Imagined Coherence:

The Modern City as Confusion between Adjacency & Homogeneity

First the introduction and then the insertion of the filmic gaze into the urban practice of everyday life, caused for a perceptual paradigmatic shift which, simultaneously, constructed and deconstructed, a sense of coherence. On the one hand the moving images shattered the sense of coherent space/time by replacing visual sequence with visual juxtaposition. On the other, that same media had the power of creating an illusion of coherence, by functioning as contextual binding thread for different kind of captured adjacencies.

This paper seeks to explore the implications of the illusion of coherence as created by the experience of the moving images, on another aspect of the modern city, which is its homogeneous planning: What are the possible interconnectivities between the
imagined and the real coherences as simultaneous—yet seemingly paradoxical—products of the modern project?

The emergence of Manhattan Island as a metropolitan will serve the discussion on the interrelationship between planning and film in relation to the dialectic of coherence and adjacency. Charles Sheeler and photographer Paul Strand’s, 1921, Manhatta—a film culminating the fragmented exposition of city life, as manifested through the City Symphony films of the early 20th—will be discussed in relation to the origin of Manhattan as an urban site.

The paper will ask: Was the origin of Manhattan’s urban planning immune to any influence of the fragmented reality as introduced through the silver screen? Was the will for unified urban tissue shaping the visual of the filmic fiction? And finally, if the insertion of film into urban life created a new—imagined—sense of coherence, can we read the coherent planning as part of this imagination?

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Lior Galili is an artist-architect, editor and educator whose work explores the politics of space in relation to media and radical imagination.

Her academic experience includes teaching at Cornell University, The College of Architecture, Art and Planning, The Azrieli School of Architecture and Urbanism at Carleton University, The Technion–Israel Institute of Technology, Syracuse University School of Architecture, and serving as a teaching assistant at Harvard GSD. Galili also participated as an invited juror in various schools including Cooper Union, Cornell, Pratt, City Collage and Rice.

Her professional experience includes working for several NYC firms including the offices of Bone Levine Architects, DMA + Shigeru Ban Architects and Michael Sorkin’s Terreform, center for advanced urban research.

Galili is the recipient of the Harvard REAL Research Grant; the Allen D. and Marion L. Rubin Award and the Menschel Fellowship Grant. Her art, design and theoretical work has been published and exhibited in NYC, Boston, Los Angeles, Syracuse, London and Jerusalem. She holds a Master’s degree in Architecture from the Harvard Graduate School of Design and a B.Arch. degree from the Cooper Union School of Architecture.