Ludwig Hilberseimer: Infrastructures of Modernity (online, 27-29 Oct 21)

Bauhaus Dessau Foundation / online, Oct 27–29, 2021
Registration deadline: Oct 29, 2021

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After the fourth CIAM Congress, held in Athens in 1933, had put the functional city at the centre of urban planning discussions, Ludwig Hilberseimer published the book "The New City" (1944) in his Chicago exile. The architect, urban planner and former professor at the Bauhaus started out from a functional analysis of the city. But he found results that went far beyond the demands of his colleagues. Based on studies at the Dessau Bauhaus, Hilberseimer developed a kind of ecological urbanism that envisaged an interrelation of city and landscape. However, he was able to realise this concept only once and only in sections: Lafayette Park in Detroit was created from 1956 onwards as a joint project with Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and the landscape architect Alfred Caldwell.

The international conference "Ludwig Hilberseimer: Infrastructures of Modernity" takes a new look at various aspects and discourses of modernity based on the special role of Ludwig Hilberseimer. In the five panels “City Building Elements,” “Großstadt: German Perspectives,” “Urban Landscapes: US Perspectives,” “Life/Theory” and “Media Methods,” infrastructures serve as a kind of leitmotif. Hilberseimer’s work, especially in its deviations, is suitable as a model for the first half of the 20th century and allows alternative approaches to a history of modern urbanity.

Participating scientists: Alexander Eisenschmidt (University of Illinois at Chicago’s School of Architecture), Scott Colman (Rice University School of Architecture in Houston), Magdalena Droste (formerly Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin), Alison Fisher (Art Institute of Chicago), Plácido González Martínez (College of Architecture and Urban Planning at Tongji University in Shanghai), Christa Kamleithner (BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg), Christine Mengin (University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne), Philipp Oswalt (University of Kassel), Andreas Schätzke (Bauhaus Dessau Foundation), Florian Strob (Bauhaus Dessau Foundation), Andreas Buss (University of Kassel), Robin Schuldenfrei (Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London), Charles Waldheim (Harvard University), Nikos Katsikis (Delft University of Technology), Benedict Clouette (Columbia University), Anna Vallye (Connecticut College), Lutz Robbers (Jade Hochschule Wilhelmshaven, Oldenburg, Elsfleth), Sandra Neugärtner (University of Erfurt)

On October 28, 2021, as part of the conference, the intermezzo "Ludwig Hilberseimer. Infrastructures of the New City" opens at the Bauhaus Museum Dessau.

Participation in the conference "Ludwig Hilberseimer: Infrastructures of Modernity" is possible online via Zoom. The detailed programme and the registration form are available here:

https://bauhaus-dessau.de/en/events/hilberseimer-infrastructures-of-modernity.html

The conference is part of the Bauhaus im Text research project run by the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation dedicated to developing a historical-critical edition of Ludwig Hilberseimer’s book "The New City".

PROGRAMME

27 Oct 2021

1 pm
Guided Tour of Dessau-Törten Housing Estate
with Monika Markgraf (Research Associate, Bauhaus Dessau Foundation)

3:30 pm
Official Welcome
by Barbara Steiner (Director & CEO, Bauhaus Dessau Foundation) and Florian Strob (Research Associate, Bauhaus Dessau Foundation)
Bauhaus Building, Aula

Panel 1: City Building Elements
Moderation: Florian Strob
Bauhaus Building, Aula

4 – 4:30 pm
Keynote: Hilberseimer and the Hall: Constructive Modernity and Urban Facility
Christine Mengin (University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne)

In line with the Neues Bauen’s interest in the economic, technical, and social aspects of architecture, Hilberseimer gave decisive importance to the hall as building type, emphasizing the utilitarian value of this technically innovative object and urban facility. The lecture aims to trace the importance of the hall in Hilberseimer’s thinking, from his 1914 project of a Markthalle to its integration in the City-Bebauung urban utopia in 1930.

4:40 – 5:15 pm
A Generic Low-Rise: Hilberseimer's Show-Home for Kleine Kienheide
Andreas Buss (University of Kassel)

The extension of the Dessau-Törten housing estate planned for 1930 bears the signature of Ludwig Hilberseimer. The mixed construction method of multi-storey and low-rise buildings propagated by him was implemented here for the first time, although not completely. Thus, the complementary low-rise development in the form envisioned by the Bauhaus remained on paper. However, it was well developed, as evidenced by designs by students and teachers in the building department. Some of them, including Ludwig Hilberseimer's terraced house, were ready for construction. The so-called L-type was intended for realization on the test site in Kleine Kienheide. The model house has now been reconstructed in drawings for the first time and compared with its predecessors and derivatives. Newly discovered sources substantiate the intended materialization. In addition, the advanced concept of a small kitchen can be identified.

5:20 – 5:50 pm
Domesticating the Unit: Ludwig Hilberseimer's Housing and the Chicago Grid
Robin Schuldenfrei (Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London)

Hilberseimer’s projects for city development envisioned a future based on the gridded unit, from the individual dwelling cell to the skyscraper to the urban grid. Considering the relationship between an elementary cell and the urban organism as a whole, Hilberseimer relegated the domestic tower block to a secondary position, in favour of identical single family houses – with their seemingly infinite reproducibility – which he posited was the real place for mass production and economies of scale.
This lecture will explore how Hilberseimer, in the years leading up to WWII and in the post-war period, was engaged in processes of reproduction, in which the constituent element of habitation was based on the unit. It will consider the means by which he worked – in, on, and around – America’s urban grid, only to displace it.

6 – 6:30 pm
Infrastructures of Living: The Housing Typologies of Ludwig Hilberseimer
Philipp Oswalt (University of Kassel)

Starting with his utopian design Wohnstadt of 1923, Ludwig Hilberseimer developed his own housing typology (in the sense of the inner structure of the flat) based on the idea of a cabin system, which he continued to develop until the end of his work at the Bauhaus in 1933. In this typology, fundamental ideas of use, circulation, building construction, lighting, ventilation and addability are combined to form a spatial model. In exile in the USA, Hilberseimer increasingly focused on urban planning to regional planning issues, although he continued to refer to his typology developed in Germany for the question of housing organisation. A special feature of Hilberseimer's work on the flat type is his focus on combinability and addability, which enables him to generate different building typologies and structural forms based on a single flat type.

6:30 – 7 pm
Panel discussion

7 pm
Dinner
Bauhaus canteen

28 Oct 2021

Panel 2: Großstadt: German Perspectives
Moderation: Regina Bittner (Head of Academy, Bauhaus Dessau Foundation)
Bauhaus Museum Dessau, Workshop room

9:40 – 10:10 am
Hilberseimer and Der Einzige
Scott Colman (Rice University School of Architecture in Houston)

Ludwig Hilberseimer’s first published writings appeared in Der Einzige in 1919, one of numerous avant-garde journals that emerged in Germany in the immediate aftermath of World War I. The

journal was edited by the philosopher Anselm Ruest and the writer Mynona (pseudonyms for Ernst Samuel and Salomo Friedlaender, respectively), both prominent in Expressionist literary circles and participants in the early events of Berlin Dada. Hilberseimer's involvement with Der Einzige exposes the logic of his "spiritual materialism" and theoretical approach to architectural and urban practice, underlying even the shift in the direction of his work during the Bauhaus years. The lecture will argue this philosophical approach to cultural work constitutes Hilberseimer's most important theoretical legacy and one that designers would do well to reconsider today.

10:15 – 10:45 am
Ludwig Hilberseimer, the Red Bauhaus and the CIAM
Magdalena Droste (formerly Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin)

The subject of the lecture is the most important planning project at the Bauhaus Dessau under Mies van der Rohe, the Fichtenbreite housing estate and its later integration into the CIAM analysis for Dessau in 1933. Both projects have received little attention in Bauhaus historiography to date. The Fichtenbreite project was developed in the winter semester of 1931/32 as a collective planning project under the direction of Hilberseimer. Even before the end of the semester, three students took over the project in order to work on it as a comparative cartographic analysis for the Athens Congress in the summer of 1933. The lecture attempts to reconstruct the processing stages and their different actors.

10:50 – 11:20 am
Invention of a Metropolitan Architecture: From the Existing City to Interior Urbanism
Alexander Eisenschmidt (University of Illinois at Chicago's School of Architecture)

In 1914, while still working as a draftsperson in the Berlin office of Heinz Lassen, the aspiring planner Ludwig Hilberseimer poured over the newly published book Die Architektur der Großstadt (1913) by Karl Scheffler. This early engagement with Scheffler's work would guide his understanding of the city and foreshadow the formulation of a "metropolitan architecture" as he would define it in 1927 under the title Großstadtarchitektur. Analyzing the beginning of Hilberseimer's studies of the city, highlighting its indebtedness to the work of Scheffler, and understanding it as a baseline for his first major publication on the city, this lecture will argue for the importance of the metropolis in the work of Hilberseimer.

11:30 am – 12 pm
The (Almost) Invisible Third. Ludwig Hilberseimer and Germany after World War II
Andreas Schätzke (Bauhaus Dessau Foundation)

From 1933 onwards, several hundred architects left Germany as a result of the National Socialist dictatorship. In the post-war period, German society was characterised by an extremely ambivalent relationship towards its former fellow citizens. In the field of architecture and urban planning, too, the former colleagues who now lived abroad were treated in very different ways. The lecture deals with the relationship between Ludwig Hilberseimer and Germany after 1945 on the basis of three topics: Hilberseimer in comparison to other emigrated architects; in his capacity as a former teacher at the Bauhaus in connection with the reception of this school in post-war Germany; and as an expert within the professional debates about urban architecture and urban development in a country that was being reconstructed.

12 – 12:30 pm
Panel discussion

12:30 – 2 pm
Lunch Break

Panel 3 Urban Landscapes: US Perspectives
Moderation: Robin Schuldenfrei
Bauhaus Museum Dessau, Workshop room

2 – 2:40 pm
Keynote: Hilberseimer Reconsidered: Commitments and Continuities
Charles Waldheim (Harvard University)

This talk rehearses Hilberseimer's intellectual and professional commitments from Berlin to Chicago. The premise of my argument is that while much of the literature on Hilbs has described discontinuities or breaks between the two halves of his career, it is possible, and perhaps even necessary, for us to read the continuities across his career.

2:50 – 3:20 pm
Hilberseimer, Fort Dearborn, and Urban Renewal in Chicago
Alison Fisher (Art Institute of Chicago)

While Hilberseimer's independent neighborhood and regional development schemes have been central to scholarly analysis of the planner's work in Chicago, his designs for specific urban renewal projects are less well understood. This lecture seeks to expand this area of inquiry by exploring Hilberseimer's proposal for a large urban renewal project known as Fort Dearborn, directed by the Chicago Plan Commission. Unlike many American architects working in the 1940s, Hilberseimer was already well acquainted with bold plans for the redevelopment of historical cities. The lecture will analyze his many drawings for Fort Dearborn in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago in light of the planner's writings on land use, the role of streets, and the historical trajectory of western cities.

3:30 – 4 pm
Operational Landscapes. Infrastructures of the Non-City
Nikos Katsikis (Delft University of Technology)

4 – 4:30 pm
Panel discussion

4:30 – 5:30 pm
Coffee break

5:30 – 6:40 pm
Lichtspielhaus in motion
Bauhaus Museum Dessau, Open Stage

6:30 – 7:30

Opening of the Intermezzo "Ludwig Hilberseimer: Infrastructures of Modernity"
Bauhaus Museum Dessau, Open Stage

7:30 pm
Dinner

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Panel 4: Life/Theory
Moderation: Alison Fisher
Bauhaus Museum Dessau, Workshop room

9:45 – 10:15 am
Keynote: Re-Visiting The New City. Towards a New Heritage of Modernism
Plácido González Martínez (College of Architecture and Urban Planning at Tongji University in Shanghai)

The interpretation of modernism has frequently been based on simplified characterizations of the work and intellectual life of some of their key figures, detached from their vital circumstances. For a long time considered “in the shadow of Mies”, the study of Ludwig Hilberseimer offers an opportunity to break with such over-simplifications. This lecture will offer an insight to the genesis and the legacy of one of Hilberseimer’s key works, The New City (1944), understood as the culmination of a theoretical discourse that started in Germany in 1927 and continued for 40 years; influenced by the experience of economic crisis, political exile, war and the cultural renaissance of the US in the post-war years.

10:20 – 10:50 am
Lebenskraft, Lebensraum, Lebensprozess: Vitalist Urban Theory in Germany
Benedict Clouette (Columbia University)

The paper considers the architectural and political implications of theories of urban form that invoke "life," as both a biological and a philosophical concept. The inquiry unfolds from Hilberseimer’s republication of Walter Christaller’s diagrams from Die zentralen Orte in Süddeutschland (1933) in his book The New Regional Pattern (1949), where they are included as illustrations of the biogeographical principles that lend coherence to a region. The paper asks why Hilberseimer – called a “socialist architect" by his colleague Hannes Meyer in the prior decade, notwithstanding the complexities of his evolving political commitments – would choose to illustrate his definitive statement on regional planning with images drawn from a body of research advanced in service of the Third Reich's violent territorial imperium.

11 – 11:30 am
The City in the Landscape: Hilberseimer’s Chicago and the Economics of Space
Anna Vallye (Connecticut College)

Best known for his stark vision of metropolitan concentration in Grossstadtarchitektur (1927), Ludwig Hilberseimer devoted his years in America (1938-1967) to formulating ecologically-informed plans for regional decentralization. I explore Hilberseimer’s archive, revealing the architect’s intellectual debt to “location theory” – a formative thesis in the German economics of space with a

profound influence on urban planning on both sides of the Atlantic.

11:30 am – 12 pm
Panel discussion

12 – 1 pm
Lunch break

Panel 5: Media Methods
Moderation: Charles Waldheim
Bauhaus Museum Dessau, Workshop room

1:10 – 1:40 pm
Keynote: In Search of Order: Hilberseimer's Visual Patterns
Christa Kamleithner (BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg)

Both contemporaries and historiographers see in Hilberseimer an obstinate theoretical mind aiming to order the world according to fundamental principles. Nonetheless, Hilberseimer was interested in empirical matters. His designs for linear cities were based upon distribution maps and related to a history of urban patterns and the forces that shaped them. This lecture explores the epistemic conditions of this search for order and highlights the role of media representations such as statistical mapping and aerial photography for modernist urbanism. The focus is on Hilberseimer's concept of the linear city, that he had first formulated during the final years of the Bauhaus and then addressed in all of his major books from 1944 to 1963.

1:50 – 2:20 pm
"Elementary-magical": Hilberseimer as Theorist of Media
Lutz Robbers (Jade Hochschule Wilhelmshaven, Oldenburg, Elsfleth)

Ludwig Hilberseimer occupies a particular position amongst protagonists of the different avant--garde currents that intersected in Berlin during the early 1920s. Alongside Ludwig Mies van der Rohe Hilberseimer was the only architect who actively contributed to the journal G – Material für elementare Gestaltung. Transcending the ideological differences between Constructivism, De Stijl and Constructivism „G" resonated with the "resolutely epistemological thrust" (K. Michael Hays) Hilberseimer exhibited in his earlier writing for the Sozialistische Monatshefte. His apparent interest in the distinction between artistic and scientific knowledge appeared to be consistent with G's universalizing technology-affirmative quest.
Through a close analysis of a number of his articles from this period, I intend to a) chart Hilberseimer's theoretical position on the avant-garde's discursive map and b) probe this discursive network with regard to the architectural imagery he produced between 1922 and 1927.

2:30 – 3 pm
Writing Architecture. On the Genesis of Ludwig Hilberseimer's The New City
Florian Strob (Bauhaus Dessau Foundation)

1933 marks the end of the Bauhaus and of Hilberseimer's teaching in Germany as well as the end of a prolific career as a critic of avantgarde art, architecture and city planning. With his exile to Chicago in 1938 he lost his most important tool in developing and conveying his theories: the Ger-

man language. By investigating the genesis of The New City (1944), his first English language book, this lecture will argue for the importance of writing as a medium of architecture and city planning. It will propose a genetic reading of The New City and hopes to show by way of focusing on the writing process the fruitfulness of such an approach for the understanding of architecture. In this context, infrastructure is also to be understood as a metaphor for the underlying processes that led to the creation of the final text.

3:10 – 3:40 pm
Structure as Infrastructure: Interrelation of Fiber and Construction
Sandra Neugärtner (University of Erfurt)

The change in Hilberseimer's urban planning models – from the Großstadtarchitektur (1927) to The New City (1932-67) – took place during his time at the Bauhaus in Dessau. There, construction as structure became the basic concept in architecture as well as in the weaving workshop. Just as Hilberseimer compared the scheme of urban architecture with a grammar, textile designers emphasized the semantic function of threads and textiles. In addition, architects and textile designers were in constant exchange due to the polytechnical, transdisciplinary training. Against the backdrop that designers placed the process of structural organization in the foreground of weaving, the contribution examines the analogies to Hilberseimer's structural thinking up to his aesthetic infrastructure.

3:45 – 4:30 pm
Panel discussion

Reference:
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