

Editorial

When the first living organism, a single-celled structure, faced a situation of conflict, it acquired a countermeasure to maintain itself.¹ As organisms evolved to become multicellular, these countermeasures increased in complexity and allowed to not only gather and retain information but also to be able to comprehend it in multiple ways. In humans, cognition allowed the development of language and communication, thus, offering a means to engage with conflict in a new way. They could now become an "observer"² within their immediate present and were able to record their present for future generations. It allowed for multiple observers in different parts of the world to document their understanding of their context and their world around them.

As civilisation evolved in different parts of the world, the reasons of conflict went from being rooted in survival of the physical being, to culture, ideologies, and systems of thinking—all eventually interwoven. Conflict, originally derived from the Latin word *conflictus* (to strike together), embodied not just competition that was violent in nature—for basic survival needs like food and water—but also over the way the world was perceived and which perception should prevail. Hence, conflicts between individuals and tribes became more complex as they—simultaneously and unknowingly—became about culture and ideologies. No matter how much we wish we had evolved away from such conflicts, we see its many manifestations even today and so it becomes imperative for some of us to continue striving to comprehend, resolve, and document such conflicts.

Mina Cheon's work in our "Work in Progress" section about the conflict surrounding the Korean peninsula, situates itself within the larger realm of a global as well as a regional conflict, from the perception of both the observer(s) as well as the affected/observed. While Cheon explores ways to examine geopolitics and its effects, Adeela Suleman documents a site of violence, within a neighbourhood of Karachi, infamous for its gang violence. The difference in scale can also be seen in terms of the interpretations/documentation/comprehension.

As differentiation of society³ continued, wars were still being fought over religious and cultural ideologies. However, a new kind of conflict of ideas was also emerging. From 1500 AD onwards, within the years of the Renaissance, individuals like Copernicus and Leonardo da Vinci were pushing the boundaries of observation and understanding of the world. Old ways of thinking were being rejected for new reason, logic, and scientific facts. While Galileo (d. 1642) met his

doom in what was one of the greatest conflicts between science and religion at the time, his idea survived and paved the way for a new understanding of the world. Albeit not the same, we find ourselves at a similar turning point in the current age (as we function as a much more complex society in terms of conflicting ideas). Despite observers like Lefebvre and Heidegger, the capitalist rhetoric prevails; dictating, largely and vastly, the way human societies manifest themselves. It is these manifestations at various scales and forms, that our contributors David Brooks, Aaron Tobey & Malcolm Rio, and Zarmeene Shah analyse, document, and explore through ways of problematising existing disciplinary conflicts embodied in art and architecture.

If change is the only constant of this world/universe (as posited by Heraclitus), is it conflict that turns its wheels? And if conflict takes place at multiple scales simultaneously how does one begin to address the ephemerality of daily conflicts that occur both internally and externally in six billion (or more) people in the world? What comprises this intimate scale? How has it been targeted? Nadine Ahmed and Sadia Salim explore conflict in the realm of spoken and visual language and the aspirations that come with these forms of expression.

As Humanity negotiates its existence in the technological turn, one wonders if our unresolved systemic conflicts will make way into the systems we design for our future—if the cellular-environmental conflict is accelerated through genetic modification or permeates into human-computer interaction. Or will these technologies help us evolve out of conflicts? If they do, what shape will the new chaos-order model take? Our ability to think upon, and comprehend, this topic is perhaps the contradictory beauty of the theme itself.

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Notes

1. John Mingers, "The Cognitive Theories of Maturana & Varela," *Systems Practice*, 4, no. 4 (1991): 319–338.
2. Ibid.
3. Niklas Luhmann, *Theory of Society, Volume 2, Series: Cultural Memory in the Present*, trans. Rhodes Barrett (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).