



ETH STUDIO BASEL
Institut Stadt der Gegenwart
Contemporary City Institute

Towards the Archipelago

lecture by

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In 1977 Oswald Mathias Ungers and a group of architects worked on a project for Berlin called "Berlin as Green Archipelago". The main hypothesis of this project was that the process of de-population, and urban crisis could turn into a possible "ideal" for the city. Ungers proposed the form of the city as an archipelago of dense urban artefacts surrounded by a forest that would gradually replace existing (empty) portions of the city. Though "Berlin as Green Archipelago" was a specific project for Berlin it can be regarded as a paradigmatic example of a political and formal interpretation of the city. The lecture will address Ungers' Archipelago not so much within its own historical context, but more as a heuristic device that can help to trace back important categories of the city such as the irreducible difference between city and urbanization, the concept of the formal, the concept of the political, and the role of organization of work in the formation of contemporary urbanity. These categories will be discussed by situating "Berlin as Green Archipelago" in relationship with other paradigmatic examples of the modern city such as Ildefonso Cerdà's "Theory of Urbanization", Archizoom's "No-stop City", and Rem Koolhaas' "City of Captive Globe".