

Eternal Gardens & Wretched Hives: Representation of Cities in Science Fiction Films

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ABSTRACT: Cities and the cinema have been inextricably linked ever since Louis Lumière filmed workers leaving his family's factory in 1895. Lumière's cinématographe was smaller and lighter than Thomas Edison's kinematograph, enabling it to be easily moved about the urban environment. This would eventually lead to the development of the "city symphony" genre—epitomized by films like Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* (1927) and Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929)—which portrays the everyday urban life of rapidly-growing and quickly-changing cities. While these early films examined the city as a subject in itself, more recent films—especially in the science fiction genre—have used cities and urban environments as tools to reinforce the thematic elements of the film.

As perhaps the most influential form of popular culture of the twentieth century, film is one of the primary avenues through which the public is exposed to ideologies of the modern city. Furthermore, recent research has shown that film may strongly influence the opinions and perceptions of an audience. As a result it is essential that scholars of the built environment recognize the role that film plays in developing the cultural understanding of urban spaces. Thus, this paper will examine three common themes from science fiction films that have implications for our understanding of cities—the stratified city, the segregated city, and the synthetic city.¹ Through the analysis of cinematic spaces this paper will show how the ideas of thinkers like Friedrich Engels, Georg Simmel, Mike Davis, Trevor Boddy, Frederic Jameson, David Harvey, Rem Koolhaas, and Charles Waldheim have been disseminated to the public. This paper will also discuss how these films may be used in an academic setting to engage students in discussions of urban issues that can oftentimes be difficult to grasp in the abstract.

KEYWORDS: Film, Cities, Urbanism, Science Fiction, Pedagogy

INTRODUCTION: Why science fiction films?

Despite much recent speculation that the cultural importance of film as a medium is on the wane—WIRED Magazine, for example, has suggested that it has "devolved from Culture-Conquering-Pastime to merely Something to Do When the Wi-Fi's Down"—it remains one of the most accessible and engaging forms of art. The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) has shown that the global box office take continues to grow (albeit slowly) year-over-year, reaching \$38.6 billion in 2016. Furthermore, the MPAA shows that films reach an enormous audience: more than two-thirds (71%) of the population of the US and Canada—246 million people—went to the cinema at least once in 2016 and the average moviegoer sees more than five films per year. The cinema, thus, remains an important cultural force with immense potential to shape our perceptions of the world around us. In this regard, a growing body of research has shown that narrative forms like film can influence a viewer's perceptions on a variety of topics (e.g. Kolker 1999). Michelle Pautz (2015), for example, has shown that as many as 25% of viewers changed their opinions about the government after watching one of two films: *Argo* (Ben Affleck, 2012) or *Zero Dark Thirty* (Kathryn Bigelow, 2012).

Much of this influence is made possible by the immersive sensorial experience of sitting in a darkened room with an illuminated screen filling a large portion of our vision. Viewers become enmeshed in the world that is being brought to life in front of their eyes, allowing them to be absorbed into the narrative. "If the cinema produces its effect," French psychologist Henri Wallon suggests, "it does so because I identify myself with its images, because I more or less forget myself in what is being displayed on the screen. I am no longer in my own life, I am in the film projected in front of me." (Kracauer, 159) This "suspension of disbelief" was first discussed by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria*, where he described the need to imbue a story with enough "human interest and semblance of truth" so that readers would lend the story "poetic faith" in accepting the implausible as possible.

British fantasy writer J.R.R. Tolkien, however, suggests that something different is at work in successful fantastical narratives. In his 1947 essay "On Fairy Stories" Tolkien describes how readers will accept the impossible only if the narrative achieves an "inner consistency of reality." In this, Tolkien argues that genre stories must create a "Secondary World" for readers to inhabit. "The moment disbelief arises," Tolkien

states, “the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed. You are then out in the Primary World again, looking at the little abortive Secondary World from outside.” Thus, Tolkien believes that a suspension of disbelief is only necessary if the work of fiction has failed to create a believable world with consistent rules and logics. The creation of a successful “Secondary World” then gives the reader/viewer the possibility of what Tolkien terms “recovery,” or a “regaining of a clear view” of the “Primary World.” Thus, it is our travels through fictitious realms that allows us to “clean our windows” on our views of the real world. It is in this “recovery” that the true power of science fiction films lie. Their implausibilities encourage us to reconsider the conditions of our own world with clearer vision and criticality.

All creative mediums explore powerful recurrent themes, therefore acting as sounding boards for how our society responds, or may respond, to certain cultural forces. Science fiction films, regardless of their fantastical visions, are no different. In recent years science fiction has moved out of the proverbial basement inhabited by Dungeons & Dragons playing geeks and into the limelight of the mainstream. Of the top 50 most popular TV shows as ranked by the Internet Movie Database, 21 come from the sci-fi and fantasy genres, including the massively popular *Stranger Things*, *Game of Thrones*, and *The Walking Dead*. In 2012 *The New Yorker* dedicated an entire issue to science fiction and 2017 brought a massive science fiction exhibition titled *Into the Unknown* to the Barbican. As Patrick Gyger—the curator of the Barbican’s exhibition—explains, the importance of science fiction is that it “helps us read the world we’re in.” (Lambie, 2017) This is echoed by British science fiction author Gareth L. Powell who states that the genre’s role is to offer “plausible futures.” “Good science fiction,” Powell suggests, “looks at the world we know and asks ‘What happens if?’” This search for plausible futures can be incredibly fertile territory for research by architects and urbanists who, of course, are charged with building the *actual* physical environments of our future world.

In addition to offering visions of plausible futures extrapolated out from the current conditions of society, science fiction also provides a territory for exploring the ethical and moral dilemmas associated with a whole range of societal questions. As Powell explains, “Futurologists and philosophers can tell us what the likely outcome of these events will be. But to really understand what living through them will be like, to experience them, you need to put a human face on them.” And it is in putting a human face to these issues that science fiction films in particular play an important role. The power of the cinema is that it allows us to fully inhabit these imaginary worlds for two hours at a time.

1.0. THE STRATIFIED CITY

1.1. Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*

Any discussion of science fiction films and urbanism must begin with Fritz Lang’s 1927 film *Metropolis*. The film depicts a future in which the city of Metropolis is deeply divided. The wealthy live in tall towers on the surface of the Earth and idle their time away in the beautiful Eternal Gardens. Meanwhile, the workers who operate the machinery that keeps the city running live in quarters far below ground. Lang’s vision for the film was inspired by his visit to America, and specifically Manhattan, in October 1924 for the premiere of his film *Die Nibelungen*. He described his arrival in New York via cruise liner, saying “I looked into the streets—the glaring lights and the tall buildings—and there I conceived *Metropolis*.” (Minden & Bachmann 2000, 4-5) He would later expand upon his American experience in a travelogue for the German film journal *Film-Kurier*, stating:

[Where is] the film about one of these Babylons of stone calling themselves American cities? The sight of Neuyork [sic] alone should be enough to turn this beacon of beauty into the center of a film. ... Streets that are shafts full of light, full of turning, swirling, spinning light that is like a testimony to happy life. And above them, sky-high over the cars and trams appear towers in blue and gold, in white and purple, torn by spotlights from the dark of night. Advertisements reach even higher, up to the stars, topping even their light and brightness, alive in ever different variations. ... Neuyork by day is the definition of sobriety, nevertheless fascinating by its movement. Neuyork by night is of such beauty that, if one experienced nothing but the arrival in the harbor at night, one would still have an unforgettable impression for one’s whole life.

This description of course calls to mind the futuristic imagery of *Metropolis* (Fig. 1), but also that of the countless films that it has influenced: *Blade Runner*, *Star Wars*, *The Fifth Element*, *Minority Report*, *Brazil*, and many more.

Metropolis is perhaps the first film to “map ideological values and/or class structure onto the urban structure of upper and lower worlds”—a technique that will become a common trope in science fiction films. (Mennel 2008, 7) The vertical city that Lang portrays in the film makes references to the real-life conditions brought about by the Haussmannization of Paris—the modern city par excellence—as well as the futuristic visions of Antonio Sant’Elia’s *La Citta Nuova* and Le Corbusier’s *Ville Radieuse*. Perhaps more interestingly, the

vertical city of *Metropolis* can also be understood as a representation of the *horizontally* disassociated city described by Frederick Engels in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. As described by Engels, Manchester consists of “unmixed working-people’s quarters, stretching like a girdle... around the commercial district. Outside, beyond this girdle, live the upper and middle bourgeoisie, the middle bourgeoisie in regularly laid out streets in the vicinity of the working quarters..., the upper bourgeoisie in remoter villas with gardens.” In addition to this physical embodiment of the Marxist critique of the capitalist metropolis the film also gives life to Marxist themes of social stratification and class struggle in a way that gives viewers an accessible way to enter into these complex issues. According to Anton Kaes (2010), “From the start *Metropolis* establishes a nexus between urban space, mechanical movement, and the technical apparatus of moving pictures. Lang uses compositional principles of abstract film to convey the dynamics of the big city and the literalize the precise and unflagging automatism.”

The automatism of the workers in *Metropolis* offers viewers an illustration of both what György Lukács has termed “reification” and what Georg Simmel (2002) has described as the “blasé attitude.” This is seen particularly clearly in the shift change scene during which the workers march rhythmically through an underground tunnel whilst avoiding eye contact with their fellow men. The workers here are successfully dehumanized—transformed into mere cogs of the machines that they operate. The alienation caused by this reification into *things* rather than fully-fledge *people* is highlighted by the blank expressions on their downturned faces as they shuffle along from one part of their miserable existence to another. This can be read as a broader critique of the “mutual reserve and indifference” that Simmel identified as a natural outcome of the “bodily closeness and lack of space” of the modern metropolis.” Thus, according to Simmel, the modern city dweller (like the subterranean worker of *Metropolis*) “never feels as lonely and deserted as in this metropolitan crush of persons.” Furthermore, the rebellion of the workers in the film can be understood as a response to what Simmel called “the resistance of the individual to being leveled, swallowed up in the social-technological mechanism.”



Figure 1: (L) Fritz Lang's depiction of *Metropolis*; (R) Ridley Scott's depiction of Los Angeles in *Blade Runner*

1.2. Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*

Ridley Scott's 1982 film *Blade Runner*—which tells the story of an ex-cop charged with tracking down several android “replicants” in Los Angeles of 2019—has many things in common with *Metropolis*: flying cars, tall towers, robots that appear to be human, and a marginalized underclass. Scott is particularly well known for using the urban environment as a tool for reinforcing the themes of his films. “If there are seven characters in a film,” Scott says, “I treat the environment as the eighth character—or the first. After all, that’s the proscenium within which everything will function.” (Sammon 1996, 93) However, the Marxist themes that can be seen in *Metropolis* are much less overt in *Blade Runner* despite the fact that Scott describes the world of *Blade Runner* as a “tangible future” in which “the poor get poorer and the wealthy get wealthier.” (Peary 2005, 49) Nonetheless, the film still depicts a highly stratified society where the dank and crowded environment of the street level of the city is populated by an ethnic majority while the clean and crisp towers are inhabited by a wealthy, white minority. Meanwhile, the most fortunate of all have relocated to the “golden land of opportunity and adventure” of the off-world colonies, which are depicted as utopias (although the truth of their conditions may be drastically different) in the ever-present advertisements that pervade the urban environment of the film’s version of 2019 Los Angeles. (Fig. 1)

2.0. THE SEGREGATED CITY

2.1. John Carpenter's *Escape from New York*

John Carpenter's 1981 film *Escape from New York* is set in a world ravaged by World War III. The voice-over narration of the film's opening credits sets the scene:

In 1988 the crime rate of the United States rises 400 percent. The once great city of New York becomes

the one maximum security prison for the entire country. A fifty foot containment wall is erected along the New Jersey shoreline, across the Harlem River, and down along the Brooklyn shoreline. It completely surrounds Manhattan island. All bridges and waterways are mined. The United States Police Force, like an army, is encamped around the island. There are no guards inside the prison: only prisoners and the world's they have made. The rules are simple. Once you go in, you don't come out.

As Carpenter describes in his commentary to the DVD release of the film, the original script was written in the mid-1970s amidst the Watergate scandal and responds to fears of a police state and a general cynicism about the presidency. By the time film was released in 1981, Carpenter suggests, the film offered a commentary on the anxieties of the Iran Hostage Crisis, the growing greed of the world, and the frequent presence of violence in the streets: "It seems to me that *Escape* attends to all of those things. It's kind of America in a way, put into the future. And it's both our fears and what we would like to have happen."

For urban theorist Mike Davis, *Escape from New York* is one of several films that have been "more realistic—and politically perceptive—in representing the hardening urban landscape" than most contemporary urban theory. For Davis the Manhattan Island Prison of *Escape from New York* can be understood as the (il)logical conclusion of the "militarization of city life" that he sees as "increasingly visible everywhere in the built environment of the 1990s." (Davis, 1992, 154-155) In his 1992 essay "Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space," Davis describes the "spatial apartheid" wrought by the redevelopment of downtown Los Angeles—including the Crocker Center, the Bonaventure Hotel, the World Trade Center, and others. While other cities have created gentrified zones that exploit their downtown's historic buildings (e.g. Faneuil Market in Boston and Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco), Davis believes that Los Angeles has taken things a step further, creating a "strategy [that] may be summarized as a double repression: to obliterate all connection with Downtown's past and to prevent any dynamic association with the non-Anglo urbanism of its future." Davis suggest that this is indicative of a "national movement toward 'defensible' urban centers" that provide space for white, upper-middle-class gentrifiers while physically severing the rejuvenated upscale city center from surrounding ethnic communities.

Nan Ellin (1996) has expanded this idea of "defensive urbanism" to include the proliferation of master-planned communities and gated communities that turn their backs to their surroundings—creating enclaves of socio-economic and racial homogeneity. While definitive numbers are difficult to determine, in their book *Fortress America* Edward J. Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder suggest that between 6 and 9 million Americans live in gated communities. The negative societal implications of this segregation have been extensively studied by sociologists and anthropologists (e.g. Low 2001, Blakely and Snyder 1997, and Marcuse 1997). A 2007 report on urban safety from the United Nations Human Settlements Program states: "One of the most noted changes in urban space over the last two decades has been the growth of private urban space in the form of gated communities." The report goes on to note that the impacts of these developments include "an increasing polarization of urban space and segregation between urban poor and middle- and upper-income groups." The extreme case of Buenos Aires is highlighted by the report, which shows that by 2000 there were about 500,000 people living in 434 private communities encompassing "an area of 323 square kilometers, or an area 1.6 times larger than the downtown federal capital area, which houses 3 million people."



Figure 2: (L) Manhattan Island Prison in *Escape from New York*; (R) The island of Seahaven in *The Truman Show*

2.2. Peter Weir's *The Truman Show*

If *Escape from New York* was, as suggested by Mike Davis, an "extrapolation from the present" of the 1970s and 80s in which many downtowns were in ruins, Peter Weir's 2008 film *The Truman Show* offers an interesting update to these themes. Rather than the more typical post-apocalyptic hellscape of most science fiction films, *The Truman Show* is set in the artificially-perfect town of Seahaven, which was famously portrayed by the iconic New Urbanist town of Seaside, Florida. At the time the popular press and urban

scholars were divided over the film's depiction of New Urbanist ideas with advocates of New Urbanism suggesting that the film was a critique of the alienating effects of suburbs and modern town planning and critics suggesting that the film offered a "devilish send up of New Urbanism's preening self-righteousness." (Steuteville, Krolloff)

However, the discussion of the role of New Urbanism in the film is largely a distraction that diverts attention away from *The Truman Show's* critique of the carceral spaces of the contemporary city, which is perhaps all the more biting because of its neo-traditional packaging. While audiences may have difficulty placing themselves in the post-apocalyptic world of *Escape from New York* they have no trouble imagining themselves in the idyllic surroundings of Seahaven/Seaside. Nonetheless, both films take place on islands that have been shut off from the outside world, suggesting a critique of both the psychological isolation of the experience of the contemporary city as well as the physical fracturing of the urban fabric. (Fig. 2) In the film the visionary television producer Christof (played by Ed Harris) suggests that the world that he created for Truman is no different than the real world outside his artificial bubble: "There's no more truth out there than in the world I created for you. Same lies. Same deceit. But in my world, you have nothing to fear." Christof's suggestion that the world he has created for Truman is safe from malice can be seen to have a direct analog in Trevor Boddy's conception of the "analogous city" of pedestrian skyways and underground concourses that have proliferated around the world—including Minneapolis's Skyway, Calgary's Plus15, Chicago's Pedway, and Houston's The Tunnel.

This "analogous city" is perhaps best exemplified by John Portman's city within a city: Peachtree Center in Atlanta, Georgia. Boddy (1992) points out that these pedestrian networks "seem benign at first" as they are "promoted as devices to beat the environmental extremes of heat, cold, or humidity that make conventional streets unbearable." However, he goes on to suggest that they are anything but "value-free extensions of the existing urban realm" because they "provide a filtered version of the experience of cities, a simulation of urbanity" that serves to "accelerate a stratification of race and class." In this way the analogous city is very similar to the idealized urban realm of *The Truman Show's* Seahaven, which serves as the literal backdrop for Truman Burbank's (played by Jim Carrey) life. Rem Koolhaas (1995) similarly points out that Portman's famous atria became "container[s] of artificiality that allows its occupants to avoid daylight forever—a hermetic interior, sealed against the real." These hermetic interiors have been harshly criticized by scholars like Frederic Jameson and Edward Soja who have both discussed the disorienting effects of Portman's Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles, California. In fact Jameson (1997) could very easily have been describing the artificial reality of Seahaven in *The Truman Show* when he suggested that "the Bonaventure aspires to be a total space, a complete world, a kind of miniature city. ... In this sense, then, ideally the mini-city of Portman's Bonaventure ought not to have entrances at all, since the entryway is always the seam that links the building to the rest of the city that surrounds it: for it does not wish to be a part of the city, but rather its equivalent and its replacement or substitute."

3.0. THE SYNTHETIC CITY

Perhaps one of the oldest tropes in works of Western fiction stems from the nature-culture divide that developed in the 16th and 17th centuries as European thinkers began to conceive of themselves as something set apart from nature, thus rendering the natural world as something to be observed, analyzed, and studied. This conceptualization of the natural world as an "other" derives in various ways out of the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau—who viewed culture as a corrupting influence on humankind's natural innocence. The result is that in Western literature and film cities are very often conceived of as synthetic sites of evil and corrupting influences set within the framework of a more pure and moral natural world. This dichotomy is present in countless science fiction films. It can be seen in the extinction of all signs of non-human life from the world of *Blade Runner* in which all things that appear to be animals—including Tyrell's owl and Zhora's snake—are revealed to be robotic "animoids." Joe Dante's 1984 film *Gremlins* illustrates this dichotomy through the corruption of the cute and cuddly Mogwai named Gizmo into a gang of reptilian Gremlins after his adoptive family fails to follow the three simple rules for his care. The eventual result is that Gizmo's original Chinese caretaker (playing the clichéd role of the innocent, non-Western, noble savage) reclaims the Mogwai while chastising the family for their ignorance stating, "You do with Mogwai what your society has done with all of nature's gifts. You do not understand. You are not ready." It can even be seen in the animated children's film *Wall-E* (Andrew Stanton, 2008) in which the corrupt human society that has abandoned Earth underneath piles of trash is redeemed after the titular trash-collecting robot discovers a tiny plant that represents the return of the healing power of nature to the world.

3.1. *Star Wars* and Landscape Urbanism

Film critic Leo Braudy (1998) goes so far as to identify a "metagenre" of films that embody an "urge to nature

as a response to moral and cultural disarray” and that “assert the need for a reconnection to what is vital in nature in order that we might escape from the dilemmas history has forced upon us.” He makes reference to how “the natural world of the cuddly Ewoks is to be destroyed by the Death Star” in *Return of the Jedi* and suggests that the original Star Wars trilogy are some of the earliest examples of this “metagenre.” However, Braudy’s analysis relies upon a common reading of the Star Wars saga, which suggests that cities are evil, corrupting influences. The most famous example of this is Obi-Wan Kenobi’s description of Mos Eisley spaceport on Luke Skywalker’s home planet of Tatooine as a “wretched hive of scum and villainy.” Mark Lamster similarly suggests that the settings of *Star Wars* “are neatly divided into the natural and the man-made, and coded to their inhabitants’ stations in the moral universe of the series: the innocent Rebel Alliance is time and again pictured amidst the natural world, while the evil Empire is fascistically resplendent in its technological terrors.”



Figure 3: (L) Theed, the capital city of Naboo from *Revenge of the Sith*; (R) Aldera, the capital city of Alderaan from *Revenge of the Sith*

However, a closer look at the cities of the Star Wars universe reveals something more nuanced. While Coruscant, the capital of the Galactic Empire and the seat of the ultimate evil of Emperor Palpatine, is a planet-wide city rendered as an urban hellscape in which all traces of nature have been extinguished (and an on-screen portrayal of Constantinople’s Ecumenopolis), the cities that are associated with the heroes of the universe offer a vision of lush urban fabrics that are wholly integrated with their natural surroundings. Perhaps the best on-screen example of George Lucas’s model of urbanism from the eight theatrical releases of the Star Wars franchise is Theed—the capital city of Naboo and home to Padmé Amidala, the eventual mother of Luke Skywalker and Leia Organa. The domed architecture of the Theed Royal Palace is integrated into a massive cliff replete with waterfalls and offering sweeping views of the surrounding verdant plains of grass. (Fig. 3) The design of the palace complex was inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright’s Marin County Civic Center (the setting for Lucas’s first feature film, *THX-1138*) which itself features sky-blue domes and is nestled into its valley site. Other cities associated with the heroes of the Rebellion are similarly integrated with nature. Aldera, the capital city of the ill-fated planet of Alderaan and the adoptive home of Leia Organa, can be seen as fully integrated into its mountainous terrain in *Revenge of the Sith* (Fig. 3). Similarly, Coronet City, the capital of Corellia and home of Han Solo, which has yet to appear on screen but has been featured in numerous video games and comic books, is also depicted as being integrated with its verdant surroundings.

George Lucas’s admiration for Frank Lloyd Wright is well known (one of the rooms at Skywalker Ranch has a Wright theme) and therefore his Broadacre City may be an obvious point of reference for Lucas’s approach to urbanism. However, given his hiring of Chinese architect Ma Yansong of MAD Architects for the design of The Lucas Museum of Narrative Art there is perhaps an opportunity to introduce the more contemporary ideas of landscape urbanism in to the discussion of cities within the *Star Wars* universe.ⁱⁱ According to Ma, his work strives to “construct an urban environment that embodies both the convenience of the modern city and the ancient Eastern affinity for the natural world.” (Ma 2015) The cities of Theed and Aldera can be viewed as on-screen analogs to large-scale landscape urbanist projects like Ma’s Nanjing Zhenhai Himalayas Center or Michael van Valkenburg Associate’s masterplan for the Lower Don Lands in Toronto in which “the social program was recognized as important as the ecological one” and a “large new meandering riverfront park becomes the centerpiece of a new mixed-use neighborhood.” (MVVA) This, according to Charles Waldheim offers an approach to cities that “rather than offering an exception to the structure of the city or planning for its dissolution, aligns with the return to the project of city making associated with contemporary service, creative, and culture economies.” (Waldheim 2016, 5) After all, the *Star Wars* saga as a whole is all about the balance between the light and the dark.

CONCLUSION

What the analysis of each of these films illustrates is that there is an enormous potential for using the medium of film as a tool for analyzing the conditions of the contemporary city and for providing a starting point for conversations of complex urban issues. The Tolkienian “recovery” that we experience as we turn our attention back to the real world after experiencing a fictitious secondary world allows us to view both the successes and failures of today’s urban world in a new light.

Furthermore, the use of films in the classroom, particularly mainstream blockbusters like *Star Wars*, has enormous potential for engaging students in a new way. First and foremost it enables them to see a variety of representations of urban environments presented on the big screen. The screening of films in a classroom setting enables students to gain a greater insight into many complex urban issues that can be difficult to fully comprehend when experienced as abstract ideas in texts and drawings. Film in general, but especially films in the sci-fi genre, push these ideas and ideologies to their logical (or illogical) ends by creating fictitious spaces that we can enter into for two hours at a time. Secondly, it suggests alternatives to traditional professional practice by illustrating the important roles played by architects and other designers in creating the settings of our popular visual culture. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it teaches them to be more aware of the built environment in both real life and in various media of entertainment including film, television, video games, and more.

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ENDNOTES

ⁱ The films selected for case studies in this paper have been selected from a list of the "100 best sci-fi movies" compiled by *Time Out London*, which brought together dozens of authors, filmmakers, critics, scientists, and other experts to determine the most influential films of the genre. While there are many other films that could be cited in reference to the themes of this paper, I have limited myself to those included on this list because of their potential for greater societal impact than more obscure films. Furthermore, this research relies on a synoptic approach that examines the ramifications of an array of disciplines on the reception of urban ideas by both the design disciplines and the general public.

ⁱⁱ George Lucas's drawn-out search for a site for his museum offers some insight into his urbanistic preferences. All of the proposals for the museum—including sites in San Francisco, Chicago, and Los Angeles (where it is now under construction)—have illustrated a careful integration between the architecture and landscape architecture, much like the home cities of the heroes in the *Star Wars* films.