



Introduction

“The Mediator between the head and the hands must be the heart.”

From the film Metropolis (1927)

WE ARE A SOCIETY of individuals, each with a powerful sense of individualism; together we have built a culture of widespread conformity and consensus with power. The paradox is not a mystery. This is driven by the constant message that we are the center of the universe. The key is in attempting to be independent from the system that permits the illusion that we are so important. If one falls into the trap of believing into the system, the cycle of conformity continues. Being independent from the system, maintains a healthy caution from trying to beat the system. I believe that one's efforts are better placed in an attempt to understand how one may be able to contribute to the overall betterment of our society in an unconscious self-motivated method.

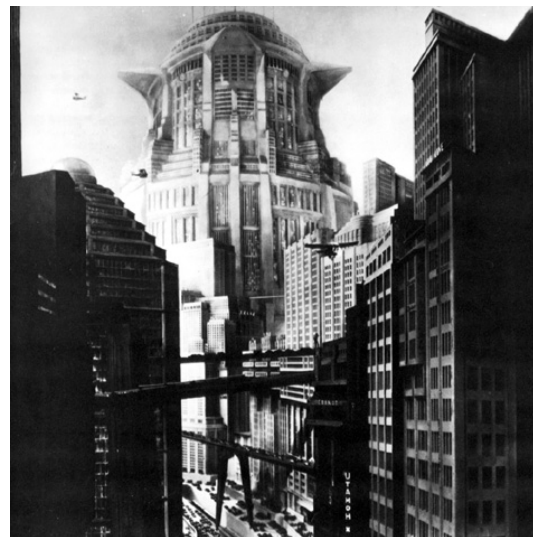
It is important to be critical, but criticism must be in combination with involvement. The self-conscious public

mask of the shiny polished system contributes nothing more than false dreams unrealized. This research paper seeks to identify that architecture has the potential for the recognition of the spatial needs of everyone, not only to improve the everyday lives of people, but also to enrich the city and city life.

Through the architecture represented in the film Metropolis, I intend to present the ideas of human conflict and its reflection. The goal is to explore an architecture that is ephemeral and evolving rather than fixed and static by the examination and reflection of the ideas presented in the film Metropolis by Fritz Lang.

Introduction to Metropolis

Metropolis was directed by Fritz Lang in 1928. This film is considered to be the masterpiece of the director's German period and possibly the cinema's greatest science fiction film. Metropolis is a futurist epic of a twenty-first-century city controlled by wealthy technocrats but serviced underground by hideous machines manned by hordes of slaves.



THE FIRST SECTION of this research paper, 'Conflict', examines the topic of conflict resolution. This exploration offers material for comparison with ideas on mediation and the examination of conflict resolution and architecture of mediation in direct relationship to the film Metropolis to come in the next section. Addressed in this section will be the varying ideas of conflict and an immersion into the world of conflict.

1.0 Conflict

1.1 Ideas of Conflict

Conflict is inevitable. It exists within each of us. It is present in the dealings of any two persons whose interests or relationships are interdependent. It is inherent in the life of every group and every organization, formal or informal. Yet there persists all around us—in us, our institutions, and our society—pervasive fear of conflict. This wide-spread fear engenders an emotional reaction, which culminates in a collective strategy calling for denial, control, or, if possible, elimination. The focus of this research paper is conflict and conflict resolution and in particular the role of mediation and reconciliation of conflict, in the film *Metropolis*, directed by Fritz Lang.

Today pluralism is not only a phenomenon within societies but also between them. In a world of globalized communications the interaction between nations inevitably involves conflicts of one kind or another, no matter whether the differences are genuinely believed in or only used to justify conflicting vested interests. Virtually all human societies have conflicts, such as those caused by differing class interests, or ethnic

animosities. A human society is held together by a variety of forces and common interests. The act of linking individuals in their private sphere to a larger society through mediation may aggravate conflict or mitigate it. The interest lies in understanding differences that is directly related to the effects of the built form acting as the symbol of cultural unity towards a common goal. In the film *Metropolis*, conflict rises despite the architecture that speaks of a culture that is set with a unified goal of creating a city that intends to exude the power, wealth and the pride of the city of *Metropolis*. It sets out to confirm the strength of the city through architecture acting as the medium to communicate on behalf the inhabitants of the city. It becomes singular in nature as the values set out by the architecture of *Metropolis* leads to a homogenic objective of advancement, seeking bigger and more powerful.



The singular nature of the cityscape with the objective of producing bigger and more powerful.

“Conflict is the struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aims of the groups or individuals involved are not only to obtain the desired values, but to also neutralize, injure, or eliminate rivals.”

This is the definition put forward by Lewis Coser(1967).¹

1.2 Mediation

In its simplest form, mediation is a process through which a third party assists two or more others in working out their own solution to a conflict. The power of the process lies in the opportunity for two or more groups to

examine a problem with a goal of creating a win/ win solution, one that honours enough of their individual interests to allow them to willingly turn away from other approaches such as denial, control or elimination. In a world of increasing public concern with conflict, this research paper is intended to examine conflicts and divisions in modern societies. At the same time, it aims at identifying solutions to these conflicts or strategies of mediation between the contending groups. Overall the film Metropolis will be the primary source to draw from regards to addressing the role of architecture and cityscape as the mediator between conflicting values and ideologies. The architecture of mediation, both existing now and those that might come into being is examined in this research in direct relation to the film, Metropolis. The goal is to reach beyond individual interests and towards identification of architecture of mediation that leads to cultural pluralism and social cohesion.

¹Thomas E. Carbonneau, Alternative Dispute Resolution. p23

1.3 Mediation and Technology

We are all familiar with the extraordinary power of information and communications technologies. We have tools to advance the cause of freedom and democracy; vehicles with which to propagate knowledge and mutual understanding. We have all of this potential to build incredible cityscapes as in Metropolis, but an open, inclusive information society that benefits all people will not emerge without sustained commitment and investment. Freedom of opinion and expression is fundamental to development, democracy and peace, and must remain a touchstone for our work ahead. Information and communication technologies are not a panacea or magic formula. But they can improve the lives of everyone.

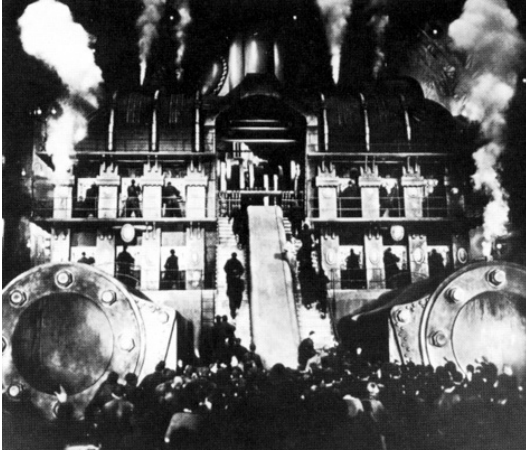
Yet even as we talk about the power of technology, let us remember who is in charge. While technology shapes the future, it is people who shape technology, and decide what it can and should be used for. So let us embrace these new technologies. But let us recognize that we are embarked on an endeavour that transcends technology.

The goal should be towards building an open, empowering information society..

1.4 Communication

Communication and interaction are two concepts that are very important in the ideas of conflict and conflict mediation. Communication in the context of the situationally-defined transaction is a complex process and is an important, if not the most important process, in mediation. Definitions of conflict have shaped and been shaped by philosophies of conflict. Classically, conflict has been viewed negatively. When picturing conflict, people have traditionally conjured such images as warfare, death, attack, destruction, and other forms of uncontrollable fury. This is demonstrated in Metropolis when the conflict reaches the breaking point when the struggling poor make the deeply felt rejection of the values and attitudes which the wealthy seem to embody, the depreciation of personal relationships. But the real conflict occurs much earlier when the communication breaks down, which is a much more subtle progression

than the much more dramatic destruction which occurs.

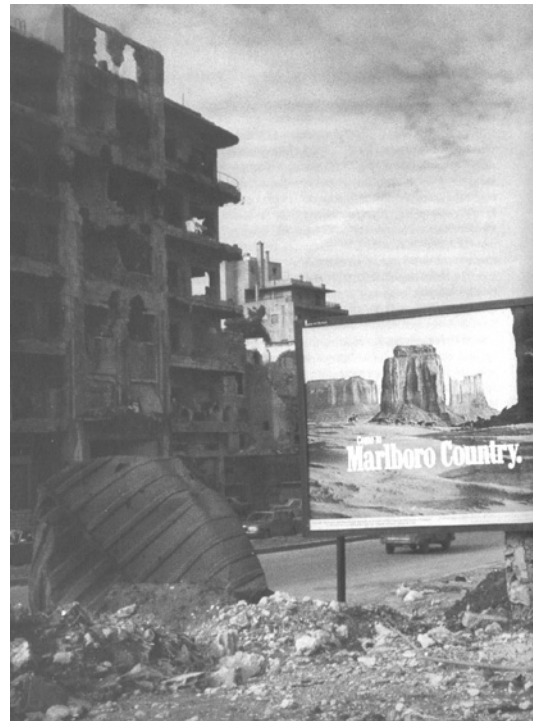


Machines and slaves at work

Second implication is that there is a need for a new architecture that is sensitive to the needs of a people interested in problems solving not through arms but through creative problem solving. People should be encouraged to solve their own problems, but with assistance from others if necessary to find acceptable alternatives. The democratic participation of people in the creation of their environment will be examined in the next section.

1.5 Implications

The first implication is that conflict is most prevalent in an interdependent environment. For example, in the film Metropolis, the city of Metropolis appears to be an autonomous place with no larger global context. The conflict between the workers and the inventor of the city in the film Metropolis was motivated by a singular authoritative vision. It seems obvious, then, that this is not a society not structured for the benefit of the many but for the few; that it is neither just toward the collective nor advantageous for the individual.



Beirut 1992

“The astronomical growth in the wealth and cultural influence of multi-national corporations over the last fifteen years can arguably be traced back to a single, seemingly innocuous idea developed by management theorists in the mid-1980s: that successful corporations must primarily produce brands, as opposed to products.”

Naomi Klein² (1999)

THE SECOND SECTION of this research paper, ‘Seeking Architecture of Mediation’, is an exploration of the current state of the cityscape of our cities. In essence, the film *Metropolis* demonstrates a requirement of the understanding of the need for an understanding and sensitive cityscape.

2.0 Seeking Architecture of Mediation within a world of conflict

² Naomi Klein, *No Logo*, p.2

Within the cityscape, Toronto like any other major cities has seen increase in “3-D ad takeover”.³ They are prevalent on buildings, buses, streetcars, and taxis. Although advertisement has been prevalent in these and other forms for decades, it appears that through the aid of digital imaging and larger pieces of adhesive vinyl, the impact of these forms of advertisement in our cityscape has remarkably increased. The novelty of seeing people being herded around in “giant chocolate bars and gum wrappers”⁴ is limited. As garment companies such as Hilfiger and Polo turned clothing into a wearable brand billboard, we witness the creeping advertisement expansion further into our cityscape. An extreme example of this branding of the cityscape is seen in the case of Los Angeles where in 1999 the poor inner-city areas were available for adoption by corporations. The corporations in turn would brand its development. Another example of the creeping advertisement expansion is the town of Celebration, Florida. This

Disney owned town is a fully privatized, branded town.⁵

The simple social intercourse created when people rub shoulders in public is one of the most essential kinds of social glue in society.

Christopher Alexander, A Pattern Language - no. 100: Pedestrian Street

Public spaces are to be lived in, where our experiences of being and our relation with the surrounding takes place. The city becomes the setting for cooperative actions, where all may find something beautiful and reveal to others. To appropriate the ground - the spirit of the place - and offer back for a new appreciation in a different way. As Christopher Alexander writes in his book A Pattern Language, the value of accidents through chance is an important virtue and excitement that belongs to cities that do not exist as readily for people who have deserted the city for “backyard barbeques and family rooms, private decks, scheduled encounters and life in climate-controlled and music-injected glossy metal boxes.”⁶ The suburbs seem to be a fair enough alternative to the branded cityscape, but

³ Ibid, p.37

⁴ Ibid, p.37

⁵ Ibid, p.37

⁶ John Bentley Mays, Emerald City, p.198

there are spaces within the city which a mediating architecture may emerge amongst the conflict.

2.1 City Streets

In addition to the harmful effects of the cityscape becoming adopted by corporations, the pattern evident in the built context of Toronto demonstrates a:

“...dissolving of coherent relations of public to private spaces, of street to block to public to open space...The buildings increasingly play the role of isolated monuments which do not engage, in any formal, visual or social way, with their surrounds.”

George Baird and Barton Myers, Vacant Lottery. (1978)⁷

Similarly to the astronomical growth in the wealth and cultural influence of multi-national corporations, more and more proportion of the city's land is held in fewer and fewer hands, through an ever increasing degree by a new process of land assembly.⁸ This tendency towards the dissolution of historically inherited urban fabric and the rise of new anonymous, sterile spaces question the validity of the current state of the

cityscape. The film Metropolis, demonstrates clearly an architecture of an authoritative, autonomous public spaces, such as the public square in the city for the workers. There is a need for an alternative to the grandiosely branded and the authoritatively bland city.

The renewal of our cities, making uses of the contorted, fractured and broken interstitial spaces throughout the city would allow for an enriching space that is independent from the rest of the cityscape. In the works of Aldo van Eyck (1918-1999), he gave:

“new momentum to the notion of architecture as a language with an emotional impact and a social-cultural scope, as the primary visual medium with which human society expresses and reveals itself.”
Francis Strauven, Aldo Van Eyck, The Shape of Relativity. (1994)⁹

This is evident in his postwar Amsterdam playgrounds. Through these small interventions, he was able to change the Dutch cityscape. Aldo van Eyck's strategy in the design of the playgrounds was in unison with the existentialist writings of Jean-Paul

⁷ Baird and Myers, Vacant Lottery, p.30

⁸ Ibid, p.30

⁹ Francis Strauven, Aldo van Eyck, The Shape of Relativity, p.9

Sartre, for van Eyck shared the desire to challenge others to become “engaged in the world” and its unique “situations”.¹⁰

Out of the ashes of the Second World War, the overwhelming wastelands throughout the city of Amsterdam, gave opportunity for renewal. Aldo van Eyck designed playgrounds for children, trying to stimulate the child’s imagination. He fixed up broken spaces and offered them back to the children in the city to enjoy. He did not offer back an idealized space, but a real place, that maintained its integrity through the surface inscriptions left from the origins.



The before and after images above of playground designed by Aldo van Eyck in Amsterdam, demonstrate the strategy in leaving the original scars of the city unpolished.

Free space that is physically within the city, but an interstitial place where people may escape from the branded and banal cityscape of normality. The result would be an opportunity of quality spaces in a community setting.

2.2 Metropolis and the Fold

“We glimpse the visible through the mist as if through the mesh of a veil, following the creases that allow us to see stone in the opening of their inflections, ‘fold after fold,’ revealing the city”

Gilles Deleuze, The Fold- Leibniz and the Baroque.¹¹

¹⁰ Liane Lefaiivre, Aldo van Eyck: The playgrounds and the city, p.27-28

¹¹ Gilles Deleuze, The Fold – Leibniz and the Baroque, p.30

The city of Metropolis is an unfamiliar place. Unlike the easy familiarity associated with our city streets, the city of Metropolis is beyond our normal world and only exists in the world of our imagination. The unfamiliarity of this cityscape is increased with a complete different level of scale of buildings in this city and the complete lack of a scale for the human being.

Instead of the self-conscious formalized masks evident *partially* through our cityscape, the city of Metropolis is one large formalized mask that envelopes the real inner workings of the city. The cityscape that we are familiar with is an environment in which the residues of the forgotten past/ immediate past remain visible at least in veil-like brief moments, but the city of Metropolis becomes one all-encompassing mask. The memories inscribed into the cityscape remain available for us to discover and find for ourselves, which is independent from the authoritative cityscape depicted in Metropolis. Also to add to the idea of the fold in the urban environment, I present the

thoughts of the late Spanish Professor and Architect, Ignasi de Sola-Morales:

“For art and architecture, the fold is the opposite of the reduction and progressive elimination typical of minimalism. The fold gives rise to accidents and irregularities, and these irregularities inscribe themselves, install themselves, on the surface. An architecture of conflict is an architecture of events that inscribe itself on the surfaces, forming folds”

Ignasi de Sola-Morales (2000)¹²

In this unfamiliar place, the desire is to create a change to a setting which allows for happy accidents to occur, things that are not scheduled because the mediation of this place requires the resonating forces of free choice. Free choice would ultimately allow for the manifestation of reality in this environment. The various irregularities and interstitial spaces that might exist hidden in the mask-oriented city might emerge. I am examining within the city typology of the future as depicted in the film Metropolis, spaces that are shaped by the existing building fabric, and reacts to differences and multiplicities.

¹² Ignasi de Sola-Morales, *Anything- “Surface Inscriptions”*, p.237

Creating a relational character is a strategy needed in urban design. The idea of the *fold* is relevant for this intention because of the importance for a inhabitant of a space to observe and react and leave imprints in their environment. The strategy of allowing people to create something and share it with others for new appreciation is important. Ultimately by imagining fragmented and incomplete spaces in Metropolis-inspired architecture, creates a setting in which people are free to inscribe into their environment, making conscious decisions to inhabit this unknown place with vibrancy and freedom.

2.3 Weak Architecture

The architecture of Metropolis is the opposite of Ignasi de Sola Morales' idea of weak architecture as the ethics that is necessary in creating a world that is conducive to multiplicities and diversity to exist and to be embraced, "This is the strength of weakness; that strength which is art and architecture are capable of producing precisely when they adopt

a posture that is not aggressive and dominating, but tangential and weak."¹³

A city must be in an environment in which it is not trying to play the game of one-upmanship evident in the cityscape of Metropolis and in parts of our cities. Within the cityscape, there is an opportunity to address the needs of a person in a sensitive, creation-oriented uninhibited setting that aids in the development of a person's self motivated individualism. There must be an echo of many voices that participates in the caring of our cities and not just one authoritative vision that encompasses the whole. This would result in a situation in which cooperative actions occur.

2.4 Implications

The implications of a mediated cityscape are that it provides a framework in which people work in partnership in renewing their environment. The further implication is that it provides an injection of energy into the urban fabric

¹³ Sola-Morales, Differences – Topographies of Contemporary Architecture, "Weak Architecture", p.71

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that allows for the incremental evolution
of the city.



The above aerial photograph of Lebbezanga, depicts a condition in which the city becomes a mosaic of infinite pieces, relational to one another. The value in this is echoed in the writings of Ignasi de Sola-Morales, where he encourages the fabric of built environments to be “plural and relational.”¹⁴ Also this image is made visible through the work van Eyck conducted in the Dogon villages, indicates an excitement and richness in ideas and relationships in a community setting, “Landscape and architecture too have repudiated appearances, images, the spectacle in the name of the essential, the profound, the permanent.”¹⁵

THE THIRD SECTION of this research paper is intended to be a synthesis of the work presented in the previous two sections. Presented in this section is the topic of cities of the future as depicted in the Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* and in comparison to the cities of Tezuka’s

3.0 Synthesis: *Cities of the Future*

¹⁴ Ignasi de Sola-Morales, *Anything- “Surface Inscriptions”*, p.237

¹⁵ Ignasi de Sola-Morales, *Mediations in Architecture and in the Urban Landscape*, p.33

Metropolis and Ridley Scott's Blade Runner.

3.1 Creation of a city in conflict



Construction of the set for Lang's Metropolis

Conflict is inevitable in human societies and this is reflected in the architecture of films such as Lang's Metropolis, Tezuka's Metropolis and Ridley Scott's Blade Runner. The main cause is due to as explored in the first section of this research paper, the existence of a rigid and closed system in which multiplicities and diversities are

oppressed. In this condition individual has conflict with himself within a homogenic society. In Tezuka's Metropolis, the authoritative zones dictate the environment of the inhabitants of the city. The poor and unwanted are designated in Zone 1, a labyrinth of slums, ghettos and garbage, lit only by the neon signage, with no sense of day or night. With this automatic sanction into this zone, the inhabitants are reduced to being categorized as unsightly. As there is no sense of control they are forced to live within the rules set out for them arbitrary and unjustly by higher power (Duke Red). Similarly, in Blade Runner, the entire city and planet becomes a place for those who are unworthy to inhabit "Off World". As majority of the population have left for the "Off World", the remaining inhabitants are deemed unwanted. The film, Blade Runner depicts a society that has lost its identity for they feel that they are stuck in an inferior world. And finally in Lang's Metropolis, the worker's city is a dark, desolate and forgotten place with no sense of life left, for everything is calculated, and systematic in its operation.

This rigid organization of these *underground* cities demonstrates the superficiality evident in these depictions of a future city, where conflict lies dormant until it reaches the breaking point where communication is sacrificed. The design of the film's surface city expresses all the magic and romance that modernism seeks yet is minimized to a superficial level.

3.2 Mediation of conflict

Lang's *Metropolis* ends as the "false" Maria is destroyed and the real Maria effects reconciliation between master and worker. This idea of mediation is explored in this part of this section of this research paper for it is important to be wary of a singular authoritative vision.



Le Corbusier's imperious, impersonal hand over his model for the Radiant City.

The relationship between the replicant, Rachael and a human, Deckard symbolizes a condition in which the depiction of the unwanted finding harmony and reconciliation with one another is important. The process in which they are able to come to mediate their inscribed dilemmas sets the tone in which an architecture that is understanding and sensitive to an individual's desire to flourish amongst social consent. The concept of architectural openness is further demonstrated in Tezuka's *Metropolis* when Tima the robot and Ken-ichi are able to overlook their differences and find common grounds that enable them to co-exist. The fresh beginning amongst the rubbles that the ziggurat is reduced to reflects the idea of an architecture that is broken and exploded to make mediate the different worlds and zones. In Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, the master and worker find that their co-existence is important necessary for their actions endangered the lives of their children.

Ultimately mediation of conflict requires the understanding that each other's values and thoughts are important in the

creation of a world that is open and partial, conducive to dialogue and ideas exchanged. The values of one another add to the society inventory of thoughts and ideas and aid in the enriching of the city and inhabitants.



Freder encounters Maria

3.3 Renewal

In Lang's Metropolis, Freder Frederson is faced with the polarity of Maria surrounded by children in tattered rags in a rooftop pleasure garden, a pastoral Eden of trees and fountains that isolates the elite from the commotion of the technological city. Through this encounter he seeks to understand the horrible netherworld existence of the slaves.



This challenge in ideology is essential in the waking up of our dulled senses in a world of social consent. As Deckard is asked by Rachael if he has ever “retired a human being by mistake”, the issue of what is human in an age where cyborgs are more human than humans. The period of reexamining our popular beliefs allows for architecture of mediation to emerge. In Tezuka's Metropolis, the idea of renewal occurs throughout towards the build-up to the destruction of the ziggurat. Tima and Ken-ichi learn that fear for the unfamiliar and unwanted results in nothing but emptiness and a society that hinders the development of a relational environment.

3.4 Implications

An implication that arises in the examination of these three films is the necessity of layers of interactions between an individuals and societies and cityscape and architecture. No one thing can be independent completely without the consideration of its context. The richness in ideas and relationships that evolve once individuals are engaged in a relational character with their environment is crucial in developing a language suitable for architecture of mediation that is thoughtful and sensitive.



Conclusion

WITHIN A SOCIETY that is pervasive on appearance and superficiality, the needs of service roads have always existed. This might be due to the requirements of an urban centre. Requirements in the past were the basic operations required by the citizens to have their night soil from outhouses and kitchen byproducts stored and picked up. Even as buildings get more isolated and become separate entities, they too require service roads of different sort, the back alleys for the byproducts of the service oriented operations existing on the city street fronts. But the concern is that more and more, the idea of these unsightly activities are being eliminated by the act of internalizing all unsightly things. As big buildings internalize, and simultaneously the small buildings are gobbled up by land assembly, what is the future of this idea of reality that is not *ideal*?

Think of the needs for people. Within the rigid anonymous cityscape, the environment is not conducive for people

to make their inscriptions as they evolve and learn to trust themselves.

The preceding pages have presented a rather grim picture of human society and its reflection in our built environment. It is my hope, however, that in clarifying the sources and operations of social conflicts, they will be of practical aid in developing architecture of mediation in our cities. This would give us a small indication of hope through a series of revelations that echo of many voices and not just of few within a world of pretense.

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