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Motor City

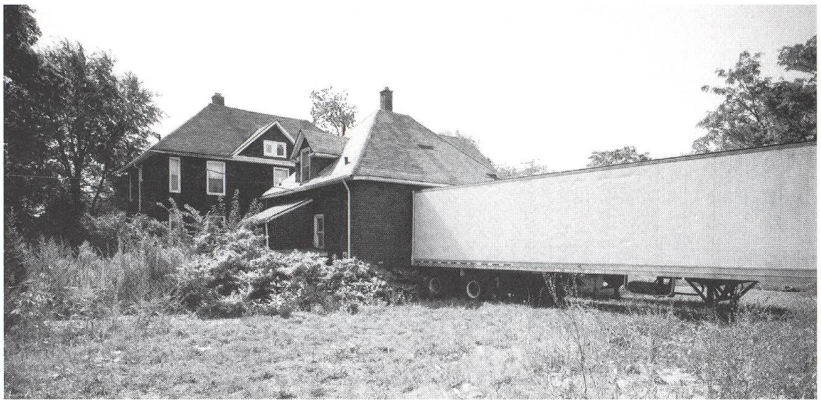
Charles Waldheim

"The belief, that an industrial country must concentrate its industry is, in my opinion, unfounded. That is only an intermediate phase in the development. Industry will decentralize itself. If the city were to decline, no one would rebuild it according to its present plan. That alone discloses our own judgment on our cities."[1] (Henry Ford)

In the second half of the twentieth century, the city of Detroit once the fourth largest city in the US, lost over half its population.[2] The *motor city*, once an international model for industrialized urban development, began that process of decentralization as early as the 1920's, catalyzed by Henry Ford's decision to relocate production outside the city to reduce production costs. While similar conditions can be found in virtually every industrial city in North America, Detroit recommends itself as the clearest, most legible, example of these trends evidenced in the spatial and social conditions of the post-war American city (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2 Downtown Detroit Figure-Ground Diagrams, Richard Plunz, "Detroit is Everywhere", in: *Architecture Magazine*, April 1996, vol. 85, no. 4, pp. 55-61.

Figs. 3-4 Motor City, photographs courtesy Jordi Bernado.



"Forget what you think you know about this place. Detroit is the most relevant city in the United States for the simple reason that it is the most unequivocally modern and therefore distinctive of our national culture: in other words, a total success. Nowhere else has American modernity had its way with people and place alike."[3]

In August 1990, Detroit's City Planning Commission authored a remarkable and virtually unprecedented report.[4] This immodest document proposed the de-commissioning and abandonment of the most vacant areas of what had been the fourth largest city in the U.S. With this publication, uninspiringly titled the *Detroit Vacant Land Survey*, the city planners documented a process of depopulation and disinvestment that had been underway in Detroit since the 1950's.[5] With an incendiary 1993 press release based on the City Planning Commission's recommendations of three years prior, the city Ombudsman, Marie Farrell-Donaldson, publicly called for the discontinuation of services to, and the relocation of vestigial populations from, the most vacant portions of the city (Fig. 1):

"The city's ombudsman (...) is essentially suggesting that the most blighted bits of the city should be closed down. Residents would be relocated from dying areas to those that still had life in them. The empty houses would be demolished and empty areas fenced off; they would either be landscaped, or allowed to return to 'nature'.[6]

Until the public release of the survey, the depopulation of Detroit was largely accomplished without the endorsement of, or meaningful acknowledgment by, the architectural and planning professions. What was remarkable about Detroit's 1990 Vacant Land Survey was its unsentimental and surprisingly clear-sighted acknowledgment of a process of post-industrial de-densification that continues to this day in cities produced by modern industrialization.

Figs. 5-6 Detroit's Vacancy, photographs courtesy Jordi Bernado.

Equally striking was how quickly the report's recommendations were angrily dismissed in spite of the fact that they corroborated a practice of urban erasure that was already well underway (Figs. 3, 4, 5, 6).

While European proponents of modernist planning had originally imported Fordism and Taylorism from American industry and applied them to city planning, it was the American city (and Detroit in particular) that offered the fullest embodiment of those principles in spatial terms. Ironically, while the American planning profession ultimately embraced the virtues of fordist urbanism in the middle of the twentieth century, they were ill prepared for the impact those ongoing processes would have on forms of urban arrangement as evidenced by the condition of Detroit at the end of that century. Among those impacts were the utter abandonment of traditional European models of urban density in favor of impermanent, ad hoc arrangements of temporary utility and steadily decreasing density.

While flexibility, mobility, and speed made Detroit an international model for industrial urbanism, those very qualities rendered the city disposable. Traditional models of dense urban arrangement were quite literally abandoned in favor of escalating profits, accelerating accumulation and a culture of consumption. This of course was the genius of Ford's conception: a culture that consumes the products of its own labor while consistently creating a surplus of demand ensuring a nomadic, operational, and ceaselessly reiterated model of ex-urban arrangement. That ongoing provisional work of rearrangement is the very model of American urbanism that Detroit offers.

Typical of their peers in other American cities, Detroit's city planners, architects, and urban design professionals clinicalized the dying industrial city to the extent that Detroit came to represent an *urban* failure, as though the responsibility for its viability rested with the techniques of modernist urban-

1 Henry Ford as quoted in Ludwig Hilberseimer, "Cities and Defense", 1945, and reprinted in: *In the Shadow of Mies: Ludwig Hilberseimer, Architect, Educator, and Urban Planner*, ed. Richard Plommer, David Spaeth, and Kevin Harrington, New York/Chicago: Rizzoli/Art Institute of Chicago, 1988, pp. 89-93.

2 In the first half of the 20th century, the population of Detroit grew from under 285,700 in 1900 to over 1,849,500 in 1950. That number dropped steadily in the second half of the century to 951,270 at the 2000 Census. For more on Detroit's declining population see Witold Rybczynski, "The Zero Density Neighborhood", in: *Detroit Free Press Sunday Magazine*, October 29, 1995, pp. 14-17, 19.

3 Jerry Herron, "Three Meditations on the Ruins of Detroit", in: *Stalking Detroit*, ed. Daskalakis, Waldheim, and Young, Barcelona: ACTAR, 2001, p. 33.

4 "Detroit Vacant Land Survey", in: *City of Detroit City Planning Commission*, August 24, 1990.

5 Ibid, pp. 3-5.

6 "Day of the Bulldozer", in: *The Economist*, May 8, 1993, pp. 33-34.

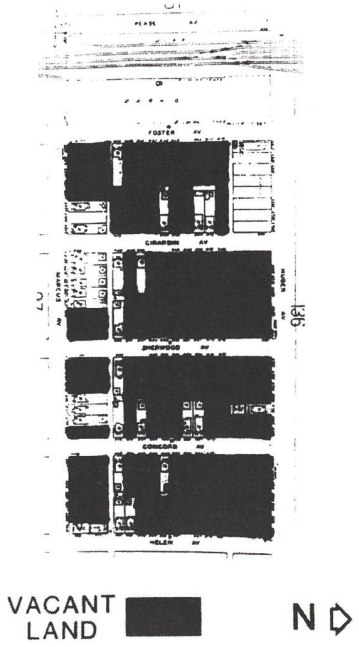


Fig. 7 City of Detroit City Planning Commission Vacant Land Survey.

ism that shaped its development. This was to mistake effect for cause. As a product of mobile capital and speculative development practices in the service of evolving models of production, Detroit was a clear and unmistakable success. As promoted internationally by the proponents of fordism, Detroit served as a model of urbanism placed in the service of optimized industrial production. With each successive transformation in production paradigms, Detroit re-tooled itself more completely and more quickly than virtually any other city in history.

What was remarkable about the *Detroit Vacant Land Survey* and the City of Detroit's plan to decommission parts of itself was not its impossibility, but rather the simple fact that it dared articulate for public consumption the fact that the city was already abandoning itself. This fact alone did not make Detroit unique. In the 1990's Detroit ranked a distant 22nd nationally in the percent of its population lost compared with other metropolitan centers, having already surrendered the majority of its citizenry over the previous four decades.[7] The original abandonment and subsequent suburban annexation of central Detroit began well before similar conditions emerged in other major cities. Unlike other cities, however, Detroit began its process of decentralization and urban abandonment sooner and pursued it more completely than any other city in the modern world. Perhaps more importantly, Detroit was the only city that dared to publicly articulate a plan for its own abandonment and conceive of organizing the process of de-commissioning itself as a legitimate problem requiring the attention of design professionals. In a graphically spare document featuring maps blacked-out with marker to indicate areas of vacant land, Detroit's planners rendered an image of a previously unimaginable urbanism of erasure that was already a material fact (Fig. 7).[8]

"One last question must now be asked: during a crisis period, will the demolition of cities replace the major public works of traditional politics? If so, it would no longer be possible to distinguish between the nature of recessions (economic, industrial) and the nature of war." (Paul Virilio)

Over the course of the 1990's the City of Detroit lost approximately 1% of its housing stock annually to arson, primarily due to 'Devil's Night' vandalism.[10] Publicly, the city administration decried this astonishingly direct and specific critique of the city's rapidly deteriorating social conditions. Simultaneously, the city privately corroborated the arsonists illegal intent by developing, funding, and implementing one of the largest and most sweeping demolition programs in the history of American urbanism. This program continued throughout the 90's, largely supported by the city's real estate, business, and civic communities. This curious arrangement allowed both the disenfranchised and the propertied interests to publicly blame each other for the city's problems while providing a legal and economic framework within which to carry out an ongoing process of urban erasure. Ironically, this "solution" to Detroit's image problems completed the unsanctioned process of erasure begun illegally by the populations left in the wake of de-industrialization. Vast portions of Detroit were erased through this combination of unsanctioned burning and subsequently legitimized demolition.[11] The combined impact of these two activities, each deemed illicit by differing interests, was to coordinate the public display of social unrest with administration attempts to erase the visual residue of Detroit's ongoing demise.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau describes the limits of disciplinary relevance absent the human subjects demanded by professional authority:

"...the dying man falls outside the thinkable, which is identified with what one can do. In leaving the field circumscribed by the possibilities of treatment, it enters a region of meaninglessness."[12]

For the architectural profession, the city of Detroit in the 1990's entered a simi-

7 US Census Bureau figures for Detroit indicate that the populations of 21 metropolitan areas in the United States, including St. Louis, Washington D.C., and Philadelphia, were shrinking at a faster rate than Detroit's during the decade of the 1990's.

8 "Detroit Vacant Land Survey", in: *City of Detroit City Planning Commission*, August 24, 1990.

9 Paul Virilio, "The Overexposed City", in: *Zone 1-2*, New York: Urzone, 1986, trans. Astrid Hustvedt.
In 1998, Detroit's Mayor Dennis Archer secured $60 million in loan guarantees from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to finance the demolition of every abandoned residential building in the city. See "Dismantling the Motor City", in *Metropolis*, June 1998, p. 33.

10 "On Devil's Night in Detroit", see Ze'ev Chafets, *Devil's Night: And Other True Tales of Detroit*, New York: Random House, 1990, pp. 3-16.
While precise numbers of houses lost to arson are hard to quantify, local myth places the figure at a conservative 1% annually. On media coverage of arson in Detroit, see Jerry Herron, *After Culture: Detroit and the Humiliation of History*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993.

11 On the urban impact of Detroit's massive demolition program, see Dan Hoffman's "Erasing Detroit", in: *Stalking Detroit*, Barcelona: ACTAR, 2001, pp. 100-103.

12 Michel DeCerteau: "The Unnamable", in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall, Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1984.

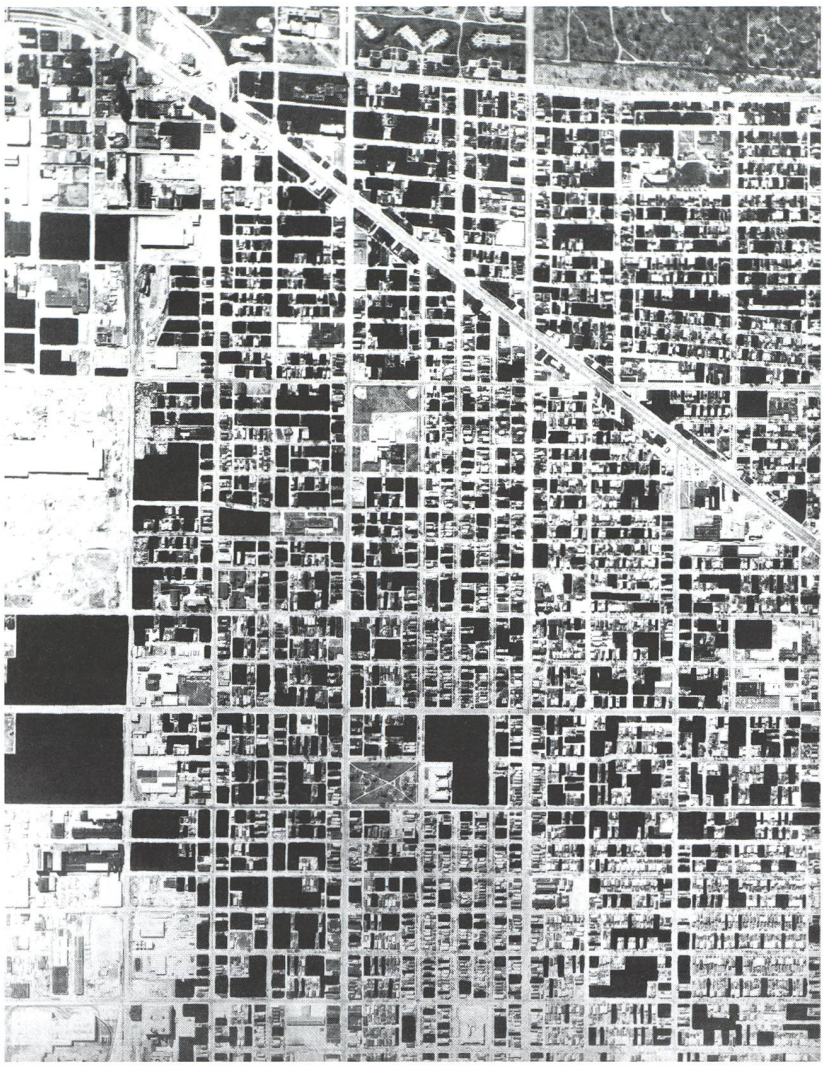


Fig. 8 Erasing Detroit, courtesy Dan Hoffman.

lar condition of meaninglessness precisely because it no longer required the techniques of growth and development that had become the modus operandi of the discipline. Absent the need for these tools, Detroit became a "non-site" for the architect in the same sense that deCerteau's dead body ceased to operate as a "site" for the physician's attention.[13] As the city de-commissioned itself, it entered a condition that could not be *thought* by the architectural and planning disciplines. As Dan Hoffman put it, in the early 1990's " ...unbuilding surpassed building as the city's primary architectural activity" (Figs. 8, 9).[14]

The fact that American cities began to dissolve as a result of the pressures of mature fordist decentralization came as a surprise only to those disciplines with a vested interest in the ongoing viability of a nineteenth century model of urbanism based on increasing density. Free of that prejudice, the development of American industrial cities can more easily be understood as a temporary, ad hoc arrangement based on the momentary optimization of industrial production. The astonishing pliability of industrial arrangement and the increasing pace of change in production paradigms suggest that any understanding of American cities must acknowledge their temporary, provisional nature. The explosive growth of Detroit over the first half of the twentieth century, rather than constructing an expectation of enduring urbanism, must be understood as one half of an ongoing process of urban arrangement that ultimately rendered its previous forms redundant.[15] Detroit can be seen as nothing more than the most recent idea about production as manifest in spatial terms. The fact that

13 Ibid, p. 190.

14 See Hoffman, "Erasing Detroit". According to research by Sanford Kwinter and Daniela Fabricius, between 1978 and 1998 approximately 9000 building permits were issued for new houses in Detroit, while over 108,000 demolition permits were issued. See Kwinter and Fabricius, "Contract with America", in: *Mutations*, Barcelona: ACTAR, 2000, p. 600.

15 Following Dan Hoffman, "The Best the World has to Offer", in: *Stalking Detroit*, Barcelona: ACTAR, 2001, pp. 42-47.

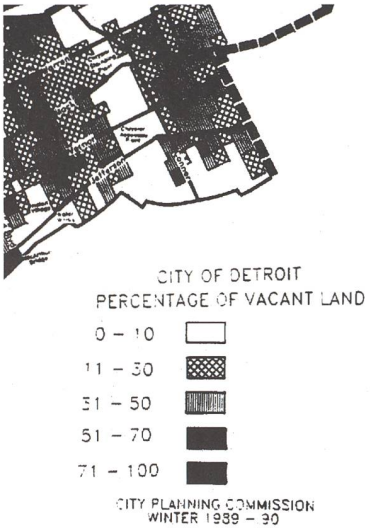


Fig. 9 Detroit Vacant Land Maps, City of Detroit.

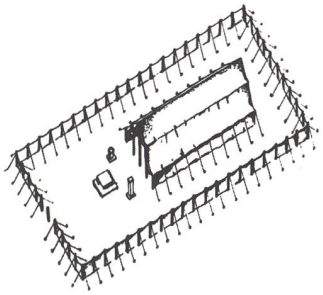


Fig. 10 Military Encampment as Primitive Hut.

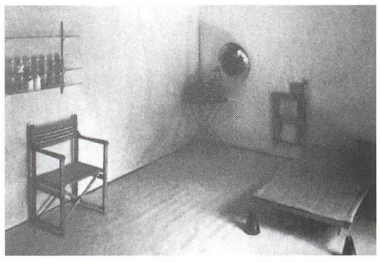


Fig. 11 Hannes Meyer's Coop Zimmer.

American industrial urbanism would decreasingly resemble its European and pre-fordist precedents should come as no surprise. Rather than a permanent construction, one must take American urbanism as an essentially temporary, provisional, and continuously revised articulation of property ownership, speculative development, and mobile capital.[16]

Especially for those Modernists interested in mobility and new models of social arrangement, the flexibility and increasing pace of technological change associated with fordist production served as models for an increasingly temporary urbanism. The most obvious model for this iterative and responsive urbanism could be found at the intersection of industrial production and military infrastructure.[17] For Le Corbusier, the origins of the city itself could be found in the ur-urbanism of the military encampment. Commenting on the architectural myths of the primitive hut, this drawing of a circumscribed martial precinct reveals the essentially nomadic pre-history of urban arrangement in European culture (Fig. 10). Ancient rites for the founding of Roman cities were essentially symmetrical with those for the founding of military encampments. In *The Idea of a Town,* Joseph Rykwert describes how performing the precise reverse of those founding rites was used to signify the decommissioning or abandonment of an encampment, thus corroborating their essentially symmetrical status.[18] With his Coop Zimmer project, Hannes Meyer commented on the collusion between the mass consumer products of fordist production and their replication in the miscellany of modern military nomadism.[19] Meyer's project arranged a petit-bourgeois domestic ensemble of semi-disposable consumer furnishings as the interior of an equally transportable military accommodation (fig. 11).

The most direct critique of modern urbanism as informed by twentieth century military techniques can be found in the projects of Ludwig Hilberseimer.[20] Hilberseimer's proposals for a radically decentralized pattern of regional infrastructure for postwar America simultaneously optimized fordist models of decentralized industrial production and dispersed large population concentrations that had become increasingly obvious targets for aerial attack in the atomic age. Hilberseimer's drawing of an atomic blast in central Illinois renders a clear imperative for the construction of a civil defense infrastructure capable of transporting dense urban populations away from the dangers of the city and toward the relative security of suburban dissolution.[21] This model of the highway as a military infrastructure afforded a form of civil defense through camouflage. Not coincidentally, the depopulation of urban centers in response to the cold war argues quite effectively for precisely the kind of decreasing density that his previous work had been predicated on in the name of efficient industrial production and optimized arrangement. In both modalities, as military encampment and industrial ensemble, the vision of a nationally scaled infrastructure of transportation and communication networks revealed a fundamental sympathy between fordist models of industrial production and military models of spatial projection.

Much has been written on the military origins of the modern interstate highway system in the U.S. and the impact of military policy on postwar American settlement patterns has been well documented. While the highway is arguably the clearest evidence of fordism's impact on postwar urban arrangement in America, it is also clear that this most fordist network is itself an essentially military technology. Given Ford's well-documented sympathy to Nazism, the infrastructural and logistical logics of the German war machine provided an essential case study in the virtues of fordist mobility.[22] Not simply a model of production, but an essential fordist precept, mobilization was understood not only as a preparation for the projection of military power but also the retooling of the very industrial process itself toward martial ends. It should come as no surprise that the modern interstate highway, the very invention Ford's success postulated was itself first proven necessary through German military engineer-

Figs. 12-13 Lafayette Park, Hedrich Blessing Photographs courtesy Chicago Historical Society

ing. By witnessing the logistical superiority and civil defense potential of the Autobahns, the American military-industrial complex was able to articulate the need for the highway as an increasingly urgent matter of national security.

Not coincidentally, Detroit has the dubious honor of being the only American city to be occupied three times by Federal troops.[23] Another evidence of the parallels to be drawn between military encampments and Detroit's temporary urbanism can be found in the symmetrical techniques employed to enforce social order amidst the dense concentration of heterogeneous populations. The history of Detroit's labor unrest documents the various quasi-military techniques employed to render a suitably compliant labor pool to serve the needs of the production line. Detroit's social history has oscillated between periods of peacefully coerced consumption (fueled by advertising and increasing wages) and periods of profound social unrest, largely based on the desire for collective bargaining, improvements in economic conditions, and to redress racial and ethnic inequities. [24]

Ford's famous *five-dollar day* and *five-day workweek* were quite calculated levers intended to fuel the consumption of mass products by the working classes themselves. The volatile concentration of diverse populations of laborers in dense urban centers was among the factors that led Ford to begin decentralizing production as early as the 1920's.[25] The combination of decentralized pools of workers each with sufficient income to consume the products of their own labors produced a new economic paradigm in the twentieth century and also helped to fuel the rapid depopulation of post-industrial urban centers in postwar America.

In 1955, at the height of post-war emigration from the city, a uniquely talented team was assembled to renovate one of the city's "failing" downtown neighborhoods.[26] A federally underwritten Title I FHA urban renewal project that would come to be known as Lafayette Park, the work of this interdisciplinary team offers a unique case study in a continuously viable and vibrant mixed income community occupying a modernist super-block scheme. In light of recently renewed interest in the problems of modernist planning principles, and the continual demolition of many publicly subsidized modernist housing projects nationally, Lafayette Park offers a unique counterpoint, arguing precisely in favor of modern principles of urban planning, and recommending a thoughtful revision of the perceived failures of modern architecture and planning vis a vis the city (Figs 12, 13).

Led by the developer Herbert Greenwald (until his untimely death in a 1959 airplane crash) and a team of real-estate professionals, the financial underpinnings of the project included $7.5 million in FHA loan guarantees (out of a

16 Following Patrik Schumacher and Christian Rogner, "After Ford", in: *Stalking Detroit*, Barcelona: ACTAR, 2001, pp. 48-56.

17 Paul Virilio has commented on the fundamentally warlike conditions of fordist urbanism. See Virilio, "The Overexposed City", in: *Zone 1-2*, New York: Urzone, 1986, trans. Astrid Hustvedt.

18 Joseph Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town: An Anthropology of Urban Form in Rome, Italy and the Ancient World,* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988.

19 Michael Hays, *Contra the Bourgeouis Interior: Co-op Zimmer, Modernism and the Post-humanist Subject*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995, pp. 54-81.

20 Ludwig Hilberseimer, *The New Regional Pattern*, Chicago: Paul Theobald & Co., 1949. See also Richard Pommer, David Spaeth, and Kevin Harrington, *In the Shadow of Mies: Ludwig Hilberseimer, Architect, Educator, and Urban Planner*, New York/Chicago: Rizzoli/Art Institute of Chicago, 1988.

21 Ludwig Hilberseimer, "Cities and Defense", in: *In the Shadow of Mies: Ludwig Hilberseimer, Architect, Educator, and Urban Planner*, ed. Richard Pommer, David Spaeth, and Kevin Harrington, New York/Chicago: Rizzoli/Art Institute of Chicago, 1988, pp. 89-93.

22 For a discussion of the military imperatives of modernist urbanism, see Sanford Kwinter, "Mies and Movement: Military Logistics and Molecular Regimes," in: *The Presence of Mies,* ed. Detlef Mertins, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994, pp. 84-95.

23 For a description of the martial enforcement of civil order in the context of race relations in Detroit, see Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

24 Thomas Sugrue, "Crisis: Detroit and the Fate of Postindustrial America", in: *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996, pp. 259-271.

25 See Schumacher and Rogner, "After Ford".

26 For an excellent overview of Lafayette Park, see David Spaeth, "Ludwig Hilberseimer's Settlement Unit: Origins and Applications", in: *In the Shadow of Mies: Ludwig Hilberseimer, Architect, Educator, and Urban Planner*, ed. Richard Pommer, David Spaeth, and Kevin Harrington, New York/Chicago: Rizzoli/Art Institute of Chicago, 1988, pp. 89-93.

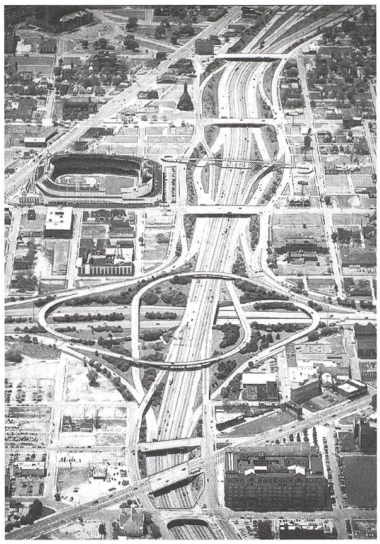


Fig. 14 Destination tourism, stadia and casinos trade in the brand "Detroit", aerial photograph courtesy Alex MacLean / Landslides.

total construction budget of $35 million) as well as a substantial federal subsidy toward the cost of the land. Originally planned as a mixed-income and mixed race development, Lafayette Park continues to this day to enjoy multiple original family residents, high relative market value, and greater racial, ethnic, and class diversity than both the city and suburbs that surround it. Greenwald's original conception of the neighborhood remains remarkably viable today, as the site continues to provide central city housing to a middle class group of residents with the perceived amenities of the suburbs, including decreased density, extensive landscaping and public parks, easy access by automobile, and safe secure places for children to play.

Greenwald enlisted the professional services of architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe for the design of the project, with whom he had previously worked on the development of the 860-880 Lake Shore Drive Apartments in Chicago. Mies brought to the team Ludwig Hilberseimer, to plan the site, and Alfred Caldwell, to execute the landscape design. Based largely on his previous academic projects in Germany and the US, Lafayette Park provided the most significant application of Hilberseimer's conception of the "settlement unit" as well as the most important commission of his career. Hilberseimer's settlement unit was particularly apt as an aggregation of planning principals and types appropriate to the decentralizing North American city.[27] Best known for his un-built urban design projects from the 1920's (Hochhausstadt, 1924 et.al.), Hilberseimer began to work on the notion of landscape as the primary medium for a horizontal and radically decentralized post-urban landscape as early as the 1930's. First evidenced in mid-1930's projects for mixed height housing schemes and the University of Berlin campus, these tendencies toward an idea of landscape *as* urbanism are immediately evident in Hilberseimer's plans for the Lafayette Park site, a portion of the city of Detroit that decentralized first, fastest, and most fully.

Hilberseimer's plans for the site proposed landscape as its primary material element, the commission offering both sufficient acreage as well as budget for what could have otherwise been an uninspired urban void. Central to this was Greenwald's finance and marketing scheme, which positioned landscape as the central amenity in the form of an 18-acre park bisecting the site and providing a much sought after social and environmental amenity in the midst of Detroit. Lafayette Park removed the vestiges of the obsolete 19th century street grid, in favor of a lush verdant and extensive green *tabula verde.* By rendering the primary spatial structure of the site in a lush verdant layer of landscape, Hilberseimer accommodated the automobile completely at Lafayette Park, yet rendered it secondary to the primary exterior spaces of the site as the parking is in proximity to units, while zoned to the perimeter of the site and dropped by approximately one meter below grade. To the extent that landscape can be seen as a primary ordering element (in lieu of architecture) for the urbanization of the site, Hilberseimer's collaboration with Mies at Lafayette Park provides a unique case study for examining the role of landscape in post-war modernist planning more generally.

At the end of the twentieth century at least 70 urban centers in the US were engaged in an ongoing process of abandonment, disinvestment, and decay.[28] While most Americans for the first time in history now live in suburban proximity to a metropolitan center, this fact is mitigated by the steadily decreasing physical density in most North American cities. Rather than taking the abandonment of these previously industrial urban centers as an indicator of the so called "failure" of the design disciplines to create a meaningful or coherent public realm, these trends must be understood as the rational end game of industrial urbanism itself, rendering legible a mobility of capital and dispersion of infrastructure that characterize mature fordist urbanism as prophesied by Ford himself. [29] In spite of a decade long attempts to "revitalize" the city of Detroit with the construction of theaters, sports stadia, casinos and other pub-

27 Ibid, pp. 89-93.

28 Alan Plattus, *Undercrowding and the American City: A Position Paper and a Proposal for Action,* pp. 1-8.

29 See Schumacher and Rogner, "After Ford".

30 The aggressive and unsuccessful federally funded campaign to count Detroit's citizens for the 2000 census was aimed in part at maintaining Detroit's eligibility for certain federally funded programs available only to cities with a population of one million or more. See "Census should show if Detroit is successful in its comeback", in: *Chicago Tribune*, June 5, 2000, sec. A, 1, 10.

31 Waldheim coined the term "landscape urbanism" in 1996 to describe the emergence of landscape as the most relevant medium for the production and representation of contemporary urbanism.

32 For a more complete description of the Stalker's subjectivity, see Andrey Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema*, trans. Kitty Hunter-Blair, London: The Bodley Head, 1986.

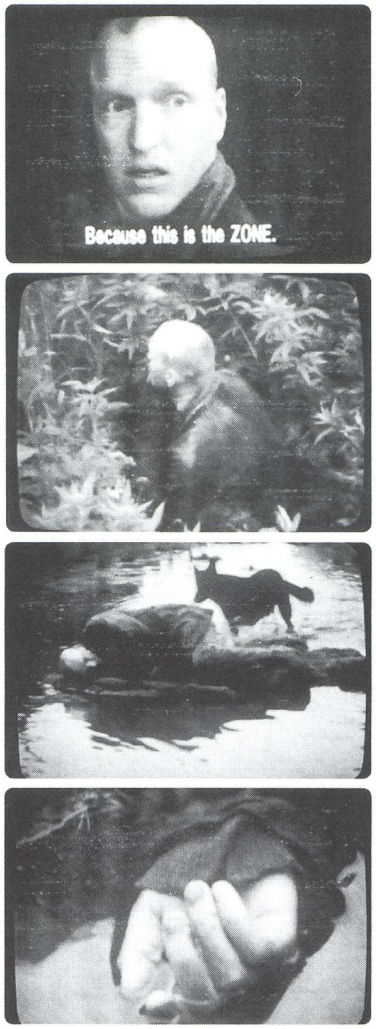
licly subsidized, privately owned, for profit destination entertainment, Detroit continues to steadily lose population and building stock. These latest architectural attempts to proclaim Detroit "back" have effectively committed the city to a future as a destination entertainment theme park for its wealthy suburban ex-patriots. Rather than signaling a renewed "vitality" or life for the post-industrial city, these projects continue to mine the brand name of Detroit, while the city continues to abandon itself to a decentralized post-industrial future. In spite of a massive federally funded advertising campaign and a small army of census takers, the 2000 US census showed Detroit's population continuing to shrink (Fig. 14).[30]

As Detroit decamps it constructs immense empty spaces, tracts of land that are essentially void spaces. These areas are not being "returned to nature", but are curious landscapes of indeterminate status. In this context, landscape is the only medium capable of dealing with simultaneously decreasing densities and indeterminate futures. The conditions recommending an urbanism of landscape can be found in both the abandoned central city and on the periphery of the still spreading suburbs. Ironically, the ongoing process of green-field development at the perimeter of Detroit's metropolitan region brings up similar questions posed by the incursion of opportunistic natural environmental systems into areas of post-urban abandonment. For these sites, both brownfield and greenfield, what is demanded is a strategy of landscape *as* urbanism, a *landscape urbanism* for Detroit's post-industrial territories.[31]

The decommissioning of Detroit's vacant lands recommends strategies for staging or setting-up reserves of open land of indeterminate status. These reserves of open space necessitate infrastructural strategies for social and ecological arrangement in the context of an indeterminate future. Also needed are collective conceptions of these spaces that are capable of rendering Detroit's post-industrial territories legible to various populations and constituencies. Rather than allowing these spaces to be legislated by brand naming and destination tourism, their future viability *as true* [vo]id spaces depends upon the imaginary and mythic conditions of their founding. Toward this end, the decommissioning of these territories requires the same kind of public participation and rites that attended to their original annexation and incorporation.

One of the more compelling cultural images for these deterritorialized "zones" can be found in Andrey Tarkovsky's film Stalker.32 Tarkovsky's film constructs a de-commissioned post-industrial wilderness in which the causality, linearity, and temporal organization of fordist space are inverted. In the place of a recently and catastrophically absent fordist / militarist control, Stalker presents a uniquely imaginative view of a post-industrial future *in* the aftermath of Chernobyl, Three Mile Island, and Bhopal (Figs. 15, 16, 17, 18).

Tarkovsky's protagonist, the Stalker, displays a post-urban intelligence capable of divining a trajectory across an otherwise inhospitable and foreboding landscape. At once both more ominous and more inspiring than the primordial European wilderness that serves as its inverted other, Tarkovsky's Zone conflates the worst of post-industrial contamination, invisible toxicity and entropic decay. Occasionally offering a deceptively beautiful impression of a seemingly pastoral and benign nature, Tarkovsky's Zone represents the overlay of a primordial and abundant natural environment, an aging and abandoned industrial infrastructure, and an increasingly opportunistic set of mutating ecological conditions. The Zone's cessation of Fordist / Taylorist imperatives in lieu of a post-modern conflation of infrastructure and ecology recommends it as an image of Detroit's not too distant future.



Figs. 15-18 Andrey Tarkovsky's *Stalker*.

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Notes
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