oswald Mathias Ungers und die Frage nach einem möglichen Entwurfswerkzeug." PhD diss., Graz University of Technology, 2020.
- Sollgruber Eva. "Die Idee der Großform. Eine neue Sicht auf das Werk von Oswald Mathias Ungers." *Wolkenkuckucksheim | Cloud-Cuckoo-Land | Воздушный замок, International Journal of Architectural Theory* 25, no. 41 (2021): 117-133. https://cloud-cuckoo.net/fileadmin/hefte_de/heft_41/artikel_sollgruber.pdf
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias, Stefan Wewerka and Shadrach Woods. *Team X Treffen* (= Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur 3). Berlin: Universitätsverlag der TU Berlin, 1966.
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias. "ein Beitrag zur Architektur." *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 71, no. 7 (July 1966): 579-584.
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias. *Großformen im Wohnungsbau* (= Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur 5). Berlin: Universitätsverlag der TU Berlin, 1966.
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias. "Planning Criteria." *Lotus International*, no. 11 (1976): 13.
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias. "Projekte als typologische Collagen." In *Dortmunder Architekturtag 1975. Das Prinzip Reihung in der Architektur*, edited by Josef-Paul Kleihues, 169-171. Dortmund: Universität Dortmund, 1977.
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias, Rem Koolhaas, Peter Riemann, Hans Kollhoff and Arthur Ovaska. "Cities within the city: Proposals by the Sommer Akademie for Berlin." *Lotus International*, no. 19 (June 1977): 82-97.
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias. "Das war eine ungeheuer kreative Situation Thomas Sieverts, Oswald Mathias Ungers, Georg Wittwer im Gespräch mit Nikolaus Kuhnert." *Bauwelt* 73, no. 48 (Dezember 1982): 1957-1980 (= Stadtbauwelt, no. 76, December 1982): 369-392).
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias. "Vielfalt, die nicht auf Einheit gründet, ist Verneinung. Einheit, die nicht auf Mannigfaltigkeit beruht, ist Tyrannei (Blaise Pascal). Oswald Mathias Ungers im Gespräch mit Nikolaus Kuhnert." *ARCH+* 19, no. 85 (1986): 32-39.
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias. *Die Thematisierung der Architektur*. Reprint, edited by Walter Noebel. Sulgen: Verlag Niggli AG, 2011.

Tiles of Space: Typology and Morphology in Action Genealogy and Legacy of the Project for the Neue Stadt in Köln by Oswald Mathias Ungers.

Typology, Morphology, Neue Stadt, Space, Dwelling

/Abstract

The article studies, through interpretation and redrawing, one of Ungers' least studied works, the project for the Neue Stadt in Cologne. In fact, it analyses two projects: the first, competition, more experimental and a second, the executive, of realisation. The first project, known for its application of the principle of solids and voids, matter and spaces is more experimental and seminal; the second, completely different from the urban point of view, transforms fragmentation into compactness. The aim of the research is to place this work within a broader reflection on the residential cell, identifying how the compositional principle of fullness and emptiness, of volume and space, already originates in some of Le Corbusier's projects and is a widespread theme in the critical reconstruction of the residential house in post-war architecture. Through Jean Prouvé or Alison and Peter Smithson, but also Hejduk or SANAA, a genealogy and inheritance is traced, which finds its full relevance in contemporary design. Indeed, the legacy is evident in more recent contemporary housing, as in the projects of the cooperatives in Zurich or Barcelona. All the topicality of the process of typological variation and transformation, in relation to morphology, seems in fact to be well gathered in the intermediate spaces, the potential of a collective and now, shared project.

/Author

Orsina Simona Pierini
Politecnico di Milano
Orsina.pierini@polimi.it

Orsina Simona Pierini is full Professor in Architectural and Urban Composition at Department of Architecture and Urban Studies at Milan Polytechnic. After taking a degree in Milan in 1989, she completed her PhD in Architectural Composition with Giorgio Grassi in Venice (IUAV) in 1995. Honorary Research Fellow at Liverpool School of Architecture. In 1998 she received a study grant for research with Carlos Martí Arís at the ETSAB, where she focused on Spanish architecture of the 1950s, curating with Josep Quetglas the exhibition on Josep Maria Sostres arquitecto and the publication of *Passaggio in Iberia*, Milano 2008. During a sabbatical year in 2012, with Bruno Reichlin she investigated the notion of architectural critique, at the EPFL. Her research activity is based on an idea of architectural design that interprets the architecture of the city in its historical experience as material for contemporary design: she has published the book *Sulla facciata, tra architettura e città*, Rimini 2008 and *Case Milanese 1923-1973, Fifty Years of Residential Architecture in Milan*, Milano 2017 and recently *Nelle case. Interiors in Milan 1928-1978*, Milano 2023. In continuity with this experience is also the participation in the Venice Biennale 2018, co-editor of the catalog *Everyday Wonders*, the *Corso Italia Complex* and the installation by Cino Zucchi on Luigi Caccia Dominioni. She has addressed the importance of the role of housing in the urban design of the contemporary city in *Housing Primer, le forme della residenza nella città contemporanea*, Rimini 2012 and recently in *Housing Atlas - Europe 20th Century*, London 2023. She has lectured at many universities in Europe and elsewhere, including TUDelft, ETSAM Madrid, EAT Toledo, KIT Karlsruhe, Beijing University of Technology, ETSA Barcelona, Henry Van de Velde Instituut Antwerpen, Bauhaus Universität Weimar, CEPT Ahmedabad, Hochschule Luzern, Düsseldorf Kunstakademie.



Among the splendid plaster models that Oswald Mathias Ungers surrounded himself with in his studio is the 1:70 scale model of Federico II Castel del Monte [Fig. 1]. Governed by geometry, the angular towers complement the growth of the central volume, emptied by the courtyard. Between each tower, to bind them together and create tension, runs the continuity of the main body. Ungers often spoke of it as an idea, an idea of space.¹

Just a few years after graduating, the young Ungers participated in the 1960 competition for the development of a part of the new residential district in Cologne, the *Neue Stadt*. The competition brief requires working on an already given urban plan, with diversified residential typologies, which the German architect resolves with a system he describes as the articulation of a positive matter, complementary to the negative space.² The theme has been well addressed in a study comparing various projects by Ungers from the same period³. Therefore, we will try to study this design proposal and the aggregative principle used, as a piece of a broader exploration of modern housing design, seeking to identify its genealogies and legacies. The models representing the initial design hypothesis are wooden, have a handcrafted and sculptural character completely different from the plaster models, paralysed in the beauty of the ideal. They show a fragment of an experimental city, made up of overlapping and visibly glued together pieces. These are evidently trials, abstractions, where the building is reduced only to the composition of solid elements, the positive ones, which by a scalar estrangement effect, outline a profile of urban towers of increasing height [Fig. 1]. In the most published model, it is almost impossible to recognise the more complex layout of the project: a wall of houses closing towards the busy street to the east, clusters of block houses organised to form public spaces, and lower houses in the Southern part of the sector. Different typologies, resolved with the same idea of a cell made of matter and space. Ungers describes it clearly:

The plans for the *Neue Stadt* are based on the idea of placing individual autonomous volumes in relation to each other in such a way as to create new spatial relationships between them. The positive form of the matter and the negative interspace are brought into correlation. This interrelation between matter and space expresses a characteristic of architecture, which consists in the fact that two spheres of action - the interior and the exterior - are simultaneously organised for a final purpose.

The phenomenon of the double goal, which Sörgel calls the Janus face of architecture, is the essential factor in configuring a city.⁴

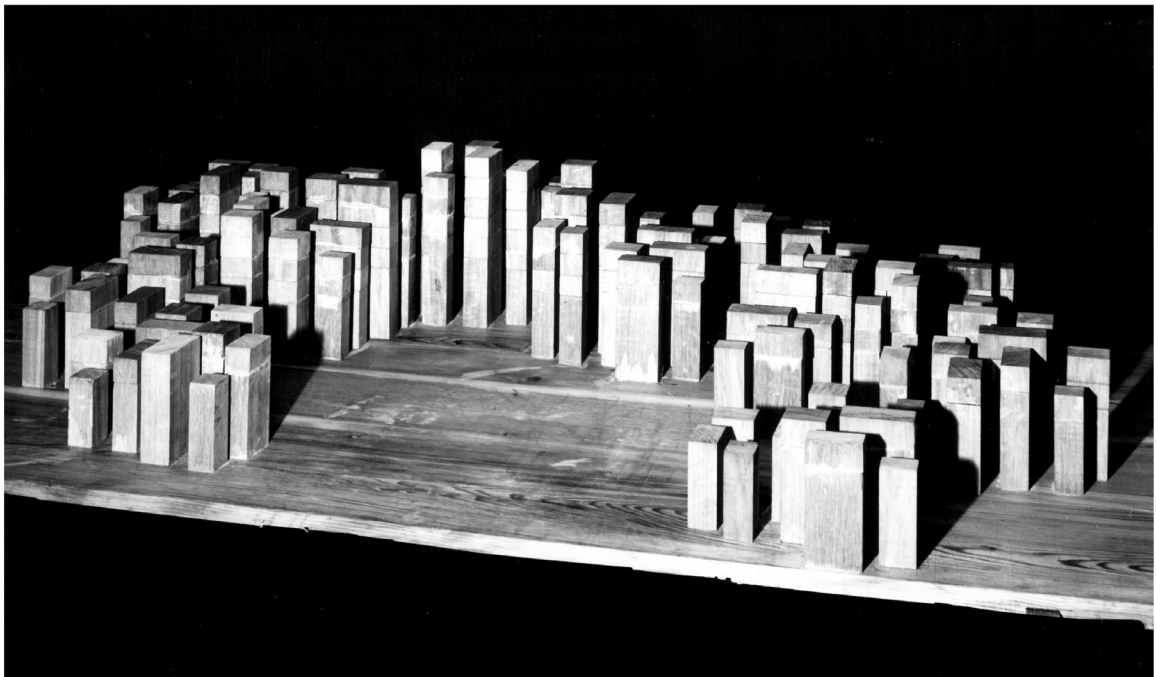
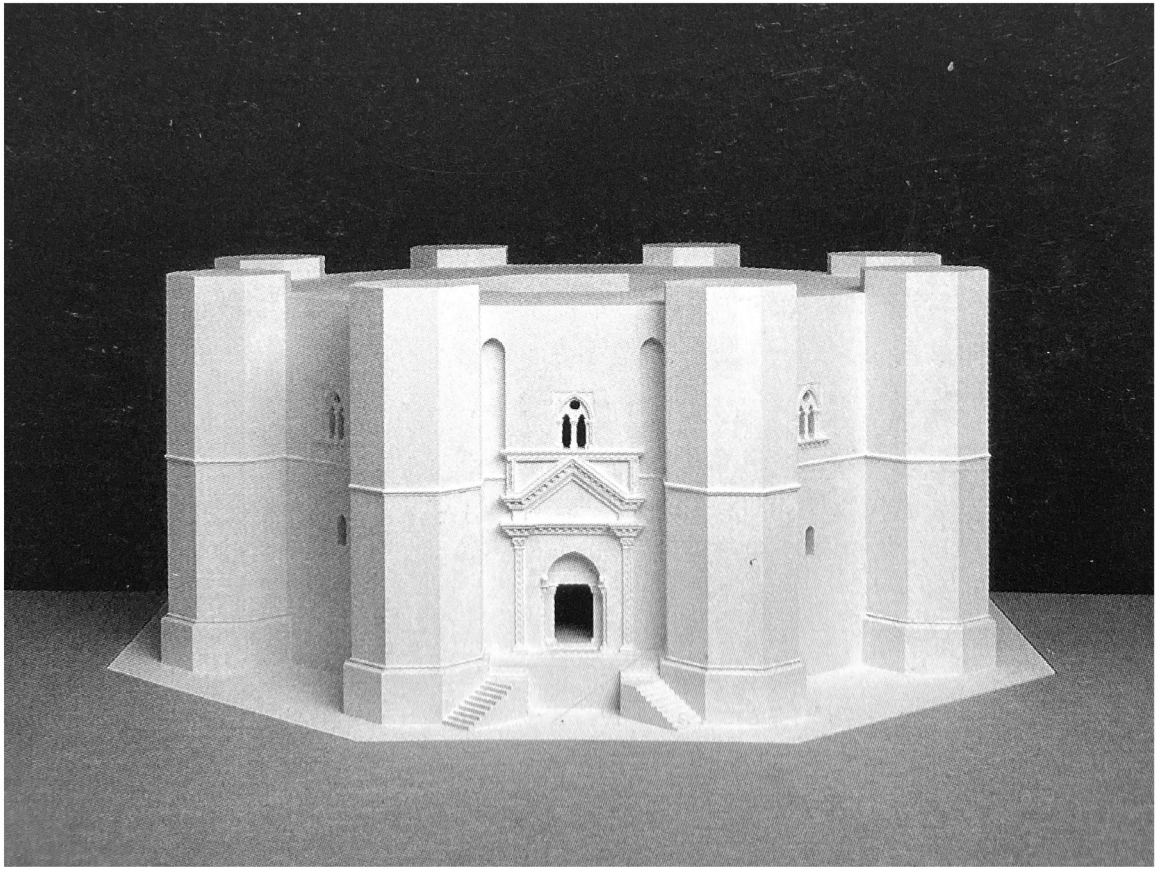
There is a sketch by Le Corbusier of the *Maison Planeix* in Paris, a project

1 Annalisa Trentin, "Ungers come educatore", in *Oswald Mathias Ungers: una scuola*, ed. Annalisa Trentin (Milano: Electa, 2004), 10-22.

2 The concept, directly expressed by Ungers, will be developed historically and critically in the text of Stefan Vieths, *O.M. Ungers: prime case* (Sant'Arcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli, 2015), 15-19.

3 Gilda Giancipoli, "Corpo e spazio. Una teoria compositiva nell'opera di Oswald Mathias Ungers", *FAMAGazine*, no. 36 (2016).

4 Oswald Mathias Ungers, "Zum Projekt "Neue Stadt" in Köln.", *Das Werk: Architektur und Kunst*, no. 50 (1963): 281-284.



11

from 1924 whose plan of the upper flat is articulated around a backbone of services. The design innovation consists in the consistency of the articulated and volumetric form of this element, partly distributive and partly technical, and the resulting space in the adjacent rooms, enriched by the arrangement of the volumetric element.

Le Corbusier would return more decisively to this aggregative principle in 1954, when he designed the never realised Governor's Palace in Chandigarh. The plan arranges different elements on a squared plate, including residential nuclei enclosed by curved folded walls. They are solid spatial units, that relate to each other through the space they carve out, sometimes paths, other times lounges or common spaces.

Even the experimental houses that Jean Prouvé designs in the 1950s and 1960s are also often played on the ability to arrange a block, which concentrates the services, within an emptied plan. The precise placement of a solid volume determines the design of the resulting spaces and thus the articulation of the entire house, as can also be seen in the *Maison Seynave* designed in 1961 [Fig. 2].

Also in 1956, Alison and Peter Smithson presented the *House of the future*, a

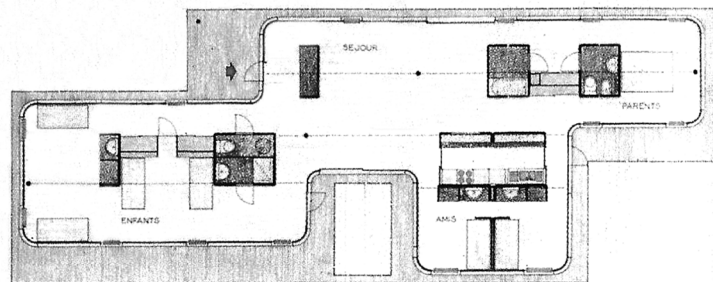
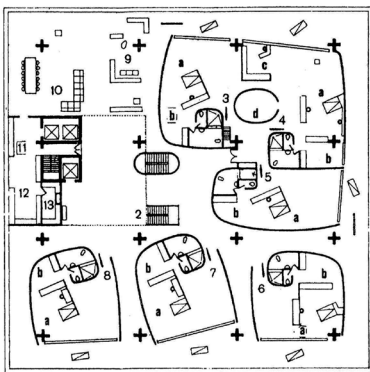
Fig. 1

Castel del Monte and first project models (from Oswald Mathias Ungers: una scuola, ed. Annalisa Trentin (Milano: Electa, 2004) and photo from Ungers Archive).

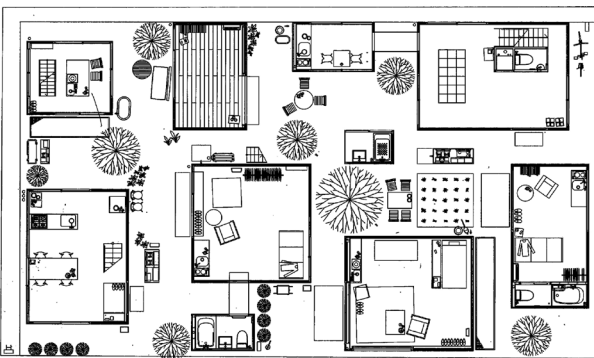
Fig. 2

Genealogy: Le Corbusier, Governor's Palace in Chandigarh, 1954 and Jean Prouvé, *Maison Seynave*, 1961. Legacy: Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa, *Moriyama House*, 2005 and Duplex Architekten, *Hunziker Haus A*, 2015 (from Xavier Monteys, *Casa Collage*, Gustavo Gili, 2014 – Nils Peters, Jean Prouvé, Taschen 2015 – Lotus International n. 132 – *Housing for all*, building catalogue, Paul Andreas, Karen Jung and Peter Cachola Schmal ed., DOM, 2019).

Genealogy



Legacy



daring model consistent with the research for *Appliance house*, and a series of projects, which will be further defined in the 1959 *Retirement House*, where solid and compact nuclei relate to each other, articulating livable and recognizable spaces thanks to their *dispositio*⁵.

This is a research project that is easily recognizable, even though the variations in the functions attributed to the solid volume may be different each time. They are all projects that disrupt the usual sequence of rooms, more or less large, that carve out the spaces in the building block that organise the human home: the compactness that held the building together was its most evident characteristic, often hiding differentiated spatialities behind unitary façades.

Instead, this family of projects introduces a variable to define space, which plays on opposites, as Ungers well explained. Solids and voids in the pursuit of their architectural definition, no longer alternative but complementary. Not necessarily just a two-faced Janus that solves everything, then, but elements where the relational system proves decisive.

In the early years of his career, during the programmatic and experimental phase, Ungers had expressed himself in his work on the house as a system of volumetric modules. This approach is particularly evident, as previously analyzed, in the early single-family houses⁶, and is a recognizable pursuit even in the large residential complexes such as the *Mauenheimer Strasse* in *Köln-Nippes*.

The competition project for *Neue Stadt* is the outcome of this experience and, while still essentially a typological project, it differs from it by being articulated into various urban morphologies. [Fig. 3]

The horizontal section seems to be the most fertile moment: a clustered plan where walls close in solid blocks to accommodate bedrooms, kitchens, and bathrooms. A stairwell generally distributes three dwellings, set on the central void, the *atrium*, which receives light from the various intervals, from the intermediate spaces⁷, as Ungers would define them, between the solids.

This is a decisive attack on the corridor, the functionalist element par excellence.⁸

It is interesting to note that to dismantle the scheme of standardized housing, Ungers employs the revival of ancient models, namely the *atrium*, but also the concentrations of volume in the *plan poché*, where excavated space and resulting space worked complementarily.

Once again, the potential of opposites, so dear to domesticity, so much so

5 Dirk van der Heuvel, Max Risselada, eds., *Alison and Peter Smithson, From the House of the Future to a House of Today* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2004), 80-103.

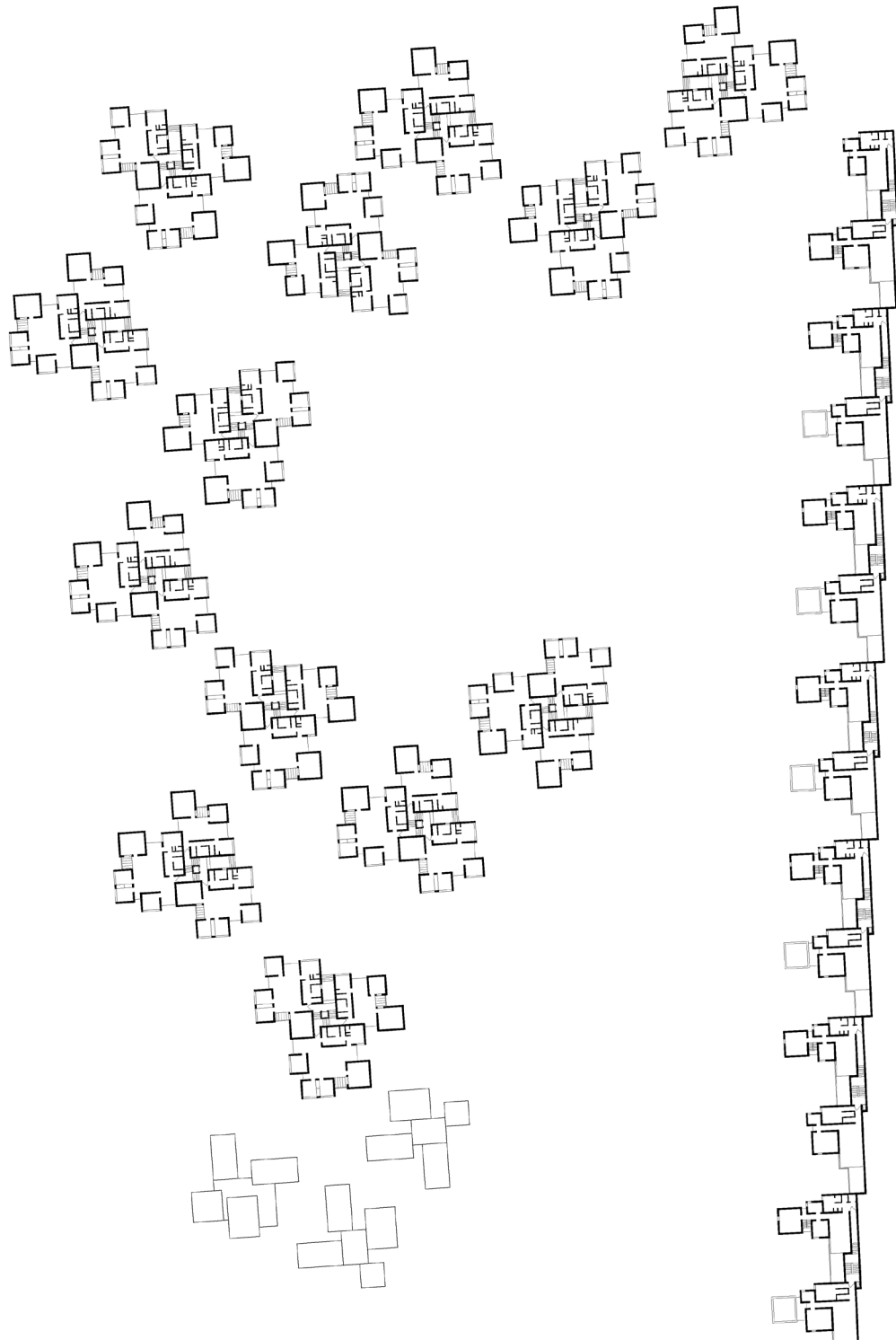
6 Vieths, *O.M. Ungers: prime case*, 15-19.

7 O.M. Ungers, *Zwischenräume* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 1999), 7.

8 The disappearance of the corridor is typical of those years: in Milan we think of the experiments of Caccia Dominioni or Angelo Mangiarotti, who concentrate on this element and its dissolution all the capacity for variation and transformation of the typical dwelling. Thus, we can find in Joe Colombo's latest works, such as the Total Furnishing Unit presented in New York in 1972, a concentration of living functions within a single piece of furniture, to be cleverly placed in empty space.

Fig. 3

O.M.U. Neue Stadt, First project, Typological plan (drawing by O. S. Pierini and C. Mazzola).



First project - Typological plan - Scale 1:500

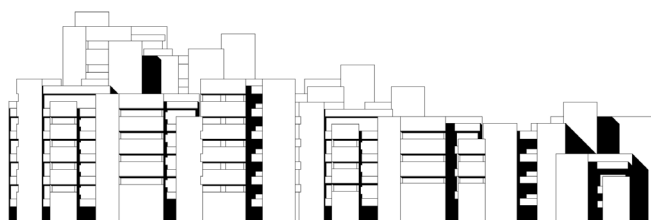


3 |

that we have complementary *oikos* and *oikía*: a place of staying and moving, of closed and open, of permanence and mutations, for the masculine and the feminine, as Hestia and Hermes tell us.

The central space of the house loses the form of a room, closed on all four sides, its dimension is generous and articulated in multiple places of dwelling, while simultaneously gaining the openness of air, accommodating at least one loggia, an external extension of the internal space between two volumes. The floor plans are repeated identically on all levels, creating the verticality of tower elements that impart a fragmented effect to the entire structure.

To understand the architecture envisioned by Ungers in this initial design hypothesis, we have, in addition to photographs of models, few study drawings of elevations, where individual residential units are hardly distinguishable, all playing on the tension between the verticality of the towers and the horizontality of the openings. [Fig. 4]



First Project - Elevation
Scale 1:500

4 |

The façades are designed by the repetition and articulation of only three elements: closed blocks, volumes carved by thin continuous horizontal windows, and finally windows with parapets or loggias in the intermediate spaces. All the windows run along an entire side of the wall volume, never holes, but horizontal cuts.

The challenge of giving three-dimensionality to a hypothesis designed for voids is apparent; the compositional expedient of mediation and gradualness seems to harmonise the modules while simultaneously restoring them a scale.

As in fractals, the different residential blocks arrange themselves to form concentrations of public space. Even in this morphology, there is no mechanical repetition, but rather an adaptation and various openings to interpret a layout that tends to close towards the West, protecting the collective space of the neighborhood.

Despite the use of the block type and the audacity of the layout, the project takes on the characteristics of an ancient city, moving away from the character of more recent urbanity, perhaps due to the turreted stance that the system accentuates.

Fig. 4

O.M.U. Neue Stadt, First project, Elevation (drawing by O. S. Pierini and C. Mazzola).

It is thus that some cells are arranged along the large wall protecting from the eastern road axis, creating a new type, stretched in the living rooms along the wall and concentrated in the volumes of the rooms, demonstrating the great transformative capacity of the system. The same principle of articulation between blocks and spaces is no longer central; the axis of the rooms is perpendicular to that of the living rooms, defining a kind of L-shaped typology that repeats in series.

Along the street, there are offsets and serrations of now linear elements, containing the stairs and reinforcing the idea of protection, delimiting a morphological layout devoid of urban references.

The development of the project that will allow its realisation will be very far from the strong experimental character analysed so far, which instead will leave an important theoretical legacy in other authors.

Starting from the concentrations and dilations of space, from the densifications of meaning, as Luigi Moretti would have called them in those very years in his magazine *Spazio*, the legacy of experimentation is easily recognizable in many projects that extend to the present day, with different variations.

At times, the principle is taken up by more theoretical experiments. We do not know exactly how John Hejduk had the opportunity to explore this project, although the American years of teaching by the German theorist certainly allowed its knowledge and dissemination beyond the ocean. However, it seems possible to recognize a similar experimentation in some of his projects, even though interpreted with different curved forms, between compact closed bodies and fluid spaces.

Many projects by Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa, SANAA have worked on this theme, going so far as to fragment the volumes of the house into functional cubes resting on the ground, as in the Moriyama House. [Fig. 2]

Finally, we can find a revival of the theme most recent developments of contemporary collective housing. The principle of compact, closed, and defined nuclei, and of the free space on which these are grafted, seems to be among the most suitable for determining new gradations of privacy and interesting places of collective sociality.

Consider the experience of the Hunziker cooperative initiative district in Zurich, where projects such as those of Duplex Architekten are conceived to contrast, in a plan emptied on the inside to position vertical distribution, compact residential blocks, concentrations of the private that fit into the fluid collective space. [Fig. 6] A planimetric arrangement that seems to be one of the most explicit heirs of the Cologne experience, also considering the social vocation that Oswald Mathias Ungers undoubtedly aspired to when thinking of the atrium as the foundational collective space of the dwelling.

A further, possible development of the principle of the settlement of solids and voids can also be found in the work of some young Spanish architects, e.g.

Peris+Toral Arquitectes, where the “breath” of the building, its thermic life are realised not through mechanical technology, but with the wisdom of tradition in circulating warm and cold air. This is how the principle of voids and solids can be applied, as in the project in Borrassà, in the province of Barcelona, both in the communal space with a thermal greenhouse and in the residential cell, where the blocks of bedrooms seem to float in the adaptable space of the living room. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the authors have given this work the explicit name *Social Atrium*. [Fig. 2]

These are just a few examples of the many pieces of space in a quest that for Ungers had found a halt in the actual construction of the *Neue Stadt* district and the later *Märkisches Viertel* in Berlin. It was a clash with reality, even volumetric reality, perhaps accepted with difficulty.

Obviously even in the final design of the *Neue Stadt*, which was only partially realized, we find traces of the original work on the cell: they are units with an L-shaped living room, an empty space carved out between the staircase, the kitchen and bathroom service block and the volume containing the sleeping area [Fig. 5]. Throughout the volumetric structure, the living room is always connected to the outside by a loggia, making the compositional principle more recognizable on the elevation. [Fig. 6] The blocks, on the other hand, are pierced by windows, as the construction system to which they allude seems to require.

However, something has been lost in this didactic contrast, which in the initial project tended to harmonize opposites in the design of the fronts, thanks to ⁴ the same horizontality of the cuts. There has been a shift from the model of positive elements alone to build reality, from an aggregative principle to a defined typology.

It is certainly an alternative project, which, above all, addresses urban planning in a completely different way. The residential block composed of three dwellings is no longer autonomous, but is added to the others, arranging on the territory a linear element with perpendicular insertions. Once again, the skilful arrangement of the blocks produces more intimate courtyards to the South and a volumetric cadence towards the street to the North. It is an aggregative work rich in potential, where the morphological result is no longer a sum but gains new spatial articulations, as it was for Berthold Lubetkin’s Highpoint project.

Among the drawings in the archive, there is a section where a long perspective is represented, only on the ground floor, that holds together and crosses the various parts of the building, where blackened shadows and illuminated parts tell the story of the urban street brought into the project. A friend of Peter Smithson, actively participating in many Team X meetings, Ungers offers his own declination of the theme of the internal street, as well as the idea of a single large linear element crossing the territory, a concept widely practiced in many urban projects of those years.

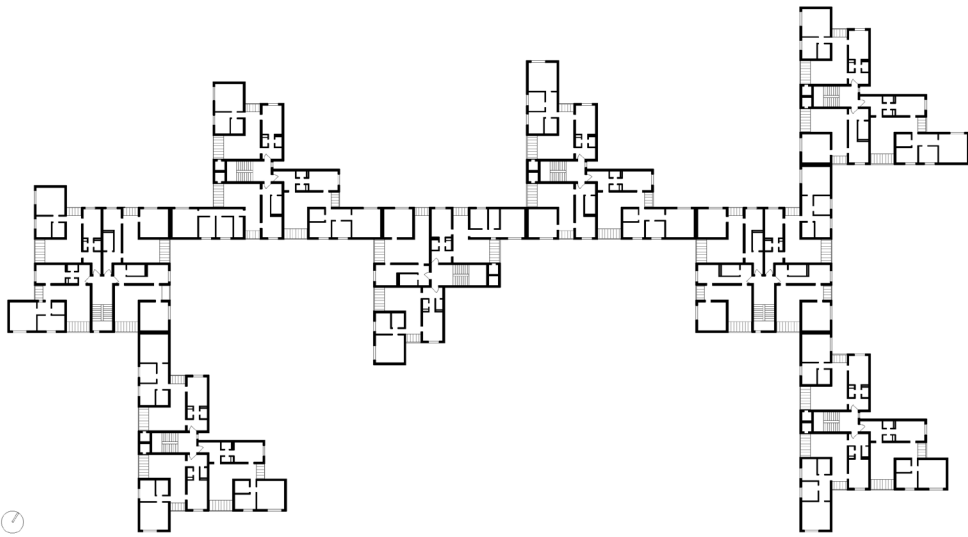
We can say that the competition project undergoes an important transformation, on the one hand a compactness partly due to its constructive feasibility, on

Fig. 5

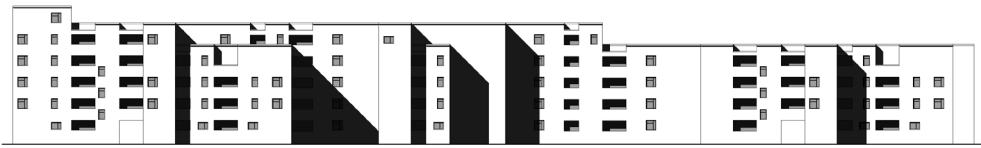
Hans Scharoun and Wils Ebert, Project for the Hauptstadt Berlin competition (1957) awarded Second Prize. Image source: Helmut Geisert, Doris Haneberg and Carola Hein, eds., *Hauptstadt Berlin: Internationaler Städtebaulicher Ideenwettbewerb 1957/58* (Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, 1990), 35.

Fig. 6

O.M.U. Neue Stadt, First project, type floor plan – as built, type floor plan (drawing by O. S. Pierini and C. Mazzola).



As built - Typological plan - Scale 1:500



As built - Elevation - Scale 1:500

5



First project - Type Floor plan
Scale 1:200



As built - Type Floor plan
Scale 1:200

6

the other hand a real morphological transformation, which brings it back to its time.

An attempt has been made to reinterpret, both in words and drawings, one of the German architect's lesser-known projects, but one that is seminal in several aspects.

It is a long journey that spans time, in the works and concepts to which it refers, as we have seen for Castel del Monte. A piece that fits into research on space, a term not always easy to handle. An experience that reflects on the home cell, on the fragmentation or compactness of architecture, on its aggregation of elements, in search of a new urbanity.

The drawings presented here were recently made for the volume *Housing Atlas - Europe 20th Century*⁹. They are a graphic reinterpretation based on drawings published in magazines and monographs, as well as from drawings received from the Ungers Archive.

It is indeed through drawing and the comparison in scale of its different design phases that the process of understanding brings this work into the present.

A present where we have tried to trace in the interesting experiments on contemporary housing, where the word "collective" becomes "shared."

9 Ordsina Simona Pierini, Carmen Espejel, Dick van Gameren, and Mark Swenarton, *Housing Atlas – Europe 20th Century* (London: Lund&Humphries, 2023), drawings by Chiara Mazzola, 15, 212-214.

Bibliography

Ungers, Oswald Mathias. "Zum Projekt "Neue Stadt" in Köln.", *Das Werk: Architektur und Kunst*, n. 50 (1963): 281-284.

Klotz, Heinrich, ed., *O.M.Ungers, 1951-1984, Bauten und Projecte*, DAM. Wiesbaden: Braunschweig, 1985, 70-73.

Neumeyer, Fritz. "L'enigma dell'architettura. Un tutto a sé stante e un'unità di particolari". In *O.M.Ungers, opera completa 1951-1990*. Milano: Electa, 1991, 17.

Kieren, Martin. *Oswald Mathias Ungers*. Zürich: Artemis Verlags, 1994, 66-67.

Ungers, O.M., and Stefan Vieths, *Oswald Mathias Ungers. La città dialettica*. Milano: Skira, 1997.

Trentin, Annalisa. "Ungers come educatore". In *Oswald Mathias Ungers: una scuola*, edited by Annalisa Trentin. Milano: Electa, 2004, 10-22.

O.M.Ungers, Zwischenräume. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 1999, 7.

Vieths, Stefan. *O. M. Ungers: prime case*. Sant'Arcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli, 2015.

Giancipoli, Gilda. "Corpo e spazio. Una teoria compositiva nell'opera di Oswald Mathias Ungers". *FAMAgazine*, no.36 (2016).

Vieths, Stefan. *O. M. Ungers: Progetti programmatici*. Sant'Arcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli, 2019.

Ungers, the Morphology of the City, and Trier

O.M. Ungers, Trier, Urban Morphology, Transformation, Typology

/Abstract

This paper investigates the background and basis for O. Mathias Ungers' exploration of the morphology of the city and its implications on the architectural project, beginning with seminal but unrealized proposals that resulted from typological and morphological studies, followed by a discussion of theoretical and academic investigations in Germany and in the U.S., and finally by the analysis of three executed proposals in Trier as the synthesis to these explorations.

/Author

Gerardo Brown-Manrique
Department of Architecture + Interior Design, Miami University,
Oxford, OH, USA
Brownmg@miamioh.edu

Gerardo Brown-Manrique is professor of Architecture, Interim Director of Architecture Graduate Studies, Department of Architecture + Interior Design and Affiliate, Latin American, Latina/o and Caribbean Studies (LAS) Program in the Department of Global and Intercultural Studies, College of Arts and Sciences, Miami University, Oxford, OH, USA.



*The catalog of forms is endless: until every shape
has found its city, new cities will continue to be
born¹*

Introduction

The work produced by Oswald Mathias Ungers (1926-2007)² over the course of his career represents some of the most significant of postwar German architecture. More crucially, from his earliest built work in Cologne in the 1950s, through the seminal (though unbuilt) projects of the 1960s and early 1970s, to the significant number of signature buildings of the third phase of his career, including three in Trier, Ungers' work illustrates his ongoing exploration of the relationship between the built work and its urban context as a reflection of the evolution of German architecture in general and that of the Eifel region in particular, a region with deep Roman roots.

While his earlier works reflected varied design strategies, those of his second phase involved more rigorous explorations, leading to those of his third phase, from the late 1970s onwards, that solidified his place in the history of late 20th and early 21st century architecture worldwide. The projects were clear explorations of typologies and their transformation, as he explained in "Thinking and Designing in Images, Metaphors and Analogies,"³ which evolved into an exploration of architecture reliant on pure forms, identified in the 1980s as the New Abstraction.⁴ But it is his explorations at the urban scale that make significant contributions to the discussion of the city in the 21st century. This paper presents an overview of Ungers' formal vision that architecture in the urban context should reflect the "collective unconscious," summarized in three interventions in the city of Trier.

Background

In 1963, Ungers was invited to join the faculty of architecture at the Technische Universität (TU) Berlin.⁵ By then he had built more than three dozen projects,

1 Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (London: Picador, 1974), 139.

2 Oswald Mathias Ungers was born on 12 July 1926 in Kaisersesch, a small town in the Eifel region south of Cologne. For a brief biography, see Martin Kieren, *Oswald Mathias Ungers* (London: Artemis StudioPaperback, 1994), 17-18. Ungers died on 30 September 2007 in Cologne.

3 O.M. Ungers, "Designing and Thinking in Images, Metaphors, and Analogies," in Hans Hollein (conception): *MAN transFORMS: an International Exhibition on Aspects of Design*. (New York: Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Smithsonian Institution, 1976), 98-113.

4 Ungers suggested the term to Charles Jencks in order to identify his own architecture. Jencks expands its meaning by writing that "...the New Abstraction is positive in its relation to history and local culture, although its solutions are still mediated by a geometrical discipline that keeps them general... archetypal, not culturally coded." Charles Jencks, "The Perennial Architectural Debate," in *Architectural Design* (AD Profile 48), 53:7-8 (July-August 1983), 13.

5 Appointed Professor to the Chair of Design VI (*Lehrstuhl für Entwerfen VI*) in the Department of Architecture at the TU Berlin in 1963, Ungers would become Dean of the Faculty of Architecture in 1965, a position he held until his departure for Ithaca, NY in 1967.

many of them among the most significant of the post-war period,⁶ and had participated in numerous competitions and planning studies in a career that began in 1951. His move to West Berlin marked the end of the first phase of his professional career, although a number of projects were completed during his tenure in Berlin.⁷ Ungers did not engage in active professional practice, instead focused on theoretical explorations that would inform his later work. His TU Berlin seminar explored issues of about the city, focusing on Berlin as a place of memory, the city as an ideal, rather than the reality of a divided city.⁸ Ungers published the seminars' findings in a series of booklets, the *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur* (VzA - Publications on Architecture), which appeared between 1965 and 1969. They investigated themes such as "major arteries as architecture" (VzA 4, "Schnellstraße und Gebäude," August 1966), "plazas and streets" (VzA 8, "Plätze und Straßen," June 1967), "housing in the park" (VzA 10, "Wohnen am Park," August 1967), and other topics.⁹ Projects from the seminar were displayed at the 1973 XV Triennale di Milano.¹⁰ Also on show were two built projects, his housing block in Cologne-Niehl and the two-family house in Cologne-Lindenthal, both published in an article by Aldo Rossi in *Casabella-Continuità* in 1960.¹¹ The publication has been identified as the beginning of the intellectual relationship between Ungers and Rossi, and between Ungers and Italian architects.¹²

Ungers' concept of the city as an ideal was preceded by four seminal competition projects from the early 1960s, completed before and during his tenure at the TU Berlin. One of these, designed in multiple iterations beginning in 1962, was for the Grünzug-Süd area of Cologne-Zollstock. It was based first on a formal understanding of the existing conditions, and then on proposing alternative responses that evolved from them: how the street wall was created, how buildings created gateways, or how blocks developed with appendages to the main structures. Without replicating the original conditions, the Ungers project

6 For a brief description of a dozen of Ungers' early works, see *O.M. Ungers: Early Buildings in Cologne 1951-1967* (Köln: UAA Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft, 2017).

7 Already underway and completed after 1963 and before Ungers' return to Germany in 1975 were the Märkisches Viertel housing blocks and senior housing building in West Berlin-Wittenau (1962-67), the restoration/renovation of the Teutonic Order headquarters (Deutschordenhaus Kommende) in Frankfurt-am-Main (1963-65), the senior housing building at the Köln-Neue-Stadt (1967), and the second phase of the Oberhausen Institute (1967-69), all supervised by his longtime associate, the architect K.L. (Karl-Lothar) Dietzsch, who ran the Cologne office.

8 In reality Berlin was divided into three (then four) parts, administered by the conquering powers, the US, the UK and the USSR, with the addition of France, which was given part of the British sector. After 13 August 1961, the US, UK and French sectors encircled by what East Germany (the DDR) politically called the "anti-fascist protective wall" (*antifaschistischer Schutzwall*).

9 On the significance of the VzA booklets, Rem Koolhaas credits his discovery of them while visiting Berlin as a student at the Architectural Association (AA) in London to research his thesis topic, for his decision to study in the US on a Harkness Fellowship, first at Cornell with Ungers and then at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS) in New York, during which time he researched and wrote *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). See Rem Koolhaas (interview), "OMA RE: OMU (In conversation with Rem Koolhaas on Oswald Mathias Ungers)," in *Cornell Journal of Architecture* vol. 8 (2011), 159-171. See also the publication edited by Erika Mühlthaler, *Lernen von O.M. Ungers* (Berlin: Universitätsverlag der TU Berlin; Aachen: Arch+ Verlag, 2006).

10 Enzo Bofanti, Rosaldo Bonicalzi, Aldo Rossi, Massimo Scolari and Daniele Vitale (editors), *Architettura Razionale*, (Milano: F. Angeli, 1977), 90, 91, 250-252.

11 Ungers' projects attracted the attention of three Italian architects, Aldo Rossi, Vittorio Gregotti, and Giorgio Grassi, who visited Ungers in Cologne in 1959, resulting in Aldo Rossi's article "Un giovane architetto tedesco: Oswald Mathias Ungers" in *Casabella-Continuità* no. 244 (October 1960, 22-35). Part of the text was reprinted in *Casabella* no. 654 (March 1998), 18-19.

12 Renato Capozzi and Federica Visconti, "Oswald Mathias Ungers e l'Italia. L'inizio di un rapporto: la XV Triennale di Milano del 1973," in *Esempi di Architettura Online* (2009) ISSN 2035-7982.

responds to and reinforces them, contextualizing the proposed interventions.¹³ The three subsequent projects continued and refined the approach and provided the intellectual basis for later proposals on the urban scale: the 1964 competition entry for student housing at the TH Twente in Enschede, NL, and the 1965 competition projects for the German Embassy to the Holy See (Deutsche Botschaft beim Heiligen Stuhl) and the Museums of Prussian Culture (Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz) in West Berlin.¹⁴

The proposal at Enschede to house the required 500 students in single and double rooms plus ancillary facilities investigated abstract types, transforming three pure volumes – cube, cylinder, and triangular prism – to create an urban complex that explored the typology of building form that “...reassembles a quasi-miniaturized city with components and elements recollected from actual city plans,”¹⁵ with free-standing buildings, buildings forming streets, and streets leading to squares. The hierarchical arrangement of low-rise, three- and four-story structures arranged around a procession of urban spaces, included a grove of tree as part of a rectilinear plaza, and an amphitheater. Elements of the proposal may be reminiscent of Alvar Aalto’s projects – the sinuous element in the section exploring the cylindrical shape, for example, is similar to the auditorium section of the main 1960-64 main structure at Aalto’s Otaniemi campus, with its outdoor lecture area on the roof of the indoor auditorium – but the Enschede project clearly illustrates a richer exploration of the notion of a city within the city.¹⁶ The German Embassy proposal started with the existing site conditions, incorporating the remaining wall that bordered the street as well as a number of trees found on the site. Diplomatic facilities, from the chancellery and official embassy reception spaces, to the ambassador’s residence, were developed as individual groupings. Ungers explored various typological possibilities based on Greek and Roman antiquity: the chancellery functions reinterpreted a Roman domus adjacent to the street wall, the ambassador’s residence a transformation of an atrium villa. A contemporary addition was an abstract cube housing the formal reception rooms for the embassy. A galleria connected the chancellery to the formal reception spaces, and perpendicular to this at either end were two similar spines, one connecting the formal rooms to the residence and the other end organizing the various functions within the chancellery. For a new museum complex in West Berlin, Ungers’ proposal commented both on the city of Berlin as it once was and in its reality at the time of the competition, a divided city with its western sector an isolated raft drifting within the German Democratic Republic. As architecture, the museum complex was conceived both as a grouping of unique structures to house discreet collections – from Egyptian

13 Jasper Cepl, Sam Jacoby, and Valerio Massaro analyzed the different iterations of this proposal, calling it “one of Ungers’ most didactic designs.” See “Grünzug Süd: An Urban Design Manifesto,” in *San Rocco* 66 (no. 14, Spring 2018), 133-143.

14 Brief descriptions of the four proposals can be found in Martin Kieren, *Oswald Mathias Ungers* (op. cit.), 68-69, and 72-79.

15 O.M. Ungers, “Architecture of the Collective Memory – the Infinite Catalogue of Urban Forms,” in *Lotus International* 24 (III/1979), 7.

16 The winning project, by a different architect, is instead a more conventional “object in the park” solution of repetitive, three-story buildings typical of the period.

or Roman antiquities to Arts and Crafts movement to contemporary painting and sculpture – and a fine arts library, and as a complex to explore the evolution of the architectural object itself. Ungers' solution recalls the historical state of the Museumsinsel itself, with Schinkel's Altesmuseum and the later Neues Museum, Nationalgalerie, Pergamon Museum, and Boden Museum.¹⁷ Ungers' proposal was for a museum complex with the various elements arranged along a monumental arcade running perpendicular to the grand entry. In a later essay, Ungers wrote: "the museum is conceived as a 'city of the mind' in which places from the past are projected into a visionary future. In such a 'city' the elements, formed and transformed by conscious and unconscious memories, represent archetypes which are 'universally human and enjoy supra-personal validity' (C.G. Jung)."¹⁸ These four proposals –Grünzug-Süd, TH Twente, German Embassy, and Museums of Prussian Culture – illustrate Ungers' search for alternative solutions at the building and urban scales. As Gregotti points in 1976,

Starting from these fixed points...[Ungers] weaves a web of answers, a rigid range of syntactical alternatives...[which] in Ungers' scheme of things, stress above all the concept of place, both spatial and historical.¹⁹

The Concept of the City

The work at the TU Berlin and the four competition projects investigated the city as an ideal through a series of specific formal concepts, an approach that would soon be expanded after 1968, when O.M. Ungers left Berlin to serve as visiting critic at the Department of Architecture at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, as he had already done in 1965. From the spring of 1969 he was appointed chairman of the department, a position he held until 1975.²⁰ This part of the middle phase of his architectural development represented a shift, as Ungers became involved in other investigations as he sought to establish a focus for his activities in the U.S. This was when Ungers was part of a Self-Help Housing Pilot project that sought to address numerous social inequities in Ithaca and the region,²¹ of another led by Thomas Vietoritz that investigated alternatives for new town development in New York State,²² and with his wife Liselotte

17 The Altes Museum (K.F. Schinkel, designed in 1822-23, built in 1825-30) was originally the Museum am Lustgarten, until the construction of the Neues Museum (Friedrich Albert Stüler, 1843-55). The Nationalgalerie (Heinrich Starck, 1867-72), the Bode Museum (originally the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum; Ernst von Ihne, 1904) and the Pergamon Museum (Alfred Messel and Ludwig Hoffmann, 1910-30) followed, creating the Museumsinsel (Museums' Island).

18 O.M. Ungers, "Architecture of Collective Memory," in *Lotus International* 24 (III/1979), 9.

19 Vittorio Gregotti, "Oswald Mathias Ungers" in *Lotus International* 11 (1976), 12.

20 The appointment was reported in the *New York Times* ("German Architect to Head Cornell Department," in vol. CXVII, no. 40,328, Sunday, 23 June 1968, 46).

21 Jess Wittenberg: "HAP Proposes Low-Cost Homes," *The Cornell Daily Sun* LXXXVII:32 (15 October 1970), 1, 12. The precedent is O.M. Ungers and Associates: *Modular Box Housing System; Study for ALCOA*. Ithaca, NY, 1969.

22 Vietoritz, Thomas (Principal Investigator): *The Design and Evaluation of Alternative Patterns of New Town Development for the State of New York; Final Report, NYS-UDC Contract No. D-49492*. Ithaca, NY: Center for Urban Development Research, 1971.

researched and wrote about utopian communities.²³ As chair, however, he became embroiled in an internal power struggle over the direction of architectural education at Cornell: on the one hand, the status quo led by Colin Rowe, and on the other, a movement to diversify the pedagogy and faculty composition championed by Ungers and the dean of the college, Kermit C. Parsons; it affected both undergraduate and graduate students.²⁴

Ungers yearned to return to his homeland and took part in a number of West German architectural and planning competitions, including one for the federal ministries (Bundesministerien) in Bonn (1971),²⁵ one for the “Blauer See” housing estate in Rüsselheim (1972), one for the redevelopment of the northern part of the city of Düren (1973), the ideas competition for the Landwehrkanal-Tiergartenviertel area in West Berlin (1973), and the competition for the Billwerder-Allerhöhe area of Hamburg (1974).

The Düren-Nord project²⁶ focused on the area crossed by the main railway lines from northeast to southwest just north of the center of the city [Fig. 1]. Ungers proposed a series of superblock elements, each with its own identity, reminiscent of the Köln-Zollstock proposal. More structured was the planning proposal for the Schloßpark area in Braunschweig, done in 1976, where Ungers first investigates the historical development of the city center in order to understand the physiognomy of four individual neighborhoods (or parishes around churches), then explains them by analogy with similar conditions, and finally proposes specific approaches for the area bordering on the Schloßpark: the Hagen parish north of the Schloßpark, connected to the St. Katharine Kirche, with a rectangular grid like Roman Trier; to the west, Neustadt around St. Andreaskirche, radial like Karlsruhe, while the Altstadt area to the south is an ellipse, like Bern, and the parish of Altewiek to the south of the Schloßpark, cellular layout like Nördlingen [Fig. 2].²⁷ Ungers explains this analogous analysis in “Designing and Thinking in Images, Metaphors, and Analogies”:

What all that means – thinking and designing in images, metaphors, models, analogies, symbols and allegories – is nothing more than a tran-

23 Liselotte and O.M. Ungers, *Kommunen in der Neuen Welt 1740-1972*. Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1972. The book was published in Spanish (*Comunas*. Barcelona: A. Redondo, 1972; *Comunas en el Nuevo Mundo: 1740-1971*. Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 1978), Italian (*Le comuni del Nuovo Mondo*. Faenza: Faenza Editrice, 1976), and finally in English, *Kommunen: Utopian Communes in the New World 1740-1972* ([London]: REAL, 2020).

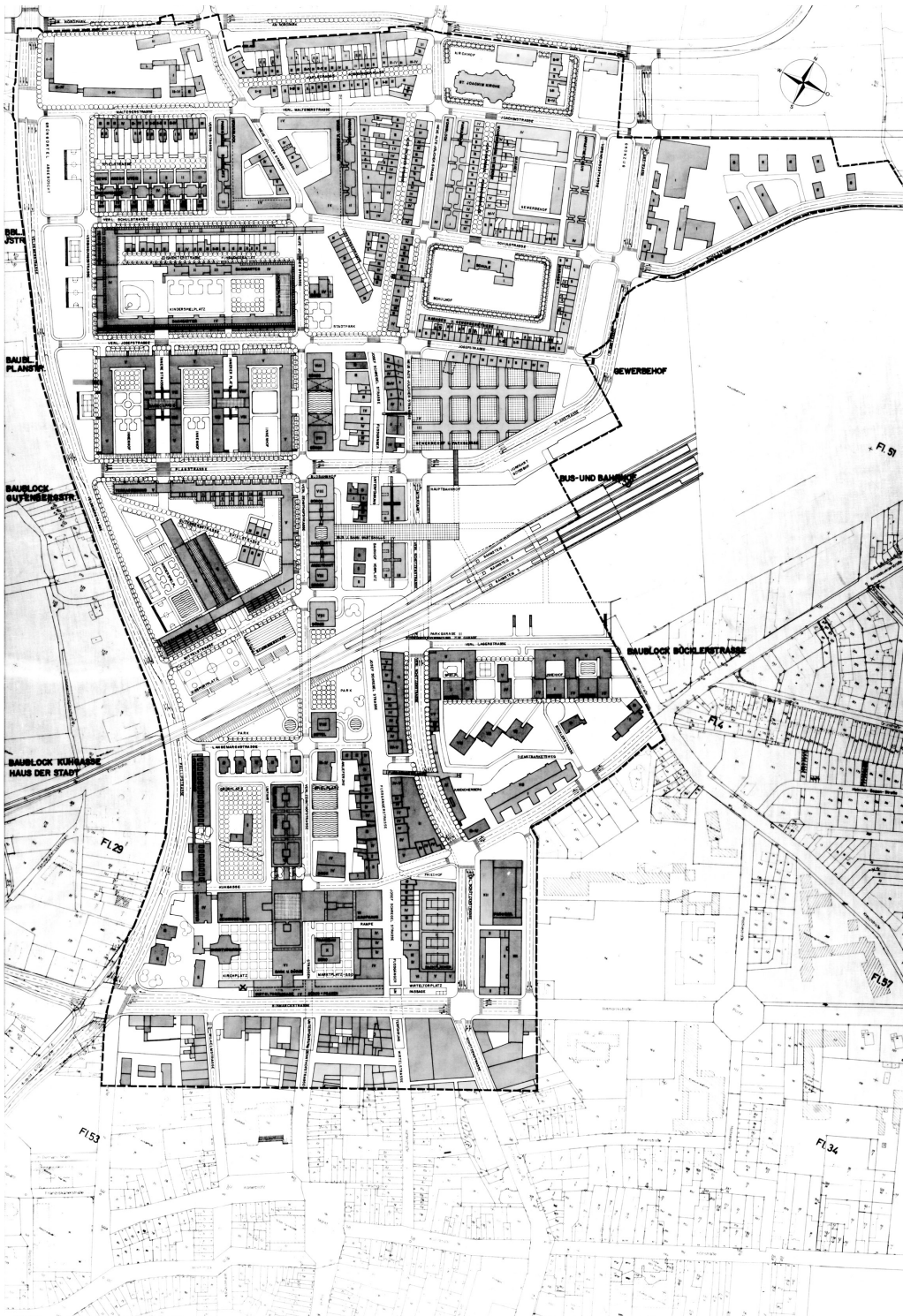
24 The controversy played out in articles, editorials, and letters to the editor of the student newspaper, including a letter from a group of graduate students working with Ungers (Letters to the Editor: “Formalist Pigs,” *The Cornell Daily Sun*, Monday 19 February 1973, LXXXIX:92, 4). For a brief reference to this episode, see Rem Koolhaas, “OMARE: OMU” (op. cit.), 162-163. Ungers also referred to his relationship with Colin Rowe when he was chairman of the department at Cornell in his contribution, “He Who Did Not Understand the Zeitgeist,” to the volume edited by Emmanuel Petit, *Reckoning With Colin Rowe: Ten Architects Take Position* (New York, NY / Abington, UK: Routledge, 2015), 64-71.

25 The Bonn project is discussed in detail by Werner Goehner – Ungers’ graduate student at the time who worked with him on this competition – in “Ungers’ Lost Project,” his contribution to the “Festschrift” and published in Anja Sieber-Albers and Martin Kieren (editors), *Sichtweisen: Betrachtungen zum Werk von O. M. Ungers* (Braunschweig/Wiesbaden: Friedr. Vieweg & Sohn, 1999), 56-63. Ungers’ entry did not receive a prize. W. Müller-Rombach, “Bauten des Bundes und ihre Integration in die Stadt Bonn,” in *Baumeister* (69:7, July 1972), 755-771.

26 See O.M. Ungers, “Projects”, in *Lotus International* 11 (1976), 14-41, and Reiner Lehmkuhl, Hansjörg Hauser, and Magdalene Hoeffler (editors): *Städtebauwettbewerb Düren-Nord Kuhgassenviertel als Grundlage der Dürer Stadtsanierung* [Series: Architektur + Wettbewerbe. Sonderheft] (Stuttgart: Karl Krämer Verlag, 1979).

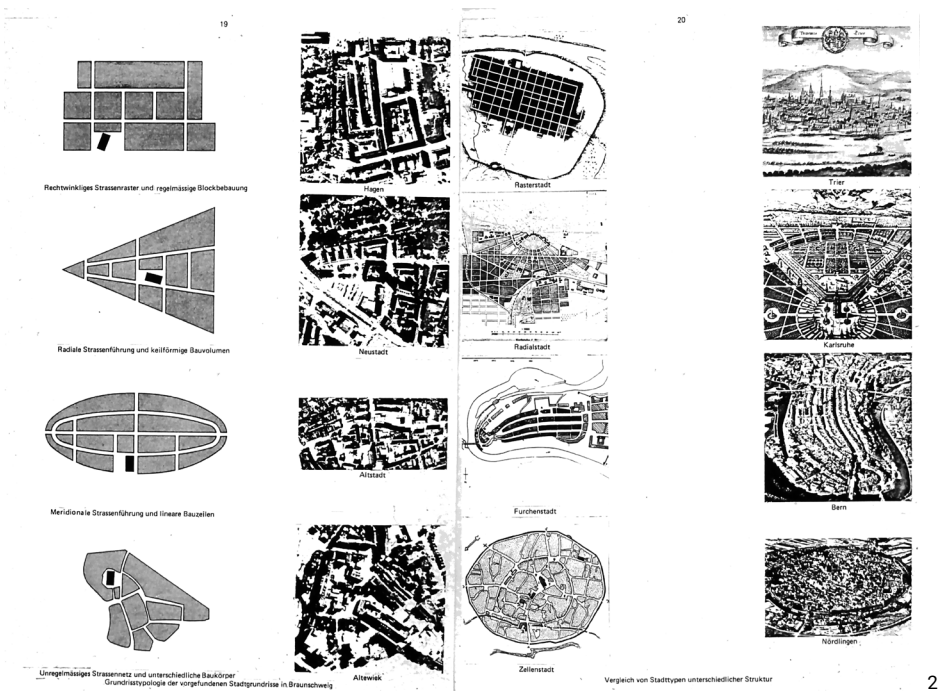
27 O.M. Ungers, “Progetto per il parco del castello di Braunschweig = Project for Braunschweig Castle Park,” in *Lotus International* 14 (03 1977), 100-127.

sition from purely pragmatic approaches to a more creative mode of thinking. It means a process of thinking in qualitative values rather than quantitative data, a process that is based on synthesis rather than analysis...It is meant to be a transition in the process of thinking from a metrical space to the visionary space of coherent systems, from the concepts of homology to the concepts of morphology.²⁸



1 |

28 O.M. Ungers, "Designing and Thinking in Images, Metaphors, and Analogies." The quote can be found on page 104.



2 |

Ungers carried out similar typological and morphological investigations of urban structure in the 1974 proposal for the 4th Ring Road in Berlin and the 1976 proposal for the new campus of the University of Bremen.²⁹

The formal characteristics of these competition proposals eventually led to research characterizing Berlin as a “Green Archipelago” of distinctive parts. Ungers organized three summer academies at Cornell that focused on the city. The first, in 1976, with Cornell faculty members Werner Goehner, Arthur Ovaska and Hans Kollhoff, all former students, was titled “Gotham City - Metaphors & Metamorphosis” and focused on Midtown Manhattan.³⁰ This was followed by two summer academies based in Berlin, on “The Urban Villa” (1977)³¹ and on “The Urban Garden” (1978),³² both involving Ungers, Kollhoff and Ovaska. At the same time, Ungers, together with Rem Koolhaas, Peter Reimann, Hans Kollhoff and Arthur Ovaska, published the seminal book *Die Stadt in der Stadt* (the City in the City).³³ It became the basis for *The Dialectic City*, written in 1997 with Stefan Vieth, then in charge of part of Ungers’ architectural practice, as co-author.³⁴ Its introductory essay, also titled “The Dialectic City,” posits an argument based on

29 For the proposal for the 4th Ring in Berlin, see “Städtebaulicher Ideenwettbewerb Berlin-Lichterfelde 4. Ring”, in *Wettbewerbe Aktuell*, 5:6 (06 1975), cover, 361-372, Ungers, O.M.: “Projects”, in *Lotus International* 11 (1976), 14-41, and Robert L. Delevoy: *Rational Architecture Rationnelle 1978; The Reconstruction of the European City / La Reconstruction de la Ville Europeen* (Bruxelles: Editions des Archives d’Architecture Moderne, 1978), 70-72, 102-103, 122-124, 127. For the proposal in Bremen, see O.M Ungers: “Kommentar zu einer humanistischen Architektur,” in Margret Bofinger et al, *Architektur in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer GmbH, 1979), 170-179.

30 O.M. Ungers, Werner Goehner, Arthur Ovaska and Hans Kollhoff, *The Urban Block and Gotham City - Metaphors & Metamorphosis – Two Concurrent Projects* (Ithaca, NY: CAAP, Cornell University, 1976).

31 O.M. Ungers, Hans Kollhoff and Arthur Ovaska, *The Urban Villa - A Multi Family Dwelling Type* (Cologne: Studioverlag für Architektur, 1977).

32 O.M. Ungers, Hans Kollhoff and Arthur Ovaska, *The Urban Garden - Student Projects for the Südliche Friedrichstadt Berlin* (Cologne: Studioverlag für Architektur, 1978).

33 O.M. Ungers, Rem Koolhaas, Peter Riemann, Hans Kollhoff and Arthur Ovaska, *Die Stadt in der Stadt - Berlin, das grüne Stadtarchipel* (Cologne: Studioverlag für Architektur, 1977).

34 O.M. Ungers and Stefan Vieth, “The Dialectic City,” in *Oswald Mathias Ungers: The Dialectic City* (Milano: Skira editore, 1997), 21.

Fig. 1

Düren-Nord Kuhgassenviertel (1973): master plan. [source: courtesy of the UAA].

Fig. 2

Schloßpark, Braunschweig (1976): abstraction and analogical analysis of the four parishes. [source: Städtebauliche Studie für den Bereich Zwischen Schlosspark und Museumspark in Braunschweig (Cologne: O.M. Ungers, 1977, 19-20), courtesy of the UAA].

the 16th-century German philosopher Nikolaus von Kleus' *Coincidentia oppositorum*³⁵ (coincidence of opposites): that the city is both one of complementary places (the "city within the city") that "...is open and can be interpreted, it is both mixed and adaptable, useful, non-ideological and unpretentious, open to innovation while also preserving the past..." and also a city of layers (as illustrated in the introduction to "Urban Metaphors," his contribution to the aforementioned MAN transFORMS exhibition) that is "...supplemented, reduced, perfected or changed. Each individual system influences, modifies or changes the next." *The Dialectic City* illustrates the 1993 proposal for the cathedral square in Magdeburg and the 1995 Humboldt Colonnades project in Berlin as examples of the first position, and the 1994 Spreeinsel proposal in Berlin as an example of the second.

Ultimately, what is clear is that O.M. Ungers saw the city as an ideal, and sought to make individual physical insertions reflect its "collective unconscious". Three projects carried out in Trier over two decades punctuate this final development, in which he reflected on the history of a place and responded to its *genius loci*. The three contemporize important sites from Trier's Roman period, and illustrate Ungers' clear understanding of the history of the city in general and of Trier in particular,³⁶ of the history of architecture, and how a contemporary functional insertion should and must respect the context of its placement in order to create a sense of place.³⁷ Taken together, these projects in Trier crystallize what was Ungers' notion of the role of individual insertions into an urban context to reinforce and even celebrate the ideal of the city. Each of the three Trier insertions was decided upon after a careful considerations of the site, its history, and evolution.

Three Projects in Trier

Modern Trier dates back to more than two millennia ago. The Romans founded the city on the Mosel River around 16 BC as an *oppidum*, *Augusta Treverorum*, to replace earlier settlements of the Treveri, the Gallic tribe native to this area of Europe. It was a location "...from which three ancient highways spread out to meet the Rhine at Cologne, Coblenz, and Mainz."³⁸ By 50 AD, during the reign of Claudius, the settlement had been elevated to the rank of *Colonia*, and in 286 AD it became one of four imperial capitals as a result of Diocletian's political reorganization of the empire. Trier became the seat of the Cæsar of the western half of the empire, having previously been the capital city of *Gallia Belgica*.

35 According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Nikolaus von Keus (Nicolaus Cusanus or Nicolas of Cusa, 1401–1464) was "arguably the most important German thinker of fifteenth century ... [who] was also an ecclesiastical reformer, administrator and cardinal." Miller, Clyde Lee, "Cusanus, Nicolaus [Nicolas of Cusa]", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/cusanus/>>, accessed 10 June 2023.

36 Ungers grew up in the Eifel region, to the northeast of Trier. While his three Trier projects were designed late in his professional life, Trier itself was a recurring source of inspiration for Ungers, as will be discussed below.

37 *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines sense of place as "(b) a clear character or identity belonging to or associated with a particular place." OED Third Edition, December 2016.

38 "Augusta Treverorum," in Richard Stillwell (editor); William L. MacDonald (associate editor), and Marian Holland McAllister (assistant editor): *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites* (Princeton, N.J. Princeton University Press, 1976), 119-120.

Until the Romans withdrew from this part of their empire following the Frankish invasions in 410 AD, Trier retained its prominence in the economic, political and cultural development of Europe.³⁹ Even after that, it retained some importance during the Frankish, Merovingian and subsequent periods, eventually becoming one of the seats of the archbishops-electors of the Holy Roman Emperor of the German Nations.

The interventions by Ungers include one of the earliest thermal baths complexes in the city, built near the forum in 80-100 AD; another one involving the imperial baths with a first phase that dates to 293 AD, and its second phase, never completed, stopped around 316 AD; and finally one relating to the *Aula Palatina* built during the reign of Constantine around 310 AD.⁴⁰

Ungers' first intervention in Trier is the 1981-84 redesign of the urban space adjacent to one of the most significant landmarks of Roman antiquity, the *Aula Palatina* or palace audience hall commonly called the Basilica in reference to its original function. In 1988, Ungers was commissioned to design his second project in Trier, the facilities for access to the new archaeological site under the Viehmarktplatz, a project that, like the previous one, involved an important urban space within the city. The new museum of the *Thermen am Viehmarkt* was completed in 1998, not without controversy. Finally, in 2003, he won the competition for a new entrance to the city's most important archaeological site, the Kaiserthermen. This was his last completed work before his death on 30 September 2007.

Konstantinplatz

The Konstantinplatz project involved the restoration of the open space immediately to the west of the *Aula Palatina*, the only part of Constantine's imperial palace to have survived since its construction around 310 AD. The structure was flanked by two service courtyards containing the furnaces that heated the hypocaust of the *Aula*, each surrounded by galleries for the praetorian guards, who protected the building. The apsidal hall without side aisles, which is the *Aula*, was partially demolished when it became part of the Rococo palace of the Archbishops-Electors built in the 17th century. The original structure was first rebuilt under Napoleon when the French occupied the Rhineland in the early 19th century, and again when the area became a Prussian province later in the century. The restored building, which measures 27.5 by 67 meters (about 90

39 The primary sources for the historical information on Trier are Edith Mary Wightman, *Roman Trier and the Treveri* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971); D. Ahrens et al, *Führer zu vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Denkmälern*; and Joachim von Elbe, *Roman Germany: A Guide to Sites and Museums* (Mainz-am-Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1977), 388-438. See also the entry on Augusta Treverorum in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites* (op. cit.), 119-120.

40 In 293 AD, *Augusta Treverorum* was named one of the four capitals of the Tetrarchy that was the Roman empire – along with *Mediolanum* (Milano), *Sirmium* (modern Sremska Mitrovica in Serbia) and *Nicomedia* (modern Izmit in Turkey) – as the seat of the *Cæsar* of the West, who was Flavius Valerius Constantius. At this time, great building works were carried out, including the construction of the so-called Kaiserthermen. His son Constantine was born to Helena in the eastern part of the empire. In 306 AD, Constantine was proclaimed emperor (Augustus) of the western half of the empire and consolidated his mandate over both halves, making *Augusta Treverorum* the seat of his empire.

by 220 feet) and is 30 meters (98 feet) high, was consecrated in 1856 as the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer (*Evangelische Kirche zum Erlöser*). When O.M. Ungers was commissioned in 1981, the area to the west of the *Aula* was used as a parking lot for tourist coaches, with underground toilets in the middle. Not an inspiring setting for such a historic landmark.

Based on the archaeological documentation of the site, Ungers undertook a series of morphological investigations to reflect the historical evolution of the site, from Roman to Mediæval and later transformations. He first explored preliminary solutions including defining the area outside the western service courtyard and the surrounding gallery with plantings on a grid, infilling the area with a structure containing two glass-roofed arcades, with a biaxially symmetrical covered courtyard structure, as a simple plaza with a loggia at its southern end and a theatrical space connecting it to the service courtyard, and similarly but with a pergola indicating the location of the surrounding gallery.⁴¹ The strategy finally restored the area immediately adjacent to the *Aula* to its Roman level. Excavations in this area revealed the remains of the enclosure around the western service courtyard, as well as the remains of an earlier apsidal structure and a later octagonal structuree [Fig. 3a], elements known from French and Prussians archæological investigations. The incorporation of these elements resulted in a plaza whose paving reflects the layers of the site's history, from the original Roman state, when the hall was surrounded by service courtyards with galleries for the prætorian guards, to an octagonal structure and an apsidal hall. During the excavation of the site, a significant mosaic was discovered from a pre-*Aula* Roman atrium house, which had not been recorded in the previous surveys. The mosaic was transferred to the nearby Rheinisches Landesmuseum.⁴² Its location was to be reflected in the paving of the square, but this was not done. A combination of ramps and stairs connects the Konstantinplatz with the Baroque Palastgarten.⁴³ Finally, Ungers provided an urban loggia to house the functions that serve the public space – snack bar, toilets, souvenir shop, etc. – and, more crucially, to define the southern end of the urban space in a way that is compatible with the Roman monument: the loggia's seven bays allude to the colonnaded streets that preceded the construction of the *Aula*, as is evident from the archæological evidence on the site. Viewed from the north, the new structure covers the post-war buildings along the Weberbach Straße with a consistent liner, while seen from the plaza Ungers' loggia emulates the Roman condition of a colonnaded street. Viewed from the west, the gable end and proportions of the loggia allude to Laugier's Primitive Hut.⁴⁴ The plaza itself descends from the contemporary street level along Weberbach Straße, to almost the Roman

41 Gerardo Brown-Manrique, "Konstantinplatz in Trier: Between Memory and Place," in *Places 3:1* (Winter 1986), 31-42.

42 The Rheinisches Landesmuseum is the state historical museum of the Landes Rheinland-Pfalz (Rhine-land-Palatinate) and holds a significant archæological collection including the discovered *impluvium* mosaic.

43 Unfortunately, the access to the cryptoporticus under the garden, dating from the time of Constantine, is still hidden by the ramp and stairs.

44 The frontispiece in the second edition of Abbé Marc-Antoine Laugier's *Essai sur l'Architecture* illustrates "the first model" of architecture. Paris: Chez Duchesne, 1755 (English translation: *An Essay on Architecture*. London: T. Osborn and Shipton, 1755; new translation by W. and A. Hermann [Los Angeles: Hennesey & Ingalls, 1977]).

street level at the edge of the gallery perimeter, its contemporary curvilinear upper edge defined by seven freestanding columns supporting spherical lamps. As a result of the lowering the site adjacent to the *Aula* to its Roman level, the location of the chimney, which was connected to the hypocaust floor of the original structure, is now evident and contributes to the understanding of the historical site. The remains of the surrounding gallery have been stabilized, the new bricks clearly distinguishable from those of Roman origin, all of which have been capped to serve as benches on either side.

Konstantinplatz is now the link between the central pedestrian precinct to its north – where the Hauptmarkt, the cathedral complex, and the Kornmarkt are located – and the Kurfürstliches Palais with its formal gardens, with the *Kaiserthermen* to the south beyond. With its new relationship to its site, visitors today fully experience the monumental scale of the *Aula Palatina* while benefiting from a sensitive urban space that, in pleasant weather, is populated by tourists and locals, by strolling couples and skate borders challenged by its edges and grade changes [Fig. 3b].

Thermen am Viehmarkt

O.M. Ungers' second intervention in Trier was to reorganize the *Viehmarkt*, the Cattle Market Square, which has been the site of a flea market for many decades since the early 19th century. The most important above-ground intervention is what is popularly known as the *Ungers-Vitrine*, which provides access to the underground archæological site of the *Thermen am Viehmarkt* (or the *Viehmarktthermen*). Not identified in previous archæological surveys, these Roman baths were discovered in 1987 during excavations for a proposed underground parking garage [Fig. 4a].⁴⁵ Situated close to the forum of *Augusta Treverorum*, the baths were built around 80 BC and thus predate the *Barbarathermen* (built ca. 150 AD) and the later *Kaiserthermen* (begun in 293 AD but never completed), which have long visited by tourists. The complex is thought to have been the largest in the empire north of the Alps. After the baths were abandoned, various buildings were erected on its ruins, including a Capuchin cloister, in the 17th century. Its garden eventually become the *Viehmarkt* after the cloister was abolished and demolished during the French occupation in 1802. The newly discovered archæological site was discovered when excavations began to build the underground garage for a new bank building. The site was excavated between 1987 and 1994, and the exposed and stabilized ruins were preserved beneath the new urban space after relocating the underground garage.



3a



3b

Fig. 3a,3b

Konstantinplatz, (a) view in 1982, during the excavation of the site at the start of construction and (b) in 2018.

45 What are now identified as the *Thermen am Viehmarkt* were unknown until discovered in 1987. The archæological maps found in both Wightman's book *Roman Trier and the Treveri* (op. cit., 121, Figure 12), and the Ahrens et al *Führer zu vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Denkmälen* (op. cit., 32:2, supplement 1) locate the forum, the *Aula*, *Kaiserthermen*, and other Roman landmarks but show nothing at the site of the later Capuchin cloister nor the *Viehmarkt*. Information on this earliest of *Augusta Treverorum*'s three thermal baths can be found in Heinz Cüppers, "Thermenanlage am Viehmarkt," in the book edited by him, *Die Römer in Rheinland-Pfalz* (Hamburg: Nikol, 2005), 625ff.

Ungers' intervention above ground is rather minimal, a ground plane – the plaza itself – supported by carefully placed columns so as to not interfere with the preserved ruins below ground. The paving of the plaza reflects both its Roman origins and its contemporary condition. Firstly, Ungers accurately recreates a Roman *cardo* and *decumanus* on the site with paving in traditional Roman bricks and edged with drainage grates, linking this important urban space to its historical roots. In contrast, he creates a background square grid in a darker shade of gray with the light tone of the plaza surface, a grid that organizes the space relative to that established by the existing street and building wall to the east. The module of both grids informs the large intervention.

Above ground, the *Thermen am Viehmarkt* are identified by a large cubic glass box (the so-called *Ungers-Vitrine*), a three by three square that rises from the background grid to expose half a glass cube [Fig. 4b]. This glass box is penetrated diagonally along the plaza level by a glass tube, which always allows the public to look into the excavations. The diagonal of the tube is parallel to the Roman street grid. Access into the underground site is through the Vitrine. An entrance opposite the glass tube, also orthogonal to the Roman grid, brings visitors to the underground level via an elevator and stairs. There, one can explore the various excavations – the spaces of the baths, other subsequent structures, and even late-mediæval sewers. Another structure is present in the plaza, a pyramidally-roofed basalt stone hut that provides access to the new underground garage. At the lower level, the full impact of the glass box is better understood, its square roof raised by spindly steel cylinders that contrast with the masonry of the ruins, and is surrounded by a glass curtain wall. The only other modern insertion is the concrete tower that houses the vertical circulation that links the plaza to the museum level.

Ungers' intervention is blunt, a *Vitrine* with a very strong presence in the space. It has been criticized for being too opaque, not transparent as promised in the competition model, its glass curtain walls too dark and acting more like a mirror. This is a fair criticism that can be levelled at all-glass façade structures, especially when they are purely transparent. From the inside, however, it is a more transparent enclosure. A different type of glass might have provided more transparency, but it still offers a constant window into this part of Trier's Roman past. The square continues to host weekly activities of the flea market, as well as seasonal events such as the annual *Weihnachtsmarkt* or Christmas market, and in these occasions, the Ungers-Vitrine serves simply as backdrop, reflecting the colorful lights of the *Glühwein* stands.



4a



4b

Fig. 4a,4b

Thermen am Viehmarkt, (a) view of excavations in 1994, and (b) view in 2008.

Entrée, Kaiserthermen

The third and final intervention by Ungers in Trier is the entrance building to the archaeological site of the Kaiserthermen, a project begun in 2003.⁴⁶ The new structure [Fig. 6] restores the edge condition of what was one of the largest baths in the Roman Empire, initially dating from 293 AD. In its previous state, the archaeological zone was surrounded by a chain-link fence and a hedge. Access to the site was through a small entrance gate and controlled by a single-story structure containing the necessary facilities. Ungers' solution regulates the northern edge of the site and provides a clear demarcation between the ruins and the adjoining formal gardens linked to the Baroque palace of the Archbishops-Electors, restituting the colonnaded street front that once provided access to the *palæstra* of the original complex. The entrance building houses an exhibition space providing an introduction to the site visible through full-height windows, as well as the ticket desk and other ancillary facilities including toilets and a souvenir shop.

The Entrée is a transformation of a cube through twenty-six modules, defined by solid or perforated planes, edges, open cubes and glass-enclosed cubes. Ungers' design explorations included transformations, as mentioned above, and the new entry has a direct precedent in the 1976 project for Schloß Morsbroich in Leverkusen. There, the proposal to replace the existing outbuildings surrounding the Baroque palace with a curvilinear structure explored the idea of enclosure in transformation, beginning with an architectural space defined by four trees forming the corners of the Primitive Hut.⁴⁷ Its segments varied from outdoor spaces defined by corner trees, where outdoor sculpture would presumably be placed, to large volumes, smaller two-story galleries, and more discreet assemblages housing artists' studio apartments [Fig. 8]. This was an exploration of the transformation of a cube – whether defined by two, four or six of its planes, its eight vertices, any number of its edges, or any combination of any of these – an exploration that Ungers revisits in Trier. At the Entrée, Ungers begins the exploration at the western end of the structure with a mostly solid block of that contains the mechanical and storage spaces, and continues with five modules of open cubes that forms a courtyard between the storage building and the entrance building. The entrance building itself is made up of seven modules, three of which contain the ancillary and support spaces, and four of which form the actual entrance and exhibition space [Fig. 5,6,7]. The first part has one solid module and two perforated modules, while the last four are the edges of the cube with glass window-walls. The last of these leads to three modules

46 The results were announced in December 2003. [<https://www.competitionline.com/de/ergebnisse/10638>]. The landscape architect was Dr. Bernhard Korte, who was also responsible for the garden at Ungers' "Glashütte" (Ungers Haus 2) retreat nearby in the Eifel, as well as other projects by Ungers. An excellent analysis of the design of both the *Thermen am Viehmarkt* museum and the Entrée can be found in Martina D'Alessandro's doctoral dissertation, "I progetti di Oswald Mathias Ungers per la Città di Treveri: Questioni di composizione architettonica" (Cesena: Alma Mater Studiorum, Università di Bologna, 2011) and her subsequent book *Oswald Mathias Ungers a Treviri: Due Musei* (Bologna: Bologna University Press, 2015).

47 Gerardo Brown-Manrique, "Schloss Morsbroich – Ungers' Museum Project in Leverkusen," in *Architectural Design* 50:1/2 (January/February 1980), 8-15.



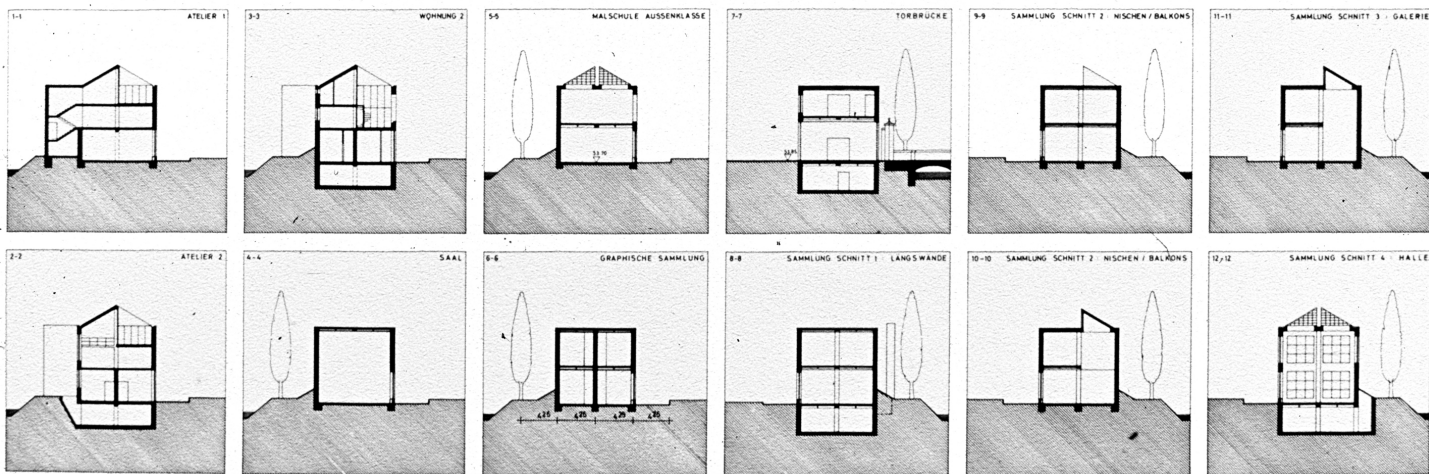
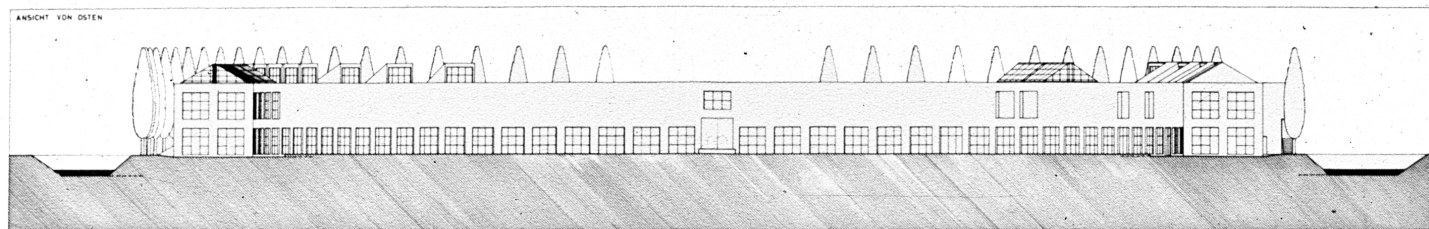
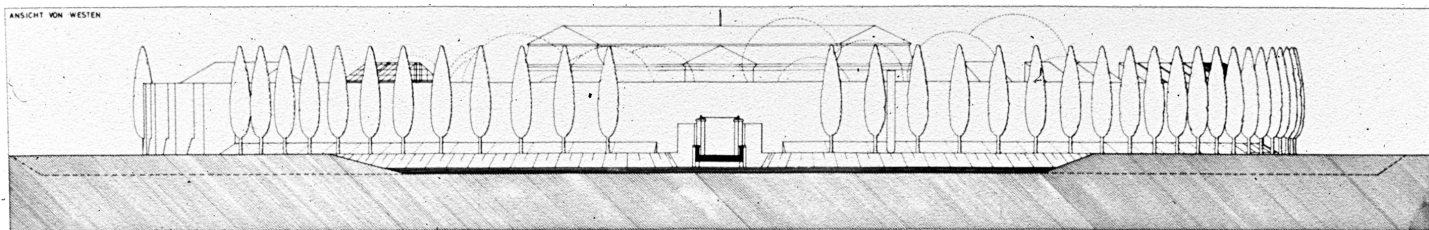
5 |



6 |



7 |



forming a loggia that ramps down from the present-day level to the Roman level. This is completed by the next four modules, formed by truncated edges filled with greenery towards the outside of the site. From this area, visitors enter the archaeological site, including access to the underground passageways that serviced the thermal baths and the palæstra above. The 169-meter (554.5 ft.) long, twenty-six module horizontal plane that forms the Entrée continues with this definition of partial edges for four more modules leading to the only vertical element of the composition, a lookout tower with proportions of 1.5:1:1. It provides a clear overview of the site and allows one to understand its scale, even though it is underground.

In this way, Ungers' interventions not only resolve the problem of how to functionally define the historical precinct in relation to the contemporary city, restoring its edge condition as a transformation of the original relationship, but also of how to create a commentary on the relationship of the object – the architectural insertion – to the whole – the city itself. Ungers' Entrée provides an appropriate edge to the garden of the Baroque palace, and respects the original relationship of the now-vanished baths to the dense Roman-era urban context.

Ungers and the City: a Summary and Evaluation

These three projects are connected beyond their shared location, as all three urban interventions are crucial parts of Ungers' ongoing search for architectural meaning beyond the need to satisfy functional requirements. They are also significant constructions that illustrate his deep respect for the evolution of urban form, as discussed above, and which is evident in his proposal for the Grünzug-Süd project in Cologne-Zollstock. And as architectural interventions, the loggia at Konstantinplatz, the *Ungers-Vitrine* at the Viehmarktplatz, and the Entrée itself show a clarity in form that began with his earliest projects in Cologne. But these three projects in Trier are much more. They show Ungers' deep understanding of the place of the Roman *Augusta Treverorum* in the history of German architecture, and as a place that is part of his own history, as a child of the Eifel. In his intellectual biography of Ungers, Jasper Cepl wrote – as did Martin Kieren in the introductory biographical essay to his monograph on O.M. Ungers – of the influence that the monastery at Maria Laach had on Ungers' development as an architect.⁴⁸ The Benedictine abbey of Maria Laach (1093-1235) in the eastern Eifel region [Fig. 9] is considered the finest example of Rhenish Romanesque architecture. It is a structure that Ungers knew well as a child and when he documented the monastery in 1947. It is a composition of circles and squares, curvilinear and rectilinear, what Kieren calls "[t]he absolute purity and clarity of architecture" and writes: "In Maria Laach, Ungers discovered proof of the compelling logic of pure architectural forms."⁴⁹

48 Cepl, op. cit., 31-32; Kieren, op. cit., 17-20.

49 Kieren, op. cit., 19.

Fig. 5

The Kaiserthermen photograph by Stefan Müller 20xx, courtesy of the UAA/ Stefan Müller.

Fig. 6

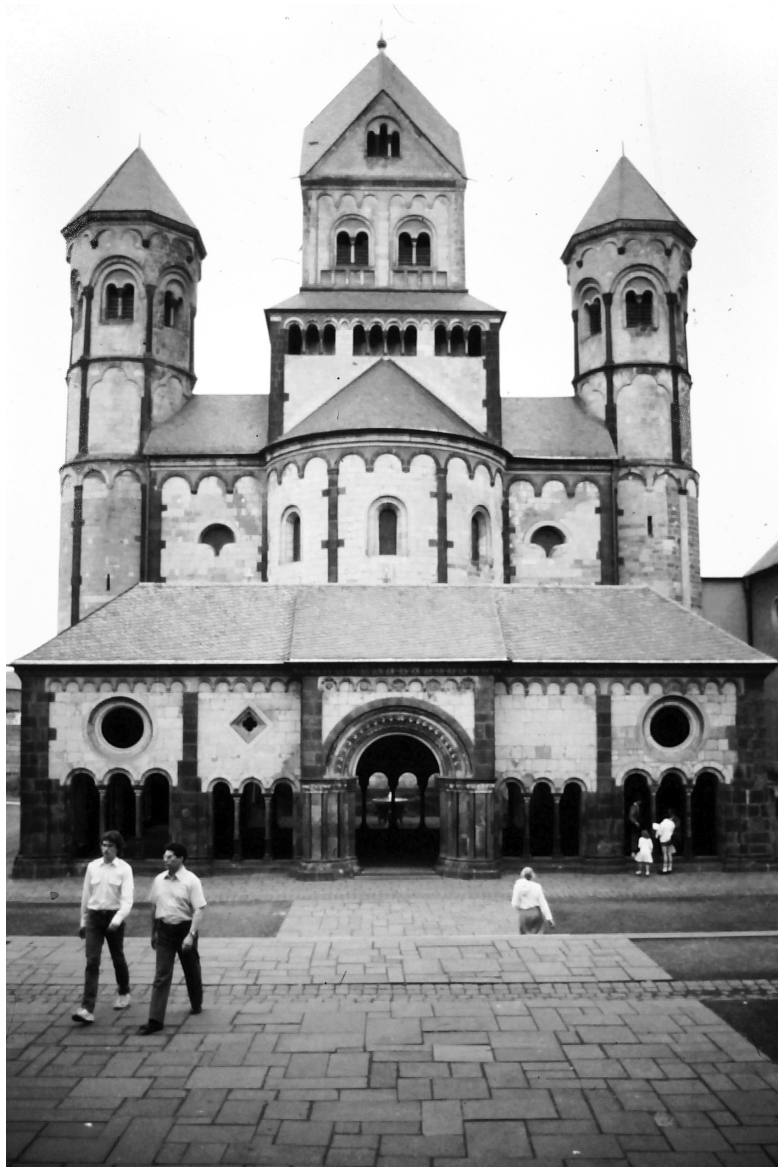
The Kaiserthermen photograph by Stefan Müller 20xx, courtesy of the UAA/ Stefan Müller.

Fig. 7

Entrée to the Kaiserthermen showing the observation tower near the remains of the caldarium section of the baths. Photograph by Stefan Müller 20xx, courtesy of the UAA/ Stefan Müller.

Fig. 8

Schloß Morsbroich, Leverkusen, drawing showing the transformation of the cube in designing the new structure, courtesy of the UAA.



But Ungers was also influenced from an early age by the history of the Eifel region with a rich Roman past, and it was in Trier itself that Ungers found the roots of his inspiration. In conversations with the author about the idea of morphology and transformation, Ungers often cited the cloister to the side of the Dom Sankt-Peter (ca. 326-1200) and behind the Liebfrauenkirche (ca. 1227-1260) as a space where one could see the evolution of architecture, both locally and throughout Europe [Fig. 10]. The arcaded cloister is bounded on one side by the Dom Sankt-Peter with its Roman walls dating from ca. 326, early and late Romanesque construction and Gothic and Baroque elements, and on the other by the High Gothic apse end of the Liebfrauenkirche, all of which form part of what defines this space.

Ungers saw his native Eifel as a place to recharge his batteries. So, it was not surprising that the second Ungers house was built outside Utscheid, to the west of Bitburg and northwest of Trier.⁵⁰ The Glashütte would be his elegy to the Eifel's Roman past. As he explained in an essay:

The region of the southern Eifel is in reality a Roman land. Trier, the ancient Treviri, was its capital and seat of government for a while, and it was from here that Constantine decided the fate of the empire between 300 and 315 A.D. The surrounding area is reminiscent of Tuscany. It was here that wealthy Romans built their villas, along the road that leads from Trier to Cologne... [and] Glashütte fits neatly, without any need for sutures, into the tradition of the Roman country villas.

He continued,

It is a tradition that has been familiar to me since my early childhood... The memories of my youth are linked to the Roman culture of the Trier region. It is here that I feel at home and it is here too that lie the roots of my architectural thinking.⁵¹

Based on a transformation of a "villa rustica" that would have been found in the region's Roman history, the Glashütte is a gabled structure, three bays wide and deep, set in an Arcadian landscape.⁵² It also illustrates his continuing search for pure forms from the beginning of his professional career.

Although Ungers was inspired by Trier, it was the results of his investigations, begun while teaching at the TU Berlin and continued later on, after his permanent return to Germany, that would form the theoretical basis of his architecture. Writing about Berlin in its post-war, pre-reunification state, O.M. Ungers noted that,

...the city is a history of formation and transformation, from one type into another, a morphological continuum; a textbook of events represent-

50 The "Glashütte" project has been widely documented, including in Anaxtu Zabalbeascoa, *The House of the Architect* (New York: Rizzoli, 1995, 162-167, 190) and "Glashütte, Utscheid, Eifel, 1986-88", in *Lotus International 90* (09 1996), 22-25.

51 O.M. Ungers, "Aphorisms on Building Houses," in *Lotus International 90*, op. cit., 17.

52 Dr. Bernhard Korte also designed the landscape around the Glashütte. See footnote 45 above.

ing ideas and thoughts, decisions and accidents, realities and disasters. It is not a uniform picture but a vivid ensemble of pieces and fragments, of types and countertypes, a juxtaposition of contradictions, a dialectical rather than linear process.⁵³

Later in his essay on “Architecture of Collective Memory,” he further describes the concepts as follows:

[T]he discovery of the place, the city of many faces and of unresolved contradictions, where each place exists in its own poetry, and in which the whole is characterized by the richness of the pieces, reflecting the ‘genius loci’ and the historical antecedents.⁵⁴

But how do the three Trier projects specifically illustrate the idea of an architecture of collective memory, how do these three specifically become indicative of the development of O.M. Ungers’ architectural approach? In his book *Architecture as Theme*,⁵⁵ Ungers identifies five possible themes, one of transformation, another of assemblage, a third of incorporation, another one of assimilation, and finally one of imagination. Each is further explained by its subtitle: “transformation or the morphology of the Gestalt,” “assemblage or the coincidence of opposites,” “incorporation or ‘the doll within the doll,’” “assimilation or the adaptation to the ‘genius loci,’” and “imagination or ‘the world as an idea.’” Introducing the themes, he writes that,

“...a thematization of architecture means nothing if not moving away from the blind alley of pure functionalism or – at the other end of the spectrum – from stylistic aberrations and a return to the essential content of architectural language.”⁵⁶

These five themes revolve in some way around the idea of an architecture that indeed responds to historical connections and a sense of place, an understanding of the *genius loci*. The *Entrée* to the Kaiserthermen, based on the idea of transformation, provides for the necessary functional spaces and clearly delineates the northern border of the *archaeological* site while making reference to its Roman condition. Similarly, both the *Konstantinplatz* and *Viehmarktplatz* projects recover the Roman condition by introducing traces of earlier, contemporary, and later structures adjacent to the *Aula*, and, in the case of the *Viehmarktplatz*, of the *cardo* and *decumanus* grid of the Roman period, with the *Entrée* alluding to the condition of the edge condition of *Palæstra* perimeter, begun in the second phase of the Kaiserthermen. With the *Konstantinplatz*, the *Thermenmuseum* and the *Entrée*, Ungers provides a commentary on the history of the city of Trier. These three interventions make a significant contribution to place-making in the contemporary *Augusta Treverorum*, establishing a link to

53 O.M. Ungers, “Architecture of Collective Memory...,” in *Lotus International* 24 (op. cit.), 9.

54 Ungers, “Architecture of Collective Memory...” (op. cit.), 11.

55 O.M. Ungers, *Architettura come tema / Architecture as Theme* (Milano: Electa, 1982).

56 O.M. Ungers, “Introduction,” *Architecture as Theme* (op. cit.), 10.

the layers of history that shape this ancient city on the Mosel and by illustrating how the connection of significant structures to the cultural past contributes to the realities of the present. The three demonstrate Ungers' notions of architecture and the city as a continuum, and by extension the history of German architecture. They are, in fact, the final stage of Ungers' process of reflecting on the history of a place and responding to its *genius loci*. They are his tribute to Trier's Roman past and, one might say, the city's tribute to Oswald Mathias Ungers.

Bibliography

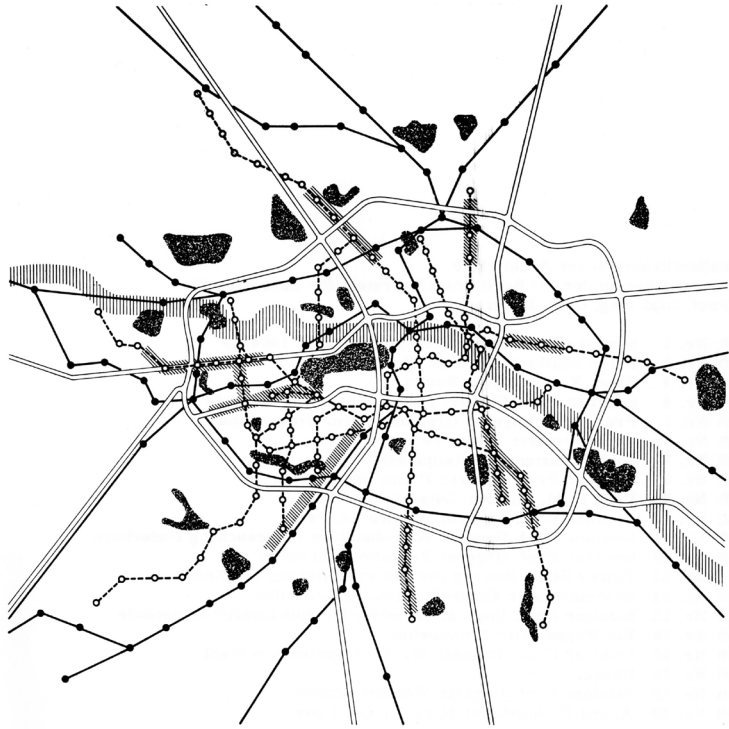
- "Augusta Treverorum," in Stillwell, Richard (editor); William L. MacDonald (associate editor), and Marian Holland McAllister (assistant editor): *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites*. Princeton, N.J. Princeton University Press. 1976, 119-120.
- "Städtebaulicher Ideenwettbewerb Berlin-Lichterfelde 4. Ring", in *Wettbewerbe Aktuell*, 5:6 (June 1975), cover, 361-372.
- Ahrens, D.; W. Binsfeld, K. Böhner, H. Cüppers et al: *Führer zu vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Denkmälen*, Band 32: Trier. Mainz-am-Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1977.
- Bofanti, Enzo; Rosaldo Bonicalzi, Aldo Rossi, Massimo Scolari and Daniele Vitale (editors): *Architettura Razionale*. Milano: Franco Angeli Editore, 1973.
- Brown-Manrique, Gerardo: "Konstantinplatz in Trier: Between Memory and Place," in *Places* 3:1 (Winter 1986), 31-42.
- Brown-Manrique, Gerardo: "Morphologies, Transformations and Other Stories: Recent Work by O.M. Ungers (Introduction)," in *O.M. Ungers: Works in Progress 1976-1980 (Catalogue 6, IAUS)*. New York: Rizzoli International, 1981, 6-19.
- Brown-Manrique, Gerardo: "Schloss Morsbroich – Ungers' Museum Project in Leverkusen," in *Architectural Design* 50:1/2 (January/February 1980), 8-15.
- Brown-Manrique, Gerardo: *O.M. Ungers : Early Buildings in Cologne 1951-1967*. Köln: UAA Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft, 2017.
- Cepl, Jasper: *Oswald Mathias Ungers: eine intellektuelle Biographie*. Köln: Walther König Verlag, 2007
- Cepl, Jasper; Sam Jacoby: *OMU's idea of the city 2015* (Architectural Association Visiting School at the Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft) London: Digital report, 2016.
- Cepl, Jasper; Sam Jacoby, and Valerio Massaro: "Grünzug-Süd: An Urban Design Manifesto," in *San Rocco* 14 (Spring 2018), 133-143.
- Elbe, Joachim von: *Roman Germany: A Guide to Sites and Museums*. Mainz-am-Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1977.
- Goehner, Werner: "Ungers' Lost Project," in Anja Sieber-Albers and Martin Kieren (editors), *Sichtweisen : Betrachtungen zum Werk von O. M. Ungers*. Braunschweig/Wiesbaden: Friedrich Vieweg & Sohn, 1999, 56-63.
- Gregotti, Vittorio: "Oswald Mathias Ungers" in *Lotus International* no. 11 (1976), 12.
- Jencks, Charles: "The Perennial Architectural Debate," in *Architectural Design* (AD Profile 48), 53:7-8 (July-August 1983), 4-22.
- Kieren, Martin: *Oswald Mathias Ungers*. London: Artemis StudioPaperback, 1994.
- Klotz, Heinrich (editor): *O.M. Ungers, 1951-1984 : Bauten und Projekte*. Braunschweig/Wiesbaden: Friedrich Vieweg & Sohn, 1985.
- Koolhaas, Rem (interview): "OMA RE: OMU (In conversation with Rem Koolhaas on Oswald Mathias Ungers)," in *Cornell Journal of Architecture* vol. 8 (2011), 159-171.
- Lehmkuhl, Reiner; Hansjorg Hauser, and Magdalene Hoeffler (editors): *Stadtebauwettbewerb Düren-Nord Kuhgassenviertel als Grundlage der Dürener Stadtsanierung*. Stuttgart: Karl Krämer Verlag, 1979.
- Rossi, Aldo: "Un giovane architetto tedesco: Oswald Mathias Ungers," in *Casabella-continuità* no. 244 (October 1960), 22-25.
- Ungers, O.M.: "Architecture of the Collective Memory – the Infinite Catalogue of Urban Forms," in *Lotus International* no. 24 (III/1979), 5-11.
- Ungers, O.M.: "Designing and Thinking in Images, Metaphors, and Analogies," in Hans Hollein (conception): *MAN transFORMS : an international exhibition on aspects of design*. [New York]: Copper-Hewitt Museum, Smithsonian Institution, 1976, 98-113.
- Ungers, O.M.: "He Who Did Not Understand the Zeitgeist," in Petit, Emmanuel (editor): *Reckoning With Colin Rowe : Ten Architects Take Position* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 64-71.
- Ungers, O.M.: "Kommentar zu einer humanistischen Architektur," in Helge Bofinger; Margret Bofinger, Heinrich Klotz and J. Pahe (editors): *Architektur in Deutschland: Bundesrepublik u. Westberlin*. Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer GmbH, 1979, 170-179.

Ungers, O.M.: "Progetto per il parco del castello di Braunschweig = Project for Braunschweig Castle Park," in *Lotus International* no. 14 (03 1977), 100-127.

Ungers, O.M.: "Projects," in *Lotus International* no. 11 (1976), 14-41.

Ungers, O.M. and Stephan Vieths: "The Dialectic City," in *Oswald Mathias Ungers : The Dialectic City*. Milano: Skira editore, 1997, 9-23.

Wightman, Edith Mary: *Roman Trier and the Treveri*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971.



HPA

Histories of Postwar Architecture