

I Love Delirious New York (or The Importance of Oswald Mathias Ungers in the Formation of Rem Koolhaas)

Volim Delirious New York
(ili važnost Oswalda Mathiasa Ungersa u obrazovanju Rema Koolhaasa)

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Abstract Over the years, Rem Koolhaas' early career and his seminal book *Delirious New York* have been widely discussed. One aspect that deserves closer attention, however, is Koolhaas' strong intellectual attraction to Oswald Mathias Ungers and the influence of their coexistence during Koolhaas' period at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. In 1972, Koolhaas began researching New York City as the field for his theoretical investigation, marking the beginning of his engagement with urban morphology as a conceptual tool. The intellectual exchange with Ungers during this time proved decisive. Ungers' summer studios became an important source of inspiration. Within this context, Koolhaas' background in journalism found a productive outlet, and his collaboration with Ungers and their students led to the speculative project *City Within a City*, later published in *Lotus International* which helped to establish many of the conceptual and methodological foundations that would define his work throughout the following decade. This project helped establish the theoretical framework that would later inform *Delirious New York*, widely regarded as one of the most influential architectural books of the twentieth century. This article examines the mentorship dimension of their relationship by tracing Koolhaas' trajectory through the volumes of *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur* and assessing their impact on his architectural thinking. Arguing that the ideas developed within this collaborative environment became deeply embedded in the conceptual structure of *Delirious New York*, revealing how Ungers' influence and their intellectual exchange shaped Koolhaas' early theoretical formation.

Keywords Rem Koolhaas; Oswald Mathias Ungers; *Delirious New York*.

Sažetak Tokom godina, rana karijera Rema Koolhaasa i njegova ključna knjiga *Delirious New York* bili su široko analizirani. Međutim, jedan aspekt koji zaslužuje pažljivije razmatranje jeste Koolhaasova snažna intelektualna fascinacija prema Oswald Mathias Ungersu i uticaj njihovog zajedničkog djelovanja tokom Koolhaasovog boravka na Cornell University u Ithaci, New York. Godine 1972. Koolhaas je započeo istraživanje New Yorka kao polja za svoju teorijsku analizu, čime je započeo njegovo bavljenje urbanom morfologijom kao konceptualnim alatom. Intelektualna razmjena s Ungersom u tom periodu pokazala se presudnom. Ungersovi ljetni studiji postali su važan izvor inspiracije. U tom kontekstu, Koolhaasova novinarska pozadina pronašla je produktivan izlaz, a njegova saradnja s Ungersom i njihovim studentima dovela je do spekulativnog projekta *City Within a City*, kasnije objavljenog u *Lotus International*, koji je pomogao uspostavljanju mnogih konceptualnih i metodoloških osnova koje će definisati njegov rad tokom naredne decenije. Ovaj projekat pomogao je u formiranju teorijskog okvira koji će kasnije oblikovati *Delirious New York*, danas smatran jednom od najuticajnijih arhitektonskih knjiga dvadesetog vijeka. Ovaj članak ispituje mentorsku dimenziju njihovog odnosa prateći Koolhaasovu putanju kroz tomove *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur* i procjenjujući njihov uticaj na njegovo arhitektonsko mišljenje. Tekst tvrdi da su ideje razvijene unutar ovog saradničkog okruženja postale duboko ugrađene u konceptualnu strukturu knjige *Delirious New York*, otkrivajući kako su Ungersov uticaj i njihova intelektualna razmjena oblikovali Koolhaasovo rano teorijsko obrazovanje.

Ključne riječi Rem Koolhaas; Oswald Mathias Ungers; *Delirious New York*.

1 Historical Context: Travel, Perception, and the Grand Tour

Over the years, the early career of Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas (hereafter RK) and his seminal work “Delirious New York” (hereafter DNY) have been the subject of much discussion. The graphic reinterpretation shown in Figure 1¹ reflects the iconic status the book has acquired within architectural culture. However, one aspect that demands attention is RK’s deep attraction to the work of German architect Oswald Mathias Ungers (hereafter OMU) and the crucial influence of their coexistence during Koolhaas’s trip to Cornell, in Ithaca, New York.

Research into the origins of his career is relevant because this period marks the transition between journalism and architecture, a time when his references, his first conceptual formulations, and his engagement with the American academic context began to consolidate. This paper tells the story of a young architecture student’s encounter with the oppressive reality of the Berlin Wall, the discovery of the writings of one of the great German architects of the 20th century and the realization that architecture could, indeed, put historical and physical context first. It is a journey of mentorship, the writing of an important manifesto and the impact of the experience of the archetypal metropolis, New York. These elements, combined to his intellectual experience at Cornell and at IAUS - The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York, allow us to understand how the university and cultural environment shaped his critical vision and served as basis for the development of one of the most significant careers in contemporary architecture.



Figure 1 Illustration: I LOVE DELIRIOUS NEW YORK.
Source: Illustration developed by the author, 2024.

¹ The image functions as a reinterpretation of the “I ♥ NY” logo, appropriating its universally recognizable visual structure to replace the original object of affection, the city of New York, with the book *Delirious New York*. This substitution suggests that Koolhaas’s work transcends its condition as a critical text to assume the status of a cultural icon, becoming one of the most influential representations of the metropolis’s imagined and architectural identity.



Figure 2 Ford River Rouge plant in Detroit by Albert Kahn.
Source: (Mendelsohn, 1929)

Throughout the 20th century, several European artists and architects looked to the United States as a model, seeing it as a version to the future. Fascinated by social and technological advances, they projected their desires and fears into the new. Young people travel across the Atlantic to discover New York, fascinated and frightened by the metropolis, and return transformed. One of the most notorious and important of these journeys was described by the books: “Amerika” from 1928 and “Russland Europa Amerika” from 1929, both written by Polish architect Erich Mendelsohn. Arriving in America in 1926, ten years before Le Corbusier, commissioned by the Berlin Newspaper Tageblatt and accompanied by Austrian filmmaker Fritz Lang, whose vision of the lights of New York would be immortalized in the 1927 film “Metropolis”, Mendelsohn translated this experience through photos in an expressionist way.

If for Le Corbusier drawing was a tool for appropriating the lived space, for the Pole, at least on this trip, his fascination was recorded through a series of photographs that conveyed the strength, dynamism, and mechanized atmosphere of the city.

During this period, the Grand Tours undertaken by young European architects and architecture students were increasingly redirected toward the United States, replacing the traditional destinations of the European cultural itinerary. Captivated by images of industrial facilities, grain silos, factories, and skyscrapers, they saw in the American landscape a tangible vision of the future. Buildings such as Ford River Rouge Plant in Detroit

(Figure 2) became powerful symbols of technological progress, industrial efficiency, and architectural scale. Through photographs and travel accounts, these structures helped shape a new architectural imagination, centered not on historical monuments but on the productive and metropolitan realities of modernity.

The photos that the young architect presents in his books demonstrate, through juxtapositions and unusual angles, the gigantism of the buildings, and the cumulative densification of the city. In a letter written to his wife, we can see his enthusiasm, which would stimulate his future speculations: “Fantastic Piranesi tubes, from which purely technical details suddenly emerge, like new births of the future” (Whittick, 1940, p. 83). Another aspect identified in Mendelsohn’s writings is the contrast between technological progress and social fragility, exposing the capitalist character of the metropolis.

A learning experience he would carry with him not only in other publications throughout the 1920’s, but one that would mark him profoundly throughout his career. In this sense, Mendelsohn’s journey can be understood as a precursor to RK own intellectual trajectory, in which travel operates not merely as observation but as a critical and projective instrument, later reframed through his engagement with OMU.

In 1972, RK began researching New York City, identifying it as his field of theoretical research which marked the beginning of his exploration of the importance of urban morphology studies. The synergy between RK and OMU during their five years together at Cornell played a crucial role. The publications edited by OMU on the summer studios he organized, although they generated low circulation, served as a rich source of inspiration for RK. His journalistic training found a voice, and his collaboration with Ungers and his students resulted in a highly speculative text: “The City Within a City”. Written in 1977 and published in *Lotus International* magazine in 1978, this work forms the theoretical basis for one of the projects presented in DNY, “The City of the Captive Globe.”

Here we explore the mentoring aspect of their relationship, tracing Koolhaas’s path, the dynamics of his relationship with OMU and the impact of these works on his architecture. Ultimately, we examine how these elements became intrinsically embedded in the essence of DNY, solidifying his collaborative legacy in architectural discourse on a journey of self-discovery and expanding horizons.

It should be remembered that individuals, when embarking on a journey, seek not only to discover new places, but also to explore different perspectives and approaches to understand the world around them. The importance of educational trips lies in the ability to stimulate individual interests, providing a unique learning experience that goes beyond the classroom.

By exposing themselves to new environments, cultures, and ways of thinking, students and young architects have the opportunity to develop a broader and more flexible mindset. The search for a new way of seeing the world not only enriches their cultural background, but also enables them to face challenges in and innovative way.

The intellectual exchange between OMU and RK, documented in the photograph shown in Figure 3, forms the central subject of this article and provides the framework for understanding the development of RK’s early theoretical thinking.



Figure 3 Photograph of Oswald Mathias Ungers and Rem Koolhaas, 1982 by Dan Grogan. Source: (Schrijver, 2021)

2 Methodology

The methodology of this text is grounded in a qualitative, phenomenological approach that understands experience as a conscious manifestation situated in time and mediated by memories, images, and meanings, irreducible to objective measurement. In this sense, the comparison between trajectories is adopted as an interpretative strategy—rather than a procedure of empirical verification—conceiving the experience of travel as a singular, historical, and subjective phenomenon. Comparative analysis thus operates as a hermeneutic device aimed at organizing and articulating symbolic materials, such as accounts, graphic records, writings, and works, understood not as factual evidence but as expressions of lived experience. The aim, therefore, is to understand how the phenomenon of travel manifests itself to consciousness and is transformed, over time, into memory, repertoire, and architectural thought.

3 RK before Cornell: Berlin and the Architectural Object

The young Dutch architecture student, based in London, RK, on the recommendation of Aldo van Eyck (González, 2014), had been studying at the Architectural Association (AA) since 1968 in constant conflict with his professors, and outsider in the nest because of his concerns with formal issues and a constant irritation with the exaggeratedly social architecture produced there. Over the years many discussions between RK and the professors, especially with Peter Cook, took place because he did not align with the spirit of the time, his

interest went beyond the political sphere as a generator of architecture and aligned with a formal, morphological, and unusual quest for the time. His constant squabbles with “rice-eating hippie” students (Schrijver, 2021, p. 25) took him on a journey to Berlin. The young RK wanted to study the Wall built 10 years before and its impact on the city, approaching it as an architectural object detached from its sociopolitical meanings. Fascinated by the radical constructivist of Russian avant-garde architecture, Ginzburg, Leonidov, Tatlin and Malevich since his trip to the USSR in 1969, RK cultivated his reputation as boring, authoritarian, and fascist, which generated a lot of interest in his work. AA students and faculty looked upon his work with a mixture of fascination and contempt.

In Berlin, RK photographed the banality of horror, the daily life around the Wall, and the overwhelming presence of the structure that tore the city apart, separating families, and that would become the main symbol of an era. He wanted to study this construction that had a huge impact on urban morphology.

To produce the work called “The Berlin Wall as Architecture”, RK benefited from his cinematographic and journalistic training to see subliminal relationships and narrate a story that mixed reality, fantasy, and architecture as design research, in and approach analogous to the paranoid critical method of Catalan painter Salvador Dali, a characteristic of his intellectual production deeply linked to the book studied here. The surrealist-inspired method consisted of fabricating evidence for speculations that cannot be proven and then forcibly inserting this evidence into the world, so that a false fact illegally takes its place among the real ones. Moreover, his appreciation of the Wall and its “apparent absence of program” (Koolhaas, 1995, p. 222) anticipates the notion of programmatic instability that would become central to his architectural thinking in subsequent decades.

The research in Berlin served as the basis for the development of this last project in AA. “Exodus or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture”, which with constructivist influences and references to totalitarian projects by the Italian group Superstudio, contradicted the Peace and Love culture of the 1960s with a highly formalist and imposing architectural proposal.

Exodus presented a construction that overrode the will of people, they had to voluntarily surrender to a new way of life in society in order to enjoy their public spaces. A process of social reconfiguration under the protection of formal rigor. The project was developed inspired by the Wall and imposed its presence on London on an almost inhuman scale. Interestingly, the project includes a number of neat forms that may bring to mind some of the projects developed by OMU and his students.

Still in Berlin, around 1969, during his research, RK came into contact with the “Architecture Publications” (Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur), a series of publications edited by OMU as part of its design laboratories developed at TU Berlin between 1965 and 1969, which explored the unique characteristics of the city of West Berlin. These publications edited during his years as a professor of the School of Architecture demonstrated a latent tension between the city as

a whole and the separate elements that create it, a discourse that seems to predict the paths that would later be followed by both architects studied here. The small-circulation publications were the result of research laboratories in West Berlin. His themes were related to the city, treating it as an urban laboratory and exploring it divided into thematic clusters as Roads and Buildings, Living Along the Park or Traffic Lane Along the Spree. RK is fascinated by the publications, takes them back to London and begins to develop his final course works in AA, already instigated and influenced by OMU.

By the time RK arrived in Berlin, OMU was already on his way to Ithaca. Having taught at TU Berlin for five years, the young professor had grown weary of the political climate and of the attitudes of his students, who in December 1967 protested against an architecture conference he had organized. At the invitation of the English architectural historian Colin Rowe, OMU emigrated to the United States, where he joined the faculty of Cornell University's School of Architecture as a professor.

4 Cornell and the Influence of OMU

Before graduating, RK receives a two-year grant of Harkness Fellowship and decides to go to Cornell. In his letter of intent to apply for a place at the institution, RK cites OMU as the main reason for his interest in going to NY: “The appeal of this course would be the active presence of Prof. Ungers, whose work in Urban Planning at the University of Berlin I find very appealing and highly relevant” (Koolhaas, 1972, as cited in Schrijver, 2021, p. 24). In 2023, during a conversation with architect Richard Hall, RK states that his interest in OMU was never based on similarity, differences were a much greater incentive. He thought that was the fundamental possibility of collaboration, as his motivation was a compensation for something he didn't have. “In the case of Ungers, it was the simple recognition of the incredible speculative force that he was able to give to architecture” (Hall, 2024).

At Cornell, during his research, RK came into contact with two recently published books, “Los Angeles – The Architecture of Four Ecologies” by Reyner Banham published in 1971 and “Learning from Las Vegas” by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott-Brown, and Steven Izenour, published in 1972. Both publications with casual texts, explored popular notions about two great American cities and theorize the metropolis of the 20th century based on them. The texts legitimized the use of metaphors, proposing them as a form of irony because they revealed some of the less admirable values of American society. Books filled with history and humor, which talked about the new and the old, celebrated vernacular architecture and opened the field of research to mundane sources in parallel with the usual academic bases. At this moment, RK realizes that one could no longer write architectural manifestos, but that he could write about cities as if they were manifestos themselves. In other words, he goes on to develop the concept of a ‘retroactive manifesto’ for New York.

In New York, RK also had direct contact with publications aligned with New Journalism², a literary style practiced by American media outlets in the 1960s and 1970s. Among these publications were magazines such as *Esquire*, *The New Yorker*, *Rolling Stone*, *New York Magazine*, as well as alternative newspapers like the *Village Voice*. In this style, based on immersion, observation of urban life, and narrative construction of experience, the metropolis is understood not as an object of functionalist analysis but as a field of events, a set of scenes, tensions, and contradictions that require a narrative reading. This approach helps explain why RK describes New York less as a coherent system and more as an accumulation of episodes, myths, and operative fictions, a procedure analogous to New Journalism, which organizes reality through the assembly of lived fragments.

This is how RK found his space to think, write, and design in the relative calm of Ithaca, where formal issues were made explicit in the works and words of his mentor. An exchange relationship was established between OMU and RK, they participated in competitions together, set up seminar and Summer Studios. His ideas about architecture, free from the hippie spirit of AA, could begin to establish themselves within the sphere of influence of Rowe, OMU, and also the American architect Peter Eisenman, who directed the IAUS Foundation in New York. The IAUS, an institute with financial support from MoMA and Cornell University of New York, had as its principle to give scholarships to students so they could spend a year researching, designing, and writing. A model that in theory would bring them closer to the reality of architecture in New York. It was there that RK wrote DNY.

Not only who RK was with, but also where he was had a significant influence on his work, he saw something about the amnesia of New York, one of the central ideas of the book that describes a process in which the city continuously erases its own memory in order to reinvent itself, demolishing, replacing, and accumulating layers of urbanism without attachment to the past. This naïve pragmatism of American architecture allowed the city to prosper, in a process of constant replacement and accumulation of hybrid and vertical experiments.

He was fascinated by the way the city was built, without a traditional master plan and, when analyzing the results, he could speculate about the infinite potential of the city as it was, representing the result of building a metropolis without the weight of political manifestos that were being conceived in Europe. The various applications of architectural form – composition,

detailing, mass, materialization – were not part of a great ideology, but only instruments to be used.

In parallel to his research, RK partnered with Madelon Vriesendorp (his wife at the time), Elia and Zoe Zenghelis and Zaha Hadid (in addition to having OMU as a mentor/associate) in the first incarnation of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), so that, in November 1978, they inaugurated the exhibition “The Sparkling Metropolis”, installed on the top floor of the Guggenheim Museum in New York in which they presented projects and paintings of the works developed by them.

The exhibition served as a launch for the book, DNY had been completed by RK during his years between Cornell and the IAUS and it featured not only a “Retroactive Manifesto” of New York City, but also (and herein lies the true relationship between RK and OMU) a collection of projects for the city illustrated by Madelon Vriesendorp and Zoe Zenghelis. It is almost impossible not to confuse the authorship or the meaning of the texts with that of the projects, the ‘manifesto’ proposed by RK feeds the design rhetoric and theory of a truly metropolitan architecture.

According to the OMU model, the projects were collaborative and their publication followed the model of the Architecture Publications, which were reemerging at Cornell, with projects and discussions from the Summer Studios. But its impact was gigantic. The book and the projects launched RK to the general public, was palpable to casual readers at the same time it fascinated architects and urbanists. OMA emerged as a vanguard office and the impacts of this moment could be felt throughout the 1980s and the 1990s.

OMU’s writings and works fall into a category of more traditional theoretical strategies, its authority was based on the classical notion of *uomo universale*, while the work of RK, twenty years younger, aspired to a more editorial and observational position, akin to a curator as a part of the architect’s identity. His work is a reflection of an innocent optimism, wishing to reinvent a plausible relationship between the formal and the social (suggesting in part the absence of such a relationship and its troubled nature), and the absolute refusal to use social issues as the basis for architectural form (Schrijver, 2021).

5 From “City Within a City” to “City of the Captive Globe”

To conclude this argument, two of works will be presented in this context that demonstrate how the OMU/RK partnership influenced the work presented in DNY and its affinity with OMU’s studies.

Dutch architect and researcher at the University of Antwerp, Lara Schrijver argues that the 1977 article “The City Within a City”, written by OMU and RK et al., developed as part of a Summer Studio in Berlin and the project presented as an appendix (or fictional conclusion) to DNY, “The City of the Captive Globe” (1978), written by RK and Zoe Zenghelis represent similar concepts at their core and are fundamental to addressing a changing metropolis.

² New Journalism broke with the traditional “who-what-when-where-how-why” reporting model and began to organize narratives through scenes, dialogues, and points of view. It was grounded in the journalist’s prolonged immersion in the observed universe, requiring intensive investigation and attention to the most ordinary details of everyday life. By incorporating fictional techniques such as narrative scenes, full dialogue, and focalization, it nevertheless maintained a rigorous commitment to factual accuracy, distinguishing itself from literature through its direct anchoring in experience and empirical observation. Key authors of New Journalism include Tom Wolfe, Gay Talese, Joan Didion, Truman Capote, Hunter S. Thompson, and Norman Mailer.

Both derive from an existing city, a real city, and model the features you see as most valuable or impressive. "The City Within a City" derives from the condition of Berlin as it was in the late 1960s, early 1970s: with areas and neighborhoods with pronounced and different identities, all within a larger metropolitan field. "The City of the Captive Globe" derives from a study of Manhattan, where, according to RK, the grid strength is so rigorous that each parcel itself can manifest a completely unique identity without destroying the conceptual coherence of the city's grid as a whole. Thus, both concepts are distilled from the unique and specific conditions of Berlin and Manhattan, and used as tools to reflect on the future of the metropolis of the 1970s, with its multiple centers increasingly fragmented. The remnants of the historic city are still present, but they are embedded within a newer area of urban expansion.

The first work, "The City Within a City" was the result of an 8-week Summer Studio, organized by OMU and Cornell's Building Systems and Housing Department in partnership with Künstlerhaus Bethanien Cultural Center in Berlin. The initial draft of the Berlin Manifesto consisted of 6 pages typed by RK between June and July 1977, when he visited the Studio. The draft sparked discussion between RK, OMU, and their assistants, who then made significant changes to the text, including its title. This text was originally presented at the exhibition organized by the students at the end of the Studio and a second revised version was published by OMU, along the lines of Architecture Publications and later in Lotus International #19, 1978.

The published text oscillates between a contemplative utopia and a strategic arsenal of arguments for a project developed for a specific city, in distinct circumstances: Berlin in the late 1970s. It describes 11 hypotheses about the city, which remodel it without destroying its pre-existing structure, considering the importance of its ruins after World War II, including the possibility that the city's population could decline in the next decade and presents solutions based on social condensing projects that organize the city as parts of a whole with specific problems and needs.

Berlin is described in the text as an archipelago, a group of islands situated in a sea that simultaneously unites and divides them. Each island is part of the whole composition, and they all work together. However, even in the complete separation of the islands, no formal center is identified and the absence of this center is something that draws the islands towards each other and, at the same time, keeps them distinct. As a result, this prevents the formation of a single mass and increases the relationship dynamics between the islands. "The City Within a City" proposed that the relationship between architecture and the city be based on fragments.

The fragmented reality of post-war Berlin provided OMU with a basis for interpreting the city as an entity that no longer depended on large scale urban planning but was composed by islands, each conceived as a micro-city, freeing the fragments from the falsehood of a unified urbanism. This notion of parts allows for the juxtaposition of fundamentally different areas within a larger whole. As a project, it neither depends on nor

allows for a single architectural or urban gesture, but instead offers a framework in which differences can exist and be cultivated.

This unusual text for the time had an enormous influence on the trajectory of these two important figures of contemporary architecture and can actually be read as the final result of the affinity that existed between them in this period. OMU returns to Berlin and RK publishes DNY.

The second work, "The City of the Captive Globe", as previously stated, is part of the book DNY and serves as part of the conclusion for his research on New York. RK's proposal is to put his ideas on paper, a fictitious conclusion, an interpretation of the hypotheses raised throughout the books, not through words, but in a series of architectural projects.

Manhattan's grid is presented as a dry archipelago, each block an island, and the heavy traffic of cars and people keeps them isolated. As a solid, unchanging urban condition, the grid allows maximum freedom for each individual condition within it. In fact, the individuality of each block reinforces the unity of the grid. RK argues that the horizontal constraint creates a free space in the vertical plane circumscribed by the boundaries of the block.

The project questions the direct and inevitable correlation between intention and outcome. Its images reflect a fascination with the materialization of these conditions in concrete and specific architectural forms, as well as the proliferation of different forms that do not submit to architectural coherence. The work draws on the mythical narrative of the city and the construction of various radical architectural proposals. Colorful representations of iconic projects, such as Le Corbusier's Voisin Plan or Malevich's suprematist models, are fundamental to understanding these spatial relationships. It is difficult to imagine its impact being so strong without the paintings by Madelon Vriesendorp and Zoe Zengelis accompanying the text.

6 Discussion

The intellectual relationship between RK and OMU represents a decisive moment in the reformulation of architectural thinking during the 1970s, a period marked by the growing crisis of comprehensive modernist planning and the search for alternative conceptual frameworks capable of interpreting the contemporary metropolis. Rather than attempting to restore urban unity through totalizing planning strategies, both architects recognized fragmentation, difference, and discontinuity as structural conditions of modern urbanism and transformed them into operative design principles.

OMU's archipelago model and RK's interpretation of the Manhattan grid illustrate two complementary approaches to this condition. In OMU's work, fragmentation becomes a morphological framework composed of autonomous yet interrelated urban "islands," each capable of maintaining its identity while contributing to a broader metropolitan

structure. In RK's interpretation, the grid operates as a neutral ordering device whose rigidity paradoxically enables architectural freedom, allowing each block to develop independent formal and programmatic experiments without dissolving the coherence of the city as a whole. In both cases, the city is no longer conceived as a unified organism but as a structured multiplicity in which difference becomes a productive urban condition.

This convergence places their work within a broader theoretical shift that includes the typological reflections developed by Aldo Rossi and the compositional pluralism articulated by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter. However, RK and OMU move beyond purely analytical interpretations of the city by introducing a projective dimension in which urban theory becomes inseparable from speculative architectural design. RK's concept of the "retroactive manifesto" exemplifies this transition: the metropolis is interpreted not only through historical or morphological analysis but through narrative and projective imagination, transforming existing urban phenomena into architectural propositions.

7 Conclusion

Consequently, the collaboration between OMU and RK should be understood not merely as a pedagogical episode but as a formative intellectual exchange that contributed to redefining the role of architecture in the late twentieth century. By establishing fragmentation as a positive and operative condition rather than a problem to be resolved. Their work helped shift architectural discourse away from universal planning models toward a conception of the city as an open system composed of differentiated yet interconnected parts. The theoretical and pedagogical environment created through the Cornell studios, the Berlin research projects, and their collaborative publications thus played a decisive role in shaping the conceptual foundations that would later emerge in DNY and in the broader trajectory of contemporary metropolitan theory. Their intellectual exchange continues to resonate, particularly in approaches that embrace fragmentation, multiplicity, and narrative as fundamental tools for interpreting and designing the contemporary city.

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