Chapter 2. From Delirium to Archipelago, the Postmodern Collective in the City

> Confusion in her eyes that says it all
> She's lost control.
> *Joy Division*

So what happens if architecture can no longer engender the social ideals it saw as its *raison d'être*? What is left when the city becomes a collection of phenomena that only sometimes congeals into something comprehensible at the scale of the building? What does one do when the forces of the metropolis have become overwhelmingly diffuse? In hindsight, Ungers and Koolhaas's urban experiments already seem to indicate a turning point in the treatment of the city. In fact, a small reflection on the problem of 1960s urbanism is hidden within their 1977 summer studio on Berlin. Presenting the proposal of the archipelago city, the authors situate it in relation to the urban planning ideas of the time: '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.'[1] This may well be one of the most crucial insights of the city studios that Ungers organized during his time at Cornell. The renewed engagement with the city picks up on the social commitment of the 1960s, but resists the unifying stories of urbanism – the seeds of postmodernity clearly taking hold, many projects on the city become a balancing act between the exercise of control (specific, architectural projects as urban catalysts) and 'letting go': acknowledging the limitations of the design intervention in the face of cultural and economic transformations. Or, as Koolhaas would later note: 'Architecture is a desperate attempt to exercise control and urbanism is the failure of that attempt.'[2]

The Terrifying Beauty of the Twentieth Century

The modern metropolis, or Georg Simmel's *Großstadt*, stands as the emblem of modernity throughout the twentieth century.[3] As such, it has taken on many guises within architecture writing. Ranging from the functionalist idiom of the CIAM to the 1960s cluster cities meant to encourage new forms of community, or the recent studies on the informal and self-organization, the city figures prominently as design question and as ground for architectural interventions. The past 30 years have seen a striking interest in the disorderly aspects of the city, in the qualities of tradition and in the network. In retrospect, we might see these stories – besides the city branding aspects – as manners of confronting the postmodern condition within the fabric of urban development. Ungers addresses the question of plurality and divergence by focusing on the structures that allow for life and vitality to develop independently within, while Koolhaas focuses more on introducing singular points of recognition amid the chaos of the city.

Both are seeking a way to escape the unity that is implied in the city of modernity. As it failed, and Team 10 began to rethink the project from within, the conditions Ungers explored in Berlin, and the cities that Koolhaas addressed, share a certain resistance to traditional aesthetic or functional understanding. A far cry from the city as a work of art (one of Ungers's earlier essays), the clinical view they bring to the table through their various urban explorations aids in addressing the type of urban spaces that seem to make many critics of the modern city uncomfortable: emptiness, banal buildings, anonymous spaces and large infrastructures. In this, they are heirs to the early modern thinkers on the city, such as Georg Simmel, who observed a new sensibility arising with the metropolis, and Robert Park, who suggested that the modern crowd had an unmistakable power that should not be underestimated. Both expressed a sense of liberation in the conditions that were changing at the turn of the century.[4] In 'The Terrifying Beauty of the Twentieth Century', Koolhaas notes that he may simply have an affinity for what exists, for the modern experience. He ends the essay, an extended riff on the qualities of the strange, disjointed cities of Berlin and Rotterdam, with the observation: 'But maybe all these arguments are in the end mere rationalization for the primitive fact of simply liking asphalt, traffic, neon, crowds, tension, the architecture of others, even.'[5] His attraction to what exists leads to a pragmatic handling of conditions, yet it seems not to have limited his affinity for constructing potential mythologies around

these existing objects. This continues to inform his writings on the city in subsequent years, which show a recurring negotiation between the ideal and the conditions at hand. 'The great originality of the Generic City is simply to abandon what doesn't work – what has outlived its use – to break up the blacktop of idealism with the jackhammers of realism and to accept whatever grows in its place.'[6]

The shared affinities of Koolhaas and Ungers for the shaping of the city through the life within it, and the role of architecture in this, are explicitly addressed in a number of their ideas on the city. Those of Koolhaas are most immediately traced through the work he did from 1972 to 1978 on *Delirious New York*, which sets up a conceptual framework that returns throughout many of his metropolitan writings. Ungers's early city thinking can be traced primarily through an appeal to transcendent ideas from 1960 to 1966 in 'The City as a Work of Art' and the notion of *Grossform* as a framing mechanism for the uncontrollable life in the city.

Alongside Yona Friedman's Ville Spatiale, Constant's New Babylon, Alison and Peter Smithsons' Cluster Cities, and other 'mountains and molehills' published in *Archigram* 5, there were more growing interests in the organic city, and the significance of the city as a palimpsest of collective memory, of architectural intervention, of slowly developing urban fabric. Combining concerns of functionality and representation into a conglomerate material memory of the city, Rossi explored the Città Analoga (1966), while Ungers sought an underlying logic of architectural approaches – the city that was no different from a house, from the point of view of designing it. The focus on what made the existing city work had already begun to figure in many post-war writings, as a recuperation of the comfortably worn old city fabric that had been swept aside by the modernist drive for progress. Jane Jacobs had alerted the public to the value of existing city neighbourhoods, while the Smithsons had proposed that the city be approached as a group of neighbourhoods akin to a village. Yet there did not yet seem to be a language for 'the terrifying beauty' that Koolhaas was to identify as part and parcel of the twentieth century.[7] Ungers and the Tendenza group were aligned in this exploration, more so than the architects involved in Team 10, and the various 1960s groups focused on the more sociopolitical dimension of the city. Italian architecture journals were some of the first to publish Ungers's early work, and in Vittorio Gregotti he found one of his staunchest supporters.[8]

A key feature here is the collective and its role in relation to the built form of the city. Koolhaas and Ungers's projects and writings investigate

the role that architecture may play in the city, and implicitly in how it may contribute to forming a collective. Can it offer a space of significance that somehow mediates between a pluralistic and fragmented public space, and a purely individuated private space? Can it create a collective space that situates itself in between the two? Can this collective space help negotiate the seemingly inevitable oppositions of the contemporary metropolis? What are the respective positions of architecture and urbanism – is the urban configured purely by urban design, with architecture simply as infill, or can architecture play a pivotal role as a punctual intervention within the larger urban field, or can it truly redefine a collective?

Without presuming a direct causal link, the physical manifestations of the 'maelstrom of modernity' are explored as counterparts to a cultural sensibility.[9] The complicated relation between the public, the collective and the individual has been a theme throughout the architecture discourse of the twentieth century. Crucial to the modern avant-gardes, but also to the development of modernist architecture and the International Style, there are seminal texts such as Georg Simmel's 'Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben' (1903) and Ferdinand Tönnies's *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887), which study how the public and the collective is formed or affected when natural social relations have been severed or undeniably altered.[10] Through a mutual interest in the collective, Koolhaas and Ungers address the problems of 1960s city planning, which still treat the city as a unified whole.[11] Koolhaas's interest in Leonidov is immediately evident in this domain (also forming visual/architectural references in Exodus). Koolhaas and Ungers in particular navigate many ambiguities inherent in a thinking practice of architecture, exemplified in their writings and projects when set next to one another. Their city studies in general are less unified and definitive than the typical plans of the 1960s. In the case of Ungers, the city plans were rarely realized, whereas Koolhaas has had the opportunity to realize some large-scale projects.[12] During the years they were in close contact, from 1971 to 1978, a number of themes arose that alluded to a transition between modernity and postmodernity, as well as the role of architecture in the contemporary European metropolis. They shared an interest in oppositions and contradictions as a way to reconfigure existing approaches to the city.

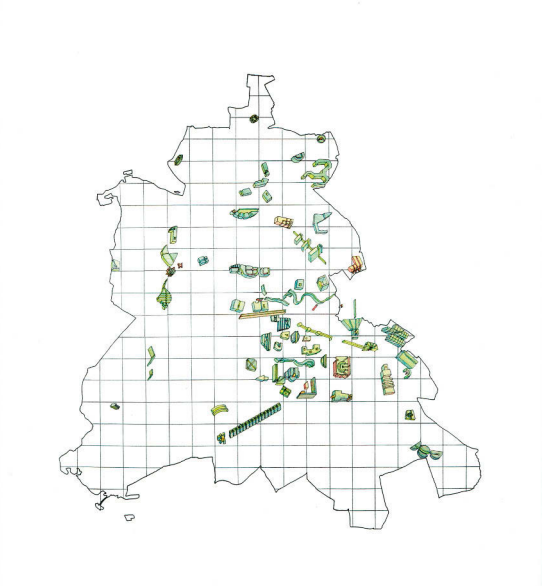
Situated Urbanism: The City of the 1970s

In 1971, an issue of *Casabella* addressed 'The City as an Artefact'. This issue illuminated a number of the urban issues of the time, including articles by Peter Eisenman and Joseph Rykwert, and one by Thomas Schumacher on 'contextualism', which would soon become prominent in the debates on the city.[13] This issue illustrates the spectrum of urban thinking in the 1970s, which engages with the problems of context and tradition, but also of modernity. It presents the duality of the contemporary city as an organic development of the vernacular and traditional, interspersed throughout with modern anomalies. By necessity, it implies the impossibility of returning to previous histories. This forms the background for the later notion of the archipelago city. This idea, launched in 1977 during the Cornell Summer Academy in Berlin, provides a new theoretical model that is based on the existing city, using empirical observations on the particularity of Berlin, such as its clearly defined boundary of the Wall and its shrinking population, to inform new models of interpretation such as the City within the City.

The notion was recalled later by Koolhaas as one of the most powerful notions in urban thinking: a blueprint for the new European metropolis.[14] The history of the archipelago city incorporates a number of crucial transformations in the approach to the city. It seeks a manner to adequately address existing urban fabric and explores a system that allows both for individualization and comprehension as a coherent whole. This approach to the city does not stand alone. It shares characteristics with the Collage City by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, and with Aldo Rossi's Città Analoga. Each addresses the city as an amalgam of collective history, individual perceptions, architectural and urban interventions. Nevertheless, the close collaboration between Ungers and Koolhaas seems to have added a conceptual dimension founded both in history and in the observation of different urban conditions that they encountered in the United States.[15]

The contribution of Koolhaas to thinking about the city is evident throughout his work, from *Delirious New York* as his 'retroactive manifesto for Manhattan' to contemporary studies of African and Asian cities as self-organizing systems or as the materialization of a global economy. These projects address the larger field of architecture, the conditions within which it takes form. Many of the architectural concepts Koolhaas introduces are based precisely on the urban conditions he sees as underlying the practice of architecture. The Vertical Schism (and the 'lobotomy') introduces a solid

Fig. 2.1: Berlin as archipelago city, Cornell summer studio 'The city in the city', 1977



drawing by Peter Riemann, courtesy of artist

division between inside and outside, calling into question such modern notions as 'honesty' or 'form follows function'.[16] The Generic City postulates an urban condition that is similar to the typical floor plan, but expanded to the urban field. One could argue, in this sense, that for Koolhaas there are no distinctions between 'architectural' and 'urban' thinking. To Ungers, too, the city is the primary situation of architecture. Even when the 'shrinking city' is acknowledged in the text 'Cities within the City', the transformation of this urban condition into something new still aims at preserving urban qualities: 'The future task is going to be not only to plan the growth of cities but also to develop new proposals and concepts for dealing with this exodus by protecting the better aspects of cities.'[17] Despite alternative proposals of semi-urbanization, and in this text, even the assessment that cities the world over are suffering from population drops, the city remains the prime example of collective dwelling throughout the twentieth century. While both

Ungers and Koolhaas clearly underwrite the archipelago city as an appropriate urban model for the time, some difference is visible in the details of the text and in the archive, which can be traced back to Ungers's interest in an overall architectural coherence, versus Koolhaas's interest in the maelstrom of modernity.[18]

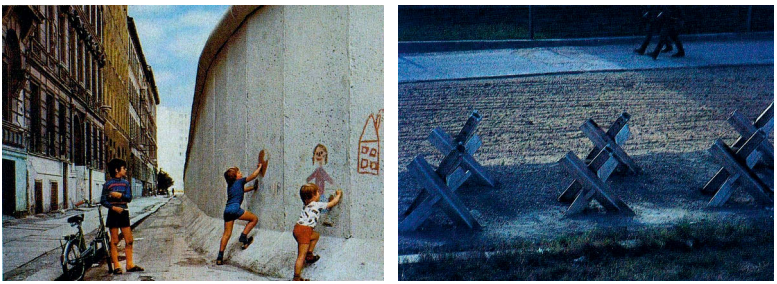
There is, however, a crucial distinction between architecture and urbanism. In the early twentieth century, architects approached the challenge of the city as a design problem, enforcing a modern architectural programme on the city as a whole. In the 1970s, a renewed interest in the existing fabric of the city, and the recognition of the qualities of the city as a cultural artifact developed over long periods of time, contributed to a distinction between architecture and urbanism. This begins in the late 1950s, when a marked resistance arises – particularly in the work of Team 10 – against overbearing modernization. The modern project is not fully dismissed, but rather the major problems with full-scale modernization are addressed, such as the loss of neighbourhood and habitat. Ungers is central to this shift in the debate; while his introduction of *Grossform* is met with interest, his rationalist tendencies later lead to a clash with the structuralists.[19]

The approaches of Koolhaas and Ungers are strikingly unsentimental, ranging from studios taught by Ungers on urban issues in Berlin to Koolhaas's speculations on the architectural qualities of Manhattan in *Delirious New York*, to the variations on urban archetypes in the 1975 competition entry for Roosevelt Island. The many contradictions they explore within their work create the space to acknowledge the potential of the 'realism' that Generic City refers to. For Koolhaas, this is a manner of envisioning alternatives to an extreme sociospatial determinism as visible in Dutch architecture. At the 1990 symposium 'Hoe modern is de Nederlandse architectuur?', Koolhaas notes that Dutch cities suffer from the mythological status of the 'sympathetic' historical core, and that everything beyond this core is left to its own devices.[20] The strained approach to city centres leads to the neglect of everything outside of the centre. In this perspective, the cluttered landscape arises not despite, but rather *due to* the resistance against the maelstrom of modernization.

Koolhaas's approach to the existing urban condition is already present in his 1971 study of the Berlin Wall, which he approached as an architectural object rather than addressing its sociopolitical significance. His resulting study, compiled in photographs, collected images and a reconstructed narrative of the architectural impact of the Wall, lists numerous architectural insights

deriving from his observations. Not unlike the later structure of *Delirious New York*, he offers a series of themes, derived by a process of induction from observations and images. The most significant comment in light of the later urban work is perhaps his consciousness of the 'heroic scale' and the 'tension between its totality and the separate elements that create it', which seems to predict the structure of the City within the City.[21] Additionally, his appreciation of the Wall as 'an object without program' is a harbinger of the programmatic instability that will later become so central to the work of OMA.

Fig. 2.2: R. Koolhaas, Summer Study, The Berlin Wall, 1971



in R. Koolhaas et al., *SMLXL*

While Koolhaas was there, he may have picked up a few copies of the *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur*, a publication series edited by Ungers.[22] In 1963, Ungers was appointed professor at the TU Berlin, where he developed a number of studio exercises on the unique urban conditions of Berlin. The clearly limited urban boundary already suggested the laboratory setting of the city, which was explored in thematic clusters such as 'roads and buildings', 'living along the park', or 'traffic strip Spree'. The studio results were published in the *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur*.[23] As Koolhaas studied the Berlin Wall and sought to exacerbate the tension between architectural intervention and existing conditions, so the studios of Ungers explored the possibilities of architectural intervention in an artificial enclave, treating Berlin as an urban laboratory, in which aspects of design could be isolated and studied.

As noted in Chapter 1, Koolhaas's affinity for the studies of Ungers informed his 1971 application for a Harkness fellowship to follow the graduate programme in Urban Design at Cornell, where Ungers was then teaching. Ar-

riving in the United States in September 1972, he spent his first year at Cornell with a varied programme of studies including a course in elementary Russian, presumably to be able to further study the Constructivists whose work he admired so much.[24] After the first year, he took his work to the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies as a research fellow. Manhattan opened up yet another vista of modernity, with an endless grid of pragmatic buildings in need of a retroactive manifesto – the early stages of *Delirious New York*. He discovered the work of Wallace K. Harrison, explored the naive and optimistic presence of Radio City Music Hall, and reinterpreted the Downtown Athletic Club as a social condensor of Constructivist proportions – without the underlying ideological intentions. In this approach, Coney Island became a site for urban fantasies that paralleled the metropolitan speculations of the European modernists, but without a comparative socialist programme. Rockefeller Center showed the potential of private investment with a bottom-line of quality, directed at profit – an inverse of the European policies aimed at the welfare state. Certainly the 'Romance of Rockefeller Center' must have been attractive to Koolhaas during his research on Manhattan.[25] This construction of an *a posteriori* narrative of a building process, while largely based in fact, suggests the more provocative manner in which *Delirious New York* is built up. At the time, the differences between the work on the European mainland and that in the United States were already visible in their finance base. In the United States private enterprise has played a more significant role in determining the public face of architecture than in Europe, which was more defined by the development of the post-war welfare state.

What Manhattan made obvious, is that there are concepts with which to address the unexpectedly titillating sense of the city without a plan – and that the urban manifestoes of European modern architecture had not created the cities that Koolhaas could admire. It is in this gap, between the built reality of Manhattan and the idealized failure of Europe, that the new urban concepts of Ungers and Koolhaas began to take shape.

New Urban Concepts for the Fragmented City

Two of the most striking ideas of this period are the City of the Captive Globe and the City within the City, or the urban archipelago, both deriving from an analysis of actual cities (Manhattan and Berlin).[26] One of the most salient issues here is that both Koolhaas and Ungers (although differently) approach

the issue of difference and fragmentation as a key question, undermining the unity that is central to earlier twentieth-century urban thought. These concepts must be viewed in relation to Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter's Collage City and Aldo Rossi's Città Analoga, in the sense that these also address the condition of fragmentation, and postulate an explicit relation with the existing city, as fragments or as fabric. While Rossi presents the urban fabric as signifying a continuous repository of collective memory, his fragments in the Città Analoga suggest a contemporary mode of addressing the presence of history, which also returns throughout the Collage City, and the 1978 competition Roma Interrotta.[27]

The City within the City and the City of the Captive Globe both represent concepts that are instrumental in addressing a changing European metropolis. Both derive from an existing city, an actual city, and model the traits they see as most valuable or striking. The City within the City derives from the condition of Berlin as it was in the late 1960s, early 1970s: with individual areas and neighbourhoods showing pronounced and different identities, all embedded in a larger metropolitan field. The City of the Captive Globe derives from a study of Manhattan, where, according to Koolhaas, the grid is such a rigorous ordering system that each plot itself can manifest a completely unique identity without destroying the conceptual coherence of the gridded city. Thus both concepts are distilled out of the unique and specific conditions of Manhattan and Berlin, and employed as tools to reflect upon the European metropolis of the 1970s with its increasingly fragmented multiple centres. The remains of the historical city are still present, yet embedded in a newer field of urban expansion. The concepts evolved both from within the discourse of the late 1960s and from within the work itself of Ungers and Koolhaas.

The various urban concepts put forward by Ungers and Koolhaas both take into account the inevitable conditions of modernization, and selectively pick out earlier historical ideas that may retain some use in the contemporary urban domain. As such, they weave a small tapestry of interrelated ideas on the late twentieth-century city that addresses the specific contemporary conditions through historical pearl-diving and cultural contemporaneity.

More than anything, the work of Ungers and Koolhaas at this time offers a departure from the perception of the city as a cohesive whole. What they share is the idea that even in a fragmented city, the connections within it and the role of architecture can remain vital. For Ungers, unity is created in a strong form (*Grossform*) or by virtue of the intense individuality of city 'islands'. For Koolhaas, the grid itself is such a neutral yet omnipresent condition that

Fig. 2.3: R. Koolhaas and Z. Zenghelis, City of the Captive Globe, 1972

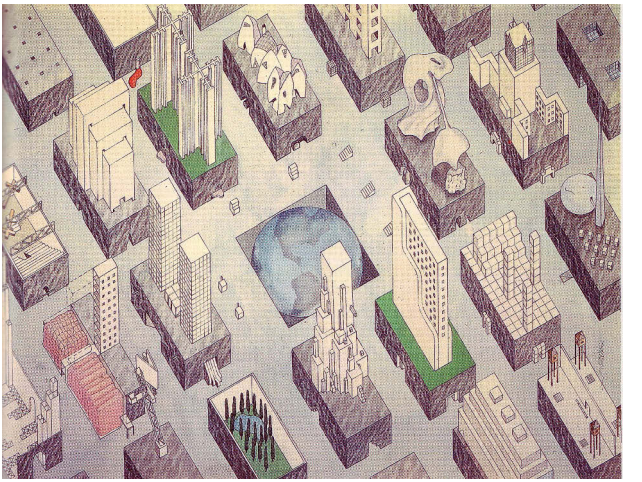


Image Courtesy of OMA

it encompasses a lack of unification. As a strong urban condition, the grid allows maximum freedom for each individual condition within it. In fact, the individuality of each plot reinforces the unity of the grid. This attention for the individual condition offers a strong position to architecture in the urban fabric: it may reinforce the larger field of the urban simply by being specific. Is it possible that the archipelago city offers a suggestion towards encompassing a collective within the heterogeneous urban realm?

City within the City

In his 1985 essay 'Imagining Nothingness', Rem Koolhaas notes the introduction of an important urban concept, the archipelago city, in a 1977 studio by Oswald Mathias Ungers 'with as yet unrecognized implications':

> 'A Green Archipelago' proposed a theoretical Berlin whose future was conceived through two diametrically opposed actions – the reinforcement of those parts of the city that deserved it and the destruction of those parts that did not. This hypothesis contained the blueprint for a theory of the

> European metropolis; it addressed its central ambiguity: that many of its historic centers float in larger metropolitan fields, that the historic facades of the cities merely mask the pervasive reality of the un-city.[28]

The notion of the archipelago city, consisting of various cities within the city, is relevant for a specific view of the role of architecture in the city as both formal and formative.[29] The role of Ungers in the development of these ideas, as an architect and a teacher, is essential to understanding the simultaneous internal coherence and overall interest in difference. These are crucial features that continue to be relevant to the current debate. The many urban ideas put forward such as the City as a Work of Art and *Grossform* (Ungers), the City of the Captive Globe and Bigness (Koolhaas), build on suppositions that revise an earlier approach to the city. These include the acknowledgment of a collective symbolic role of architecture, positioned as dream-images more than social engineering, and the discontinuity of formal expression and social 'content' or reception. They also include a fascination for the 'maelstrom of modernity' that is at odds with the return to primitive archetypes, the ordinary and the village in the late 1960s.

To Koolhaas, the archipelago concept addresses the tension between the historical centres, typically seen as the stronghold of traditional public spaces, and the larger, more fragmented metropolitan fields surrounding them. The archipelago concept, in folding both conditions into a general theory, illustrates the attempts by both Koolhaas and Ungers to address the potential of architecture to create pockets of meaning and significance within the urban. They both note a tension in the contemporary city in its inability to combine a traditional form of public space, offering cohesion and a sense of community, with the extensive desire for individuation that is also part of contemporary society. While neither architect presumes a direct relation between the social field and built form, they do identify projects and ideas that are more receptive to the collective imagination. Although the city concepts of both architects address specifically architectural and urban questions, an underlying concern with a broader cultural significance is discernible. Reconsidering this early work in relation to questions raised today, it shows an implicit yet seminal concern for the idea of 'collectivity' – something in between the traditional idea of the public and the private, acknowledging the pluralism of an individualized society without giving up the idea that a larger cohesive framework is possible.

In his essay, Koolhaas notes that in the archipelago model:

> . . . the desire for stability and the need for instability are no longer incompatible . . . such a city becomes an archipelago of architectural islands floating in a post-architectural landscape of erasure where what was once city is now a highly charged nothingness.[30]

This raises questions about the relation between architecture and the city: Does architecture now become the city, while the city becomes a 'highly charged nothingness'? Is architecture simply relinquished in favour of a 'post-architectural' form of urban practice? Does architecture 'erase' the city by incorporating its urban functions? The continual negotiation between architecture and the city is central to the reconsideration of the metropolis and how to define and create space for collective meaning. The archipelago concept is a 'system of fragments', an interpretation that Ungers had been working on for many years, which negotiates the problem of forming a sense of community that can transcend the purely individual without destroying the potential for individuation. This is perhaps the most crucial feature of late twentieth-century urban thinking, as a unifying view becomes increasingly difficult and a plausible logic to connect formal interventions to the undercurrents of a fragmented city seems untenable. As an interpretation of Berlin, the archipelago city is based on a 'natural grid' of green interspaces that allow a full range of life to grow in between, not unlike the rigorous New York grid as described by Koolhaas in 'The City of the Captive Globe'.[31]

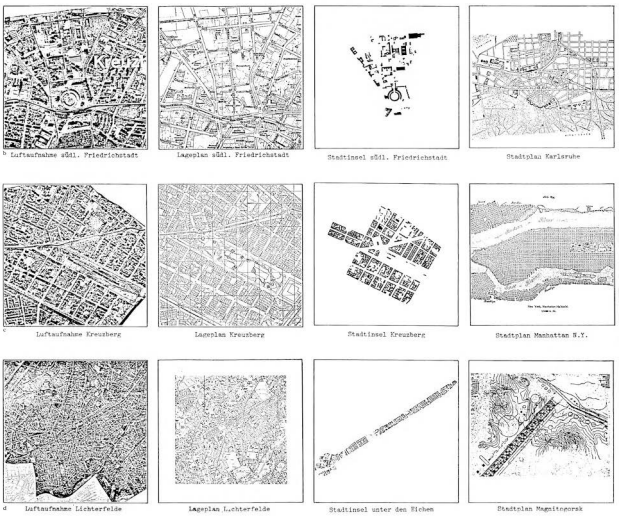
The summer studio 'Die Stadt in der Stadt' was taught in parallel with another studio on the Urban Villa, exposing a deepening interest in the urban condition and architecture's relation to it.[32] It follows in the tradition Ungers had built of approaching Berlin as a laboratory to experiment with urban ideas. The City within the City seems a natural fit to the context of Berlin. As Neumeyer and Rogier argue, the city of Berlin is crucial to the development of the archipelago concept, as the Berlin conditions already suggested a presence of Utopia and a defined enclosure.[33] Important here is the approach, examining the existing for durable cultural features that become embodied in the urban artifacts, much as Rossi suggested in the city of collective memory.[34] As such, the most important features of the City within the City are the systematic approach to difference, and the attempt to facilitate collectivity in the fragmented city. The City within the City forms a bridge from the analysis of the existing city (Berlin in this case) to derive 'urban rules', to the projection of critical urban qualities for the future. It seeks to comprehend the underlying logic of the city as an indication of general

urban conditions, which may hold true in other situations. Both Koolhaas and Hans Kollhoff were involved in the conceptualization and the publication of the material after the studio. The final publication puts forward 11 'theses' that form a chronological sequence of steps in analysing and working with the specific conditions of Berlin. The theses follow a simple structure of 'thesis', 'comment' and 'conclusion', which together form an argument within the larger framework. Each initial thesis contains a general position (such as the predicted population decline in Berlin, or the differentiated structure of large cities), which it follows up with a commentary that focuses on the specific situation at hand, and a conclusion that prescribes a potential urban intervention.

The main body of morphological work is situated in theses 6 and 8. Thesis 6 describes the identification of urban islands, which is an exercise in describing programmatic, formal and urban qualities, in order to acquire 'design knowledge that can be utilized in a typological sense'.[35] Here, the images show the study of areas of the city through aerial photos and plans, with a figure-ground diagram to isolate the most important morphological features, an application of Gestalt theory that recurs throughout the work of Ungers. This urban structure is then compared with an exemplary project of a similar composition. In thesis 8, the focus is shifted to the smaller, but still collective, scale of the urban villa, which would accommodate multiple families in a volume smaller than the apartment block and larger than the detached house. The urban villa accommodates the desire for social infrastructure and the 'need for individuality'. The images following this show a series of urban villas ranging from the nineteenth-century version to Berlin vernacular and new propositions, followed up by the concrete and situated proposition of clusters of these urban villas.

A particular focus in the archipelago city is the accommodation of new forms of collectivity. This focus reoccurs throughout the theses as a counterpoint to the diversity of the metropolis. Thesis 5 notes the importance of an overarching collective structure that also acknowledges the primacy of the individual, identifying the whole of the city as a 'federation' of distinct city areas given 'consciously antithetical' forms. These antithetical forms are a natural conclusion to thesis 4, which explains the metropolis as 'characterized by the overlapping of many distinct, mutually exclusive and divergent principles. This is what distinguishes it from the village, the town, the city district and from smaller and medium-size cities.'[36] This inherent quality of the city is reinforced through the 'selective reduction of urban

Fig. 2.4: Berlin islands: Friedrichstadt, Kreuzberg, Lichterfelde. Left to right: aerial photo, urban plan, figure-ground drawing, and reference project.



Lotus 19 (1977)

pressure'. This entails the elimination of superfluous areas of the city and the amplification of the distinct qualities of functioning areas. As a whole, this exercise creates the archipelago city: 'The enclaves thus released from a general urban anonymity will then create, as it were, liberated city islands, an urban archipelago in a natural green lagoon.'[37] The green zones function as an amorphous field surrounding the city islands, through which they become distinct and clearly defined.

The resulting notion of the City within the City now forms the basis for a future urban spatial plan for Berlin. The image of Berlin as a green archipelago city is seen to offer a 'pluralistic urban concept' that is 'the antithesis of urban design theories until now, which are based on the definition of a unified city'.[38] The position of the collective is still seen as relevant to the urban condition, but it is premised on the individualized society of the contemporary metropolis. Therefore it maintains a different relationship with the traditional understanding of the public and mediates between the

totality of unconditionally accessible public space and the pure privacy of individual experience. The idea of the City within the City 'accommodates the contemporary structure of society, which has developed ever more towards an individualized society with different needs, desires and ideas. The concept also incorporates the individualization of the city and thus a dislike for the typical and for unification.'[39] By individualizing the city, there is space for the inhabitant to identify with something specific (as opposed to the depersonalization encountered in the anonymous city).

If one major shift can be identified in the work of Ungers and Koolhaas both, it is from the city as a unified whole to a city that is embedded with various pluralities, and various heterogeneous spaces, that nevertheless still construct an overarching whole.[40] The images of Ungers, his geometries and various fragments are each a distinct and clear unit, always emphasizing individual moments and the coherence of each City within a City. These beg reference to the City of the Captive Globe, with the grid that is so strong as a framework that it allows each individual plot the maximum freedom to expand in the vertical dimension in terms of scale and in an infinite variety of forms.

City of the Captive Globe

While the City of the Captive Globe is structurally similar, its visual language is distinct, as is its approach. The City within the City arose from the work of the studios, following a traceable process of analysis that is explicitly laid out in the theses of the publication. The City of the Captive Globe rather appeals to the mythical narrative of the city and its foundations in radical architectural proposals. Its visual language is central to its symbolic power, with its colourful renderings of iconic architectural projects such as Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin and Malevich's Suprematist models. It is hard to imagine its impact being quite as strong without the paintings by Madelon Vriesendorp and Zoe Zenghelis accompanying the text. In early reviews of the work of OMA, the images were often addressed first, with reviewers being in equal parts enthralled and puzzled by the visual language.[41]

Both notions make use of historical precedent, with the City within the City extracting historical forms from the urban fabric, and the City of the Captive Globe placing them on pedestals as symbols of different possibilities. Both ideas approach the city as consisting of isolated islands being able to maximize their own individual traits.[42] It is clear that this work takes a

new direction in defining the role of architecture in the city as punctual, as one of specificity rather than abstraction and totality. Both the ideas of Ungers (archipelago, *Grossform*) and Koolhaas (City of the Captive Globe, Bigness) show a transition in how the city is handled from the perspective of architecture. They attempt to grapple with a continually transforming condition of the metropolis, incorporating plurality and dissension even in its foundations, yet in their work this struggle is always resolved through architecture.

The City of the Captive Globe also makes note of the importance of a framework if the diverse forms of urban life are to thrive, but here it is based on the Manhattan grid. This material was developed from 1972, when Koolhaas landed in Ithaca to take classes with Ungers, through his stay in Manhattan with the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in 1973-1974.[43] The pragmatism of American architecture and the varied sites of Manhattan formed his ideas on urbanism. It enabled Koolhaas to look for what there already was, to explore the endless potential of the city as it stood, in a material presence, much as he did with the Berlin Wall.[44] In its final form, *Delirious New York* gave a form to this inductive approach, which openly appreciated varied and incongruous aspects of the city: it became a 'retroactive manifesto' for Manhattan. The apparently simple material fact of its presence became the starting point for a process of discovery, inductive reasoning and fictional speculation on the underlying rationale and desire that constituted its current shape. The identifiable characteristics of architectural form – composition, detailing, massing, materialization – were no longer treated as the inevitable result of an abstract ideology, but as archaeological finds that help to reconstruct a possible narrative.

This leads to specific concepts such as the 'lobotomy' and the 'vertical schism', which Koolhaas posits as describing the distinct realities and potential opposites enclosed within the same skin. He uses non-architectural notions (like the lobotomy) as descriptive analogies, making his perceptions intuitively understandable, yet also somewhat mystifying in comparison to drier architectural descriptions. In the condition of the skyscraper, when the form disengages itself from the programme and manifests itself as an undeniable presence of architecture, it creates a new condition that is strong enough to encompass the complexity of everyday reality.

In 1976, Lotus published a shorter version of 'City of the Captive Globe' than published in *Delirious New York* in 1978, which refers to the grid as 'an archipelago of "Cities within Cities"'.[45] In this publication, the original work

on the 'City of the Captive Globe' is dated to 1972.[46] Both ideas remain focused on diversity and the construction of potential futures out of what is found in the existing urban fabric. In this, they show their affinity with Rossi's Città Analoga, combining pieces to create new meanings, and with Colin Rowe, even though his work seems to remain somewhat more nostalgic or historical.

City as a Work of Art

Earlier work of Ungers and Koolhaas illuminates the specificity of their ideas at this time. The strong focus on form, composition and morphology is visible in Ungers's work as early as 1963, when his publication 'Die Stadt als Kunstwerk' drew parallels between the rules of composition in architecture and urban design. The article is an early manifestation of his steadily increasing interest in morphology.[47] Moreover, it demonstrates the clear foundation of his thinking in a design logic that builds on the tools of architecture. Earlier, in 1960, even when he was appealing to a 'new spirit' in architecture, the centrality of architectural composition is central. The new spirit is a question of material articulation, a matter of finding the right architectural composition.[48] The notion that a material articulation may evoke a 'spirit' places this work closely to high modernist claims for architecture. Nevertheless, the manner in which Ungers appeals to the city as a work of art also is founded on a rationalist approach to architecture – that the logic and principles of design are transcendent, and scalable. This stands in contradiction to Koolhaas's later propositions on Bigness, which claim that beyond a certain scale, traditional architectural tools are useless.

Grossform

While Ungers was perhaps less interested in the immediate urban condition, he similarly had a deep-seated fascination for the unexpected aspects of the city; in the life that grew within it, and how architecture might facilitate this type of growth. Ungers was looking for the logic that would allow difference and transformation to occur – a conceptual model that would go against the unified thinking of both the modernist city plans and CIAM's rebellious progeny, Team 10. He seemed to have found a solid model for this approach to the city in the notion of *Grossform*, which was put forward in 1957 by Otto Schweizer.[49] This notion took note of a new condition

arising with the scale of the modern city that required a new approach to architecture and the city. The concept as such is picked up by Ungers in his 1966 lecture 'Grossformen im Wohnungsbau', and similarly addresses the question of how to give humanly comprehensible form to the modern city shaped by forces of economy and technology.[50] In this sense, the concept of *Grossform* offers an architectural approach to the city – it revolves around the *Gestaltung*, or form-giving, of urban space. Following earlier modern ideas, it approaches the city architecturally. There is a striking similarity between Ungers's position on architecture's autonomous language, and what his erstwhile teacher Schweizer proposes in his book on the architectural *Grossform*, which similarly argues that architecture has a responsibility to transcend mere considerations of function.[51] For Schweizer, this amounts to a combination of the Baroque and the Gothic, in which the structuring of architecture and urban space addresses both formal and spatial aspects. For Ungers, the *Grossform* performs a similar function, but is more oriented on his later interests in the visual ordering of our environment.[52] Where Schweizer avails himself of the language of modern architecture, and illustrates his ideas with his own work, Ungers begins to gather various examples, from various time periods, fabricating a thematically oriented history of architecture as the facilitator of urban life.

Schweizer's proposition of an architectural *Grossform* takes into account the fundamental problem of a new scale of experience in the modern metropolis, and the challenge that architecture and urbanism face in addressing it. Calling to mind the principles of Gestalt theory, he writes of the shift from the architectural significance of the single building to the larger structure of the built environment.[53] The primary feature here is a holistic approach: 'Die Voraussetzung für das Werden der Großform ist eine veränderte Blickeinstellung: eine Ausweiterung des Sehens, eine *Wendung des Blickes vom Einzelnen auf das Ganze*.'[54] This comment incorporates the 'tipping point' in perception that was part of Gestalt psychology – the moment in which individual elements are no longer perceived individually, but as subsidiary contributions to the whole. This prefigures the later work of Ungers, specifically on the human need for visual ordering in the 'Man TransForms' exhibition of 1978. Schweizer concludes that the modern metropolis has brought new considerations of form and spatiality to the foreground: 'Das differenzierter Leben eines modernen Großstadt hat neue Gestaltungskomponenten in Erscheinung treten lassen.'[55] He particularly refers to the increased mixing of landscape (growth) and the modern

metropolis (built), which seems to hint at the contrasting conditions present in the later proposition of a future Berlin as a green archipelago.

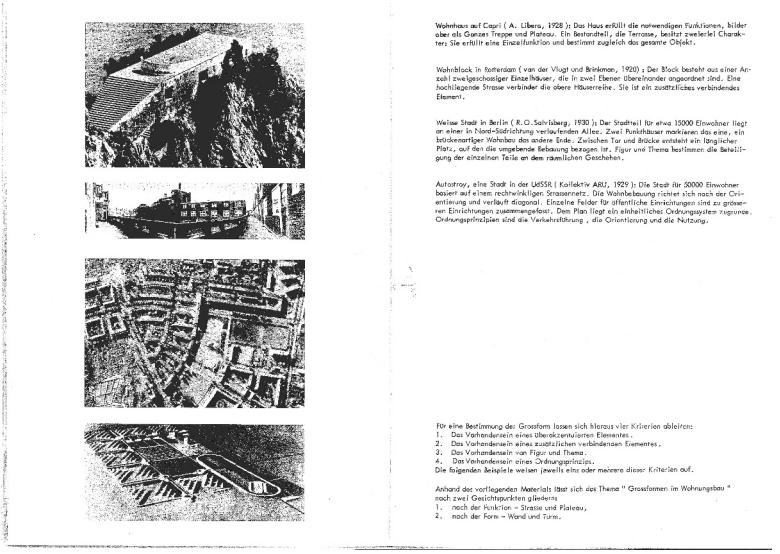
The 1966 essay by Ungers on 'Grossformen im Wohnungsbau' explores the potential for architecture to have a morphological impact on the city. As such, *Grossform* is defined more by form than by scale. The essay begins with an observation of quantity and scale: 500,000 dwellings had been built per year in the German federation since 1950, resulting in 8 million new dwellings by 1966. This is used to argue the need for quality, which resides in formal articulation. Ungers notes that the increased need for dwellings, the limitations of space, and a poor relation between expenditure and yield results in 'a concentration of building volume, rationalization of construction methods, and densification'.[56] He follows with a criticism of the quantified nature of this construction, noting that people speak of 'units' but mean 'numbers': 'Man spricht von Wohneinheiten und meint die Anzahl der Räume, von Wohnblocks und meint die Anzahl der Wohneinheiten.' This passage echoes Gestalt theory; *Grossform* is defined more by the relation of the parts in apprehending the whole, than by the mere response to scale and number. This allows the idea of *Grossform* to incorporate an extra dimension that is strictly architectural, not instrumental, social or functional. It is not a metaphorical expression of the interior function but a formal 'added value', much as the 'iconography' of Bigness, which presents the building envelope and the façade as an independent entity, founded on the 'lobotomy' stipulated in *Delirious New York*.[57]

Grossform responds to the metropolis, as do the later urban notions of City within the City and the City of the Captive Globe: it is set up to resolve a specifically urban problematic of containing diversity. On the one hand then, scale is highly relevant: the large scale requires a careful consideration of the form that will both encompass diversity yet offer a distinct framework. On the other, *Grossform* is almost solely dependent on form: if the form is powerful enough, even 'a small house' can be a *Grossform*. This encapsulates the tension between form and scale that will later resurface in the proposition of Bigness by Koolhaas. In Bigness however, once the scale becomes large enough, the problem of form becomes something entirely different. Where *Grossform* offers a mode of apprehending something larger, Bigness shows the obsolescence of traditional architectural tools and ideas.

In contrast, *Grossform* sets out to identify specific architectural approaches in the examples that accompany it. From these projects, which include the work of Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright and the Smithsons, Ungers derives

four criteria that may construe a *Grossform*: an (over)accentuated element, a connecting element, the principle of figure and theme, and a specific ordering principle. In a further categorization of these architectural interventions, he groups them into two 'perspectives' on urban space: the formal (walls and towers: visual anchors in the environment) and the functional (streets and plateaus: spaces of gathering and interaction). Even in the functional perspective, the interest in typology is dominant. The streets and plateaus form the urban spaces and thus become available for appropriation.

Fig. 2.5: The four criteria of Grossform: overaccentuated element, connective element, figure-ground, ordering principle.



Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur 5

In retrospect, the closing comments of 'Grossformen im Wohnungsbau' are a prelude to the 'archipelago city'. 'Warum Grossform? . . . Die Antwort: Die Grossform schafft den Rahmen, die Ordnung und den geplanten Raum für einen unvorhersehbaren, nicht planbaren, lebendigen Prozess, für eine parasitäre Architektur. Ohne diese Komponente bleibt jede Planung starr und leblos.' This introduces the condition that will be exacerbated in the notion of a City within the City: the maximum freedom for individual elements to be

uniquely defined within a larger scheme that holds these individual elements in place. Koolhaas interprets the effect of the Manhattan grid in a similar fashion, arguing that its horizontal restriction (the plot boundaries defined by the grid) creates a space of ultimate freedom along the vertical plane and within the blocks of the grid.

In all of these ideas, the continuing importance of some form of *zeitgeist* that underpins the original relation between the social and the formal is tangible, even as in the discourse today: Schweizer's proposition of *Grossform* aims at a conscious relation to the conditions of our time, which will found an approach that leads to modern architectural unity.[58] As an approach to the role of architecture in the city, *Grossform* arises out of the conditions of the twentieth century. It spans the modern and the postmodern condition in its explicit appeal to contemporary conditions, its incorporation of an ever-increasing expansion of scale, its invocation of historical precedent, and its role in bringing order to the new urban condition that appears chaotic but is implied to be a new ordering system that we cannot as yet comprehend. While *Grossform* is founded on the importance of formal composition in the perception of our built environment, it does not presume to be able to predict the nature of public reception. In this, we can see the rise of postmodernity, which questions the direct and inevitable correlation between intention and result. Similarly, the images accompanying *Delirious New York* express a fascination with the crystallization of these conditions into concrete and specific architectural forms, as well as with the explosion of different forms not governed by architectural coherence, which is reminiscent of the diversity that Schweizer sees as arising within a rigorous architectural frame.[59]

The most important conceptual propositions for the city put forward by Koolhaas and Ungers approach the issue of difference by formulating a space between what is made and how it is used. Their respective studies of Berlin and New York City show how they find a way to utilize empirical observations to discern patterns in the city, which will return in Ungers's 1982 publication *City Metaphors*. The City within the City, as well as *Grossform* and the City of the Captive Globe and the later notion of Bigness all incorporate a distinction between the thing itself and the events within. In this, these ideas are related to the work of their contemporaries – from Tschumi and Eisenman's interest in the event to the postmodern focus on alternate narratives. Nevertheless, there are important differences as well. The lessons Ungers turns to are those of history, emphasizing an underlying *condition humaine* that we share across various cultural boundaries. The affinities of

Koolhaas span a broader spectrum of cultural production, although they too are used to draw comparisons between various historical and geographical contexts, from the European city to the African megacity of Lagos.

Looking Forward: Urban Notions for the Twenty-First Century

The City within the City proposes a relation between architecture and the city based on fragments. Suggesting similarities to the Foucauldian idea of heterotopias, the City within the City uses Berlin to help define what tactics would be useful for a diverse and vibrant city.[60] Returning to Berlin from the suburban context of Ithaca and the culture of congestion in Manhattan, the urban concepts altogether congealed into a more robust conception of the city. The urban notions of the twenty-first century continue this balancing act between control and freedom. The crucial feature now becomes the locus of control: where the tangible dimensions of twentieth-century urban design form explicit limitations, there is now a perceptible shift towards underlying and invisible mechanisms.

In a broad sense, the role of collective and symbolic form is central to the three Berlin summer academies held in 1977 and 1978. The two themes for 1977 were the Urban Villa and the City within the City, and for 1978 the Urban Garden.[61] The summer academies continued along the lines of earlier projects undertaken by Ungers, where specific ideas were given a systematic framework to be worked through as design projects. In these projects, a fundamental connection between the work of Ungers and of Koolhaas becomes visible: the interest in the various conflicting conditions that make up our world as we know it, and the desire to not smooth that over with a single architectural gesture. The summer academies begin to explore the potential of multiplicity, particularly through the notion of the City within the City, which allows for the juxtaposition of fundamentally different areas within a larger whole. As a design proposition, it is not dependent on a single architectural or urban gesture, but rather offers a framework within which differences can exist and be cultivated.[62] This concern for difference makes Ungers and Koolhaas's work timely as the rise of postmodernity emphasized the importance of distinct individuality. Nevertheless, the need for an overarching logic remains tangible. Postmodern architecture made reference to collective symbolism, but its nostalgic and image-bound nature neglected to offer contemporary alternatives for collective desires. The balance between

control and freedom, the underlying logic of extrapolating continuities between the historical fabric and contemporary concerns, and the explicit articulation of distinct forms contribute to the robustness of these ideas.

The projects of OMA are driven by ambivalence and opposition.[63] This may be interpreted as an extreme form of 'realism' in its acknowledgment of contradictory requirements. Yet it may also be seen as a series of small ideologies, or ideals expressed purely through a form of specificity. The provocations against politicized architecture that are present in the work of Koolhaas were also present in that of Ungers, who generally identified more with the cultural and intellectual role of the architect. Both rethink the role of architecture in the contemporary city. Building on the importance of the formal in its broadest sense (the composition of a building, the image it evokes, the sensibility of a detail), both Koolhaas and Ungers imply that ideas must be assessed in their material forms. Ungers uses the formal as a structural principle, which is materialized in multiple reiterations of concretized ideas.[64] Through the lens of Ungers's direct focus on formal principles, it becomes easier to revaluate the role of form in the work of OMA: it is not about the autonomy of form as an experimental drive within the limits of the discipline, taking no account of possible external realities. Rather, it is in the relation between idea and form that the work of architecture is situated, in the materialization of ideas and the confrontation with external constraints.

Ungers and Koolhaas explicitly resisted the politicized architecture of the 1960s. Using the shortcomings they perceived in this sociopolitical focus, they countered with an alternate direction for architecture. Particular to their work is the appreciation of historical examples without nostalgia. They explored the formal autonomy of architecture, yet maintained an interest in cultural ramifications. This explains the interest in divergent forms of collectivity, even in a project such as Exodus, strongly marked by references to autonomous architecture.[65] The insistence on collectivity remains present throughout the texts and drawings of both Koolhaas and Ungers. They attempt to envision the collective without expanding it to a smooth or all-encompassing reality. Koolhaas seeks a strategy of flexibility that remains architecturally specific. His use of the oxymoron as a design tool – the clash of inherent contradictions – clears out a space of architectural specificity that stands its ground because it does not offer a direct link between form and meaning. Form is present, as is significance, but they are autonomous conditions, suspended within the space of architectural experience.

The work is thus about collisions, not about finding a unified whole, but about creating tiny momentary utopias. The collective may be temporary, liquid even, but it inserts itself between the ever-expanding global public and the increasingly small manoeuvring space of the individual. This space is a hopeful one, despite the fact that the ideals of the 1960s failed to materialize. Within an individualized collective there may yet be a potential for architecture that embodies neither a mechanical utopia nor an idealized perception of the creative individual. Explicit and materialized contradictions are instrumental in this understanding of a contemporary collective simply because they present alternative perceptions.

Bigness

The 1994 essay 'Bigness' looks ahead to a new role of architecture in the urban domain based on the ever-increasing size of buildings. While the observations founding this category of Bigness are similar to the conditions Ungers notes about his contemporary city in the mid-1960s, the small step in scale here is a giant conceptual leap in the role of architecture. Bigness is situated simply as the result of an increase in scale ('Beyond a certain scale, architecture acquires the properties of Bigness'), which then becomes a condition that transcends traditional comprehension of form and the common strategies of architecture.[66] Here, scale instigates a completely different appreciation of aesthetic value:

> The only drastic explanation is that beyond a certain scale almost all buildings are beautiful, from their sheer overwhelming presence. Ethically that is very difficult to admit for an architect, believing that beauty is something that you create, not something that comes from the outside or simply because of a certain scale.[67]

In a departure from the writings of Ungers, Koolhaas here makes a conceptual leap: he simply discards the traditional techniques of architecture. Traditional tools such as composition and ornamentation are useless, or: 'The "art" of architecture is useless.' The city cannot be seen as a work of art, governed by accepted rules of composition, nor does *Grossform*, as a formal sense of coherence, offer a solution. *Grossform* is to some extent derived from scale, but is defined primarily through its formal qualities. Bigness derives from a scale that transcends form entirely. This becomes the key to a new problem in architecture: Bigness may be derived from quantity (the 'numbers' discarded

by Ungers in his essay on *Grossform*), but it becomes a new quality. This quality then has the capacity to 'reinvent the collective'. Where *Grossform* maintains a tenuous balance between scale and form, the scale of Bigness allows it to transcend form. *Grossform* still somehow frames the collective, or makes the collective appropriation of space possible. Bigness, on the other hand, is meant to entirely reinvent the collective – it does not offer the framing mechanism of a strong form but demands a full-scale rethinking.

Bigness 'instigates a regime of complexity': it engenders the conditions we typically consider 'urban', which cannot be addressed merely by a coherent totality of architectural form. Yet this regime of complexity, precisely like the archipelago, and even as framed by *Grossform*, is not positioned as pure fragmentation. Rather, in Bigness, the 'parts remain committed to the whole'. The congruence between the writings of Ungers and Koolhaas remains visible: neither denies the possibility of coherence, but both try to accommodate the complexity and plurality of the contemporary metropolis. It is within this regime of complexity that new forms of collectivity are to be formulated.

Generic City and Lagos: Escaping Architecture

Despite its claims to discarding traditional techniques of architecture, Bigness is still framed within a discourse on architecture. The notion of the Generic City and the studies of alternate forms of urbanization found in Lagos approach this question from the other direction. They study the expanding networks of the global city and their consequences for urban architecture. The operation itself is founded on the earlier work of studying existing conditions, but the object has transformed from a clearly circumscribed area to a diffuse condition of networked reality. This focus is no longer evidently related to the work of Ungers as it moves forward into a posthuman condition of contingency and precarity. Here, the traditional tools of architecture and urban design become truly useless, as the architect is forced to deal with networks, an expanding global field, and a swarm-like logic of objects that have begun to act as agents. The exponential increase in urban complexity, on the other hand, demands new insights and new approaches, which Koolhaas hopes to furnish with the generic and his studies of African and Asian cities.[68]

It is here that the question of the loss of control, or the failure of control, acquires its most poignant characteristics. Our cities are becoming organisms that we feel no longer capable of grasping – whether it concerns the millions of inhabitants in a highly dense Asian city like Seoul or the

inhabitants of a sprawling American city like Los Angeles – there are factors that now contribute to an increasingly unsettled habitus in the metropolis. Simultaneously, one might also argue that the digital realm has opened up new possibilities while also demonstrating the significance of physical space.

In 2011, Koolhaas notes in an interview that the idea of the generic resulted from his specific urban studies: *Delirious New York*, Lagos, and Singapore are all different conditions, but once you re-examine them, their similarities are what is most striking. Koolhaas claims that the Generic City suits the twenty-first-century urban condition. The specific identity of contemporary (and branded) spaces essentially thwarts its users. Instead, it is the non-identity of the typical and the generic that better facilitates use.[69]

Coming full circle, back to the freedom inherent in 'urban nothingness' and the spaces of the green archipelago, the Venice Biennale exhibition 'Cronocaos' recalls the lesson of the City within the City and injects it with the current need for the generic. In 1977, the notion of preservation was implicitly addressed in the realization that the population of Berlin was shrinking but the city itself was not, implying that the needs of the future would not require new construction. 'Cronocaos' offers a parallel proposition that architecture is being preserved more quickly, turning back to Berlin's original proposition, which states that what is exceptionally good should be maintained, and the rest left to disappear – selective preservation:

> There's something more important than the design of cities (which will become more so in the immediate future), namely the design of their decomposition. Only a revolutionary erasing process and the establishment of 'zones of freedom', a conceptual Nevada in which all the laws of architecture are suspended, will be able to put an end to the tortures inherent to urban life – the friction between the programme and its hindrances.[70]

Incorporating the Failure of Control

The proposition of selective preservation plays out the inevitable struggle between control and its failure. It elevates architectural design to an utmost determinant in the preserved spaces, yet the naturalization of the system as a whole allows no room for articulation.

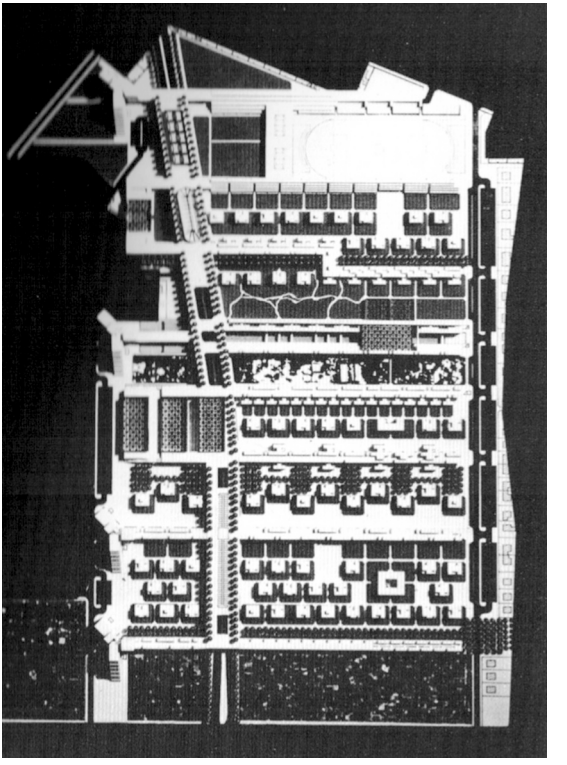
Like his colleagues of Team 10, as well as many others of the same generation, Ungers maintains an interest in shaping the spaces that would

allow a sense of cohesion, something that might connect the extremely individualized beings sharing the space of the late twentieth-century city. In contrast to ideas such as the megastructure and network cities from this period, however, to Ungers it is primarily the formal definition of architecture (as a self-contained whole) that leads to its function in the collective. Architecture must not turn to other disciplines such as sociology to begin to understand how collective spaces are formed. By offering a strong form, it grounds the unpredictable and fleeting condition of life within it. Ungers (and later, Koolhaas) places architecture at the centre of creating a collective, but leaves its mechanisms within only the discipline. This is not architecture as social engineering, but architecture as architecture.

In the publication series *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur* (1965-1972), Ungers shows a tendency to argue for the collective, or the larger frame – the coherent formwork that is more than just the individual pieces. A strong role is allotted to the architectural object, both as trigger in the urban fabric and as (after)effect of societal conditions. Furthermore, a crucial position is given to collective spaces, though not always identified with a broader notion of the collective domain. These spaces do not follow the European tradition of the town square, but that of 'strong form' as counterpoint to voids and the surrounding amorphousness of a dissipating city. Perhaps this is also precisely the distinction between the City within the City, or the City of the Captive Globe, and their precursors in the form of Team 10 or the principle of megastructures. Rather than seek a new collective totality, a new public domain that will embrace all, the work of both Ungers and Koolhaas allows a tension to remain between the configuration of a collective and the freedom of individual agency. The idea of a grid with freedom inside the grid, the archipelago city that offers a totality of a conglomerate of islands, yet the full freedom for individual development per 'island', is perhaps the most relevant aspect of this work in regard to the questions arising within the contemporary urban condition. The archipelago city incorporates the failure of control as an initial parameter, yet it refuses the complete disintegration of the public realm by proposing a format for 'loose' collectives that transcends the merely individual, yet allows for individuation. The unremitting desire to address the problem of a collective space in the face of a pluralistic society is what strikes a chord in the work of Koolhaas and Ungers. Whether it is the freedom to produce an unpredictable infill of the larger frame of a *Grossform*, or the potential to reinvent a collective through the condition of Bigness, there is a continuous oscillation between clearly defined architectural form and the

space for unprogrammed, undefined and unpredictable interventions. This suggests that focusing on form rather than programme may create space for individual agency. In this way, the archipelago city, as a 'blueprint for the theory of a European metropolis', offers something distinct and new: the potential for small-scale interventions based on architectural form, which have the potential to create collective spaces. This holds a key to a pluralistic yet cohesive urban space, with collective spaces forming an intermediate condition between the public and the private.

Fig. 2.6: O.M. Ungers, competition entry 4th ring, Berlin-Lichterfelde, 1974, with Koolhaas listed in the project team



Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft

Fig. 2.7: OMA, competition entry Parc de la Villette, 1982

Het Nieuwe Instituut Rotterdam, OMA archive

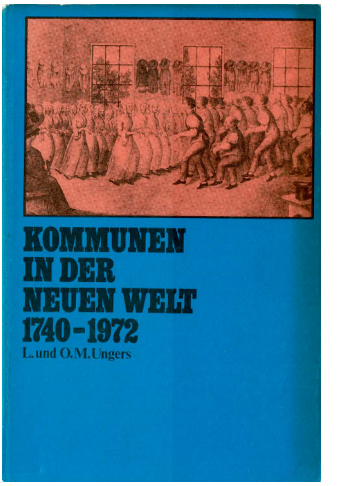
The city concepts put forward in the 1970s reveal the inadequacy of a purely architectural approach, yet also leave space for architectural articulation within the larger domain of the city. They reveal the inadequacy of modernist theories in addressing specificities, and show that the legacy of Utopia engenders a more restrictive and idealized approach, while the reality of architecture is more mundane, navigating compromise and complexity. Maintaining a strong cultural idea (an image in the abstract sense: an unformed image that is allowed to be reinvested with new cultural tendencies) is one of the hallmarks of a longstanding architectural project – one that transcends the immediate context to evoke an element of timelessness. There is a strength in deriving logic from specific cases through the process of

induction, which addresses material reality and seeks patterns from within. In this sense, the object itself allows multiple relations to it – yet is not so 'unformed' that it denies any relation. Somehow it provokes or elicits responses while remaining somewhat flexible in reception.

Perhaps the most immediate, pressing issue underlying the urban work of Koolhaas and Ungers is precisely the inadequacy of our theoretical models to 'surf the waves' of reality. As far back in history as Thomas More's *Utopia*, there are examples of ideal cities meant to facilitate or engender ideal societies. These propositions typically fail by virtue of their articulated perfection.[71] Ungers had the opportunity to examine the aspirations and realities of Utopian communes up close while he was in the United States. One summer, he took a family road trip along various American communes, which resulted in the 1972 publication of *Kommunen in der Neuen Welt 1740-1972*.[72] In this book, which was a collaboration with his wife Liselotte, a variety of features of each commune is analysed, including the family and social structure, the organization of labour and farming, and its town planning and housing principles. The notion of *Grossform* is to some degree an architectural answer that provides both a materialized ideal and an openness to long-term questions in the urban domain, which are inherently unstable. The archipelago city offers a postmodern approach to this instability: it incorporates vast differences within the total urban fabric of the city at any given moment. Following Fredric Jameson, the question may be posed whether this full embrace of diversity does not result in an overall indistinguishable field of 'difference', but at the time, they provided a generous framework that allowed for aberrations.[73] Fashioning a communal sense of responsibility within this diversity is difficult at best. While the desire to transcend individual difference remains, the question of how to approach this is unanswered. What is more than evident in the current time, is that a renewed sense of collectivity and social justice will be required to face the economic and ecological challenges of the near future, as well as the question of distribution of wealth. We are far beyond an era in which we can draw lines between the various areas (nation-states) of our world, and the global impact of economic and ecological crises is now clear. A communal sense of responsibility will be necessary for the direct future. In this sense, the 1970s provide interesting lessons for the future – it was a decade in which various crises took hold, and when the human influence on the climate became increasingly clear. The 1972 Club of Rome report provided dramatic predictions for the future, the economic crisis of the 1970s had a strong impact, and population drops were

plaguing various urban centres. While this history may have fallen a little below the radar of current reflections, there are some hopeful developments in response to the multiple economic, ecological and urban crises that suggest new approaches.

Fig. 2.8: L. and O.M. Ungers, Kommunen in der Neuen Welt, 1972



What is important to keep in mind is the oscillation between an ideal type and the social context. If it is indeed true that the formal may not be reduced to an illustration of social intervention, nor that the two are causally related, it is nevertheless crucial to examine the relationship we perceive between the things in themselves – in their material manifestation – and the social and psychological responses they elicit. It may well be that there is a quality in things that allows for a continual reconfiguration of this relation; that it is not an invested intention, or a circumscribed understanding, but that transformations in this relationship are enabled (and that the relation is therefore continually reactivated). The plausibility thesis between the social and the formal reserves a central role for architecture in determining the urban condition, but also maintains a place for collective desire and the attribution of significance with regard for aesthetic qualities but without

preconceived style. As such, the quality of the object-user relationship became a more important element. The initial steps of the 1970s discourse introduce a renewed space for interpretation and reception that aid in individuation, but remain tied to the material conditions of the built environment.

This position bridges the transatlantic crossings of architecture thinking. Koolhaas notes that his return to Europe in 1975 was informed by the developing rationalism he found there.[74] He further explicitly rejects the exclusion of social programme:

> Colin Rowe's modernism . . . was completely stripped from its social programme. The social for him being the height of ridiculousness. There is in his book, *Collage City*, a very revealing phrase: 'In the way we can enjoy the aesthetic of the Utopia without suffering from the annoyance of the political Utopia.' It was the first time that I was confronted with this tendency, typically Anglo-Saxon, which later became more and more dominant.[75]

The coherence and continuity between the social and the formal seems more typical in the European debates. The Anglo-Saxon debate was somewhat marked by the aesthetic attitude Koolhaas here alludes to, while the American side of the debate included a pragmatic approach that again transforms the approach to the city and its relation to the domain of architecture.

The city remains strongly circumscribed by the sociopolitical sphere, on which architecture has some, but limited influence. Where the twentieth century began with an exaggerated sense of the influence of architecture, it seemed to hit a note of despair in the late 1970s, with the question of what architecture might do beyond window dressing. The urban concepts of Koolhaas and Ungers navigate the tricky domain of social justice and architectural production by allowing for a role of city form that recalls the mythologies of Barthes, or the dream images of Baudelaire – they show potential, open up vistas, but leave the infill to be determined. Precisely by concentrating on the salient features of urbanism and architecture themselves, they allow for the possibility that its value may exceed the immediate situation. The early twentieth-century hopes for urbanism as 'fait social' may have failed, but a hopeful window is opened on a less rigidly determined, but nevertheless influential role, in which the collective dreams are given material form. This does require rescinding the modern belief in the architect/urbanist as social engineer, and the belief that modern forms will help initiate the modern sensibility. One tangent problem arises here: the discipline remains somehow dependent on an interpretation of architecture

that sees it as embodying a Hegelian *zeitgeist*. While the new urban ideas of the 1970s allow for disjunctions and heterotopias, they are still framed as inextricably linked to the contemporary. It becomes difficult to speak of timeless or shared ideas, if the production of architecture is defined by its contemporaneity.

If the city is the domain in which we experience both the collective dimension of humanity and a sense of exacerbated individuality and aloneness (still, in a sense, following the lines set out by Simmel), it is the role of architecture to give space and form to the collective sensibilities in the city. For Ungers, this encompasses a more classical view of architecture, which amounts to a symbolic value beyond direct representation, and a structure that can supersede the immediate (*Grossform*); for Koolhaas, this amounts to an organizing of the structures of modernity, and above all leaving space for the unknown. Both thus position the architect as relevant to the built form of society (in contrast perhaps also to the Lagos studies), yet as the Exodus project shows, in a special position: the wall that demarcates the project of modernity – the voluntary prisoners of architecture – to which one must willingly surrender.