

Hidden In Plain Sight: La Jolla / UTC Annex, An-Edge City

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To see what is in front of one’s nose needs a constant struggle.

-George Orwell

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Mirage in reverse: La Jolla / University Towne Center

Introduction

The sprawling conglomerate of technology and lab parks, gated condo complexes and a central mall, that has sprung up in the past 30+/- years, adjacent to the University of California, San Diego campus (from here in, referred to as UCSD) is typical of the form of land use that Joel Garreau has identified, albeit uncritically, as “Edge City” in his seminal text of the same name. Garreau’s 1991 piece of ideologically inflected reportage (frequently reading like a bald promotion) has gone further than any other source that I am aware of toward identifying the urbanistic, cultural, and socioeconomic criteria of this phenomena, otherwise largely recognizable, (those mid-rise suburban mega-centers, unapproachable without a car), and just as readily dismissed as innocuous. Certainly, a gamut of critical work has been done regarding the “postindustrial” or “de-industrialized” landscape in the west, however, I am not aware that any has focused more than tangentially on the term of Garreau’s coining above. In lieu of any semantic challenge, “Edge City” would seem to retain an entrenched measure of rhetorical power.

I find this disconcerting. Not only does this allow Garreau and the like to eventually profit from a set of theoretical postulations masquerading as objective journalism, (see garreau.com, homepage of the “Garreau Group”), it would also work to hold in place a troubling set of populist epistemological habits. While Garreau outlines a set of predictable, objective criteria, such as “edge city” versus “downtown”, urbanism where there wasn’t any before say, the early 1970s, more offices than bedrooms, is identifiable as a specific “place”, etc., what is more interesting are the fundamental assertions underlying Garreau’s justification for his inquiry. I quote Garreau:

During this historical blink of an eye, we Americans decided to change just about all our routines of working, playing, and living. We created vast new urban job centers in places that only thirty years before had been residential suburbs or even corn stubble. By capturing Americans making the most literally concrete decisions possible, I hope we can achieve a critical understanding of what our real values are—who we are, how we got that way, and where we’re headed.¹

Later on in the text, these presumptions would be echoed by remarks such as, “ . . . the community deep in its guts knows what’s important to the people in the neighborhoods.”² As if “Edge City” has no historical, economic, urbanistic, geographic or cultural determinants, rather proceeds a priori by utopian will. Furthermore, that such will is unanimous, and went forward in a luxurious vacuum of contestation and opposition. He would then imply that if we look at “Edge City” as an anthropological and archeological subject, we might be able to identify the moral substance of such a unanimous will, that at the core, all Americans value precisely the same thing. Near the same concerning the “guts” quote. It is unclear as to which “neighborhood” and “community” he refers, as if the values of all, regardless of class, history, geography, etc., are, once again, the same- deep down, that is.

1. Joel Garreau, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier*, (New York: Doubleday, 1991), xii.

2. Ibid., 207.

Among additional evocations, these rhetorical presumptions are my target. My case study is the specific geography adjacent to UCSD identified above. This territory goes by several monikers, though the only official titles are “San Diego” and “La Jolla” (the city in the address for all the territory owned by UCSD). La Jolla / University Towne Center (LJ/UTC), or North University City, are colloquially recognized as the northern portion of the “Golden Triangle,” as defined on the map by the Interstate 5, Interstate 805, and State Route 52 freeways. North University City is bifurcated from what is more singularly understood as “University City” by Rose canyon: a topographic irregularity that has become a receptacle for railways and various other infrastructures. Outside of, yet nearby the Golden Triangle territory is Torrey Pines Mesa, similarly ambivalent as far as municipal jurisdiction, I loosely include it when I refer to LJ/UTC.

Beyond rhetoric and the mythos accompanying it, my concern is iconography. I posit that iconography is rhetoric and mythos becoming visual. As such, I aim to interrupt the process by which a set of ideological symbols becomes entrenched in a set of visible referents. Furthermore, if an ensuing confidence in meaning as such produces a kind of cognitive invisibility (illustrated by the presumed banality of the edge city), then I aim to decolonize the visual field of this landscape, so that it may be re-imbued with a new set of critical meanings. I consider this a process of counter-mythology.

Between text, performance, and framing, this process is cinematic. I have attempted to hold in tension foreground and background, so that from their juxtaposition may emerge some uncharted as of yet discursive terrain. Concerning this, the sections of this text could be read in the reverse of the order they are presented. As of now, the arc moves from a general regional and historic context to specific, recent interventions. In this order, I am working to establish a framework, or a background, against which specific interventions develop their connotative thrust. Read in reverse, the narrative starts with specific interventions as the foreground subjects: prisms through which through which a larger context is eventually parsed.

Lastly, I need acknowledge Brecht’s warning. This project could be regarded as emerging from “the muddled thinking which overtakes musicians, writers and critics as soon as they consider their own situation has tremendous consequences to which too little attention is paid. For by imagining that they have got hold of an apparatus which in fact got hold of them they are supporting an apparatus which is out of their control.”³ My behavior, in the long term, is no different than the subjects I eventually criticize. This project is as much a product of its environment as is any biotech park, unmanned attack aircraft, or pharmaceutical patent. Perhaps by the reflexive proxy that may be the prerogative of the fine arts discipline, I can stand beside and narrate my own complicity.

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3. Bertolt Brecht, “The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre” 1930 *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans and ed. John Willett, (New York, Hill and Wang 1977), 34.



Figure 1: 00:00:00, The first frame in the pan.



Figure 2: Horizon from Wikipedia image.

The View from Mount Soledad: A Horizontal Geology of Development

The horizon is barely discernable [figure 1]. Even with color correction, it is difficult to make out the mesa that rises over what would appear to be three bodies of water interspersed with developed land in the mid-ground. Otherwise unnamed, this mesa is in Mexico. Rather, it rises up out of the Tijuana river estuary and crests just north of the border. It extends approximately 10 miles south into Mexico before dipping into La Joya canyon. This rugged, canyon-severed topographic prominence once effectively bifurcated Playas de Tijuana from Tijuana proper. Within the last 15 to 20 years, this otherwise vague tabletop has been riddled alike with “irregular” settlements and maquiladoras. As Tijuana’s population has exploded at a rate of five to six percent a year recently, development and infrastructure fail to keep pace. Migrants from further south in Latin America usually have little other recourse than to occupy by ramshackle and tenuous means the canyon topography beneath the sprawling factories that have occupied the prime mesa-top land. Lacking both the regulatory and physical infrastructure to provide adequate measures of public health and safety, residents find themselves subject to whatever flows downstream [sewage, waste water, dumping, etc.] and out of the maquiladoras [industrial toxins]. Were it not that the northern portion of this water shed flowed across the border into the United States where it connects with the Tijuana river before the Pacific ocean, subjecting a protected ecological reserve to undue siltation and contamination, it is unlikely that any attention from powerful institutions would be paid the subsequent eco-humanitarian and geopolitical crises.⁴

Such is the narrative unfolding on the faintly discernible prominence constituting the horizon in this live plate. It has been difficult to capture this image as of late; a thick marine layer seems to have indefinitely established itself. A much clearer discerning of the Mexican horizon can be viewed on Wikipedia’s entry for Mt. Soledad in La Jolla, whence the camera recording this shot is positioned [figure 2].

A similar narrative is notable on a significant portion of the globe at present: In the so-called “developing” (replacing third world) countries of the “global-south,” the material necessities of the world at large are produced by an exploited underclass of relocated peasants, whose livelihood and safety are usually the last consideration against a backdrop of lax environmental regulation and an abundant, willing-to-work-for-little-to-nothing labor-force.⁵

The term postindustrial has been well established as a misnomer. Indeed, our culture has by no means transcended its material demands. Ironically, one might add, in spite of more and more facets of existence becoming virtual within the global north, our material demands seem to continually increase rather than diminish. If anything has changed, the sites of material production have moved elsewhere, such as to the mesa top framed before us.

Our shot opens up: over the duration of the long shot with Mexico on the horizon, our focal length has been in the neighborhood of 440 mm. As we pull out or widen to approximately 140 mm, a new urban dynamic becomes visible: downtown San Diego, whose present expanse of skyscrapers owes much to the tech booms of the 90’s and

4. On maquiladoras, development, and ecology in Tijuana, see *Los Laureles Canyon, Research in Action*, DVD, produced by Shannon Bradley, Laura Castañeda, Keith Pezzoli, et al. (2009; San Diego, CA: UCSDTV, 2009). and *Maquilapolis: City of Factories*, DVD, produced and directed by Vicky Funari and Sergio De La Torre (2006; Vallejo, CA: California News Real, 2006).

5. See Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (New York, London: Verso, 2006). David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: A Theory of Uneven Geographical Development* (New York, London: Verso, 2006) and Grant Kester, “Out of Sight is Out of Mind: The Imaginary Space of Postindustrial Culture,” *Social Text*, no. 35 (1993): 72–92.

early 2000's, although much of the space produced currently sits tenantless in the wake of the real-estate crash of 2008.

Regardless of the present malaise, there is visible in a widening from a 6 to 17° field of view a vast economic discrepancy, spanning a bi-national territory, nonetheless sharing the same regional ecology [figure 3].

What remains occluded behind the architectural skyline and the mesa topography is some 15 miles between downtown and the border, wherein one finds a suburban expanse somewhat older than the suburbs to the north (which I will discuss in turn), and the old industrial portions of the region along San Diego bay: National City, Imperial Beach, Chula Vista and further south to San Ysidro: an incorporated 'island' and bustling Mexican-American community, incidentally the location of the busiest international border-crossing station in the world. Although Chula Vista saw a huge growth spurt as the housing bubble of the early-mid 2000's inflated, and paralleled relative growth of the middle class among Mexican Americans, the macro organization of San Diego would appear to shrug off yet complacently prefer this 15 mile expanse as a dusty, beige, one-story, buffer between glittery, sky-hub, convention-center boom-town prosperity of downtown San Diego and the squirming, brown, filthy, 3rd world narco-polis of Tijuana.

We begin our pan. we start by strafing the skyline of downtown San Diego, in which the scalar and carceral entrapment enacted by spaces such as the new bay-side convention center and Horton Plaza, the simulacral nostalgia of the "gas lamp" district, and the dense field of sparkling new, yet largely unoccupied condo ghost-towers would locate the space within a theoretical trialectic defined by Jameson's Bonaventure, Baudrillard's Disneyland and Harvey's architectural landing strips of capital over-accumulation.⁶ There is limited spectacle as we continue the pan to the east of downtown's relative high-rise prominence. What becomes indistinguishable is the difference between Hillcrest, North Park, University Heights, City Heights--the proto-Fordist seed neighborhoods of the sprawl that would eventually become of Linda Vista and Clairemont, presented before us now in somewhat more detail. I am neglecting to discuss Mission Valley, though its narrative constitutes the proto-phenomenon of the "edge city" that will work out toward the terminus of our pan.⁷

On May 17th, 1995, Shawn Nelson, a U.S. Army veteran and unemployed plumber from Clairemont hijacked a tank from the Kearny Mesa National Guard Armory and proceeded on a 23 minute rampage through the Kearny Mesa / Clairemont neighborhood. Though much property was destroyed, no one, except for Nelson himself, who was fatally shot by police when he refused to cease and desist, was injured. Although this incident was framed by the news media as a curious spectacle and reframed in subsequent years for its entertainment value, filmmaker Garret Scott engages the media spectacle as a prompt to dig deeper into the socioeconomic and urban spatial conditions that preceded Nelson's fateful outburst.⁸ His seminal work of documentary before his untimely death, Scott's *Cul-de-Sac: A Suburban War Story* thoughtfully engages Nelson's circle of friends and family, invoking a profile of American suburbia that persists despite fundamental and generational changes in the socioeconomic base for which it was optimized. Describing the Clairemont neighborhood, in



Figure 3: +01:13:10, Immediately after zoom, before pan begins.

6. See Jameson, introduction to *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 1991). Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995). David Harvey, "The Invisible Political Economy of Architectural Production," *The Invisible in Architecture*, (London: Academy Editions, 1994).

7. See Mike Davis, "Battle of Mission Valley," *Under the Perfect Sun: The San Diego Tourists Never See* (New York: The New Press, 2003). Joel Garreau Lists Mission Valley as an established edge city in an appendix to the book. It is worth noting that Mission Valley becoming 'edge city' was a narrative of contestation, whereas a characteristic of such urban phenomena as exemplified by La Jolla/UTC, no such contestation is apparent.

8. *Cul de Sac: A Suburban War Story*, VHS tape, directed by Garret Scott (2001; Brooklyn, NY: Icarus Films, 2002). This incident was variously rebroadcast for its spectacle / entertainment value on police chase compilation television shows popular in the late 1990's.

the Harvard Film Review as a, “Geopolitical event constantly unfolding,” Scott maps out the ironic history of the reliance of an ostensibly clean and safe suburbia upon a military industrial complex, the economic engines of which are fueled by the perpetual anticipation of physical violence. As the heirs to the modest prosperity of cold-war aerospace engineers find themselves stagnating amidst drug addiction and an obsolete suburban model, in a twist of fate, the stew boiled over in an outburst of violence directed at the space itself.

As state route 52 breaking away from interstate 5 and continuing east through San Clemente canyon becomes visible, along with the northwestern corner of the Clairemont neighborhood, we might have been able to discern among the faint semblances of office park structures toward the landscape’s horizon, the former General Dynamics production plant situated in Kearney Mesa, Clairemont’s eastern, and far more industrial neighbor [figure 4]. The plant, along with its Convair division along the Pacific Coast Highway near Limburg Field, was the economic anchor for Clairemont, rolling the iconic aerospace sabers of cold-war mobilization off the assembly line and generating numerous jobs.⁹ The plant was raised in the 1990’s, as the military industrial complex’s business model adapted to the mollification of soviet Russia and diverted its productive strategies toward more diverse and precise applications.¹⁰

Before us now in the foreground is the southwest corner of University City [figure 5]. The neighborhood was developed almost a decade after Clairemont, and occupies a mesa that is defined by San Clemente canyon to the south, and Rose canyon to the north. On this relatively discreet and discernible platform, we can identify a buffer between the first wave of postwar suburbia pace Clairemont, and what Joel Garreau posits as something completely different: the pattern of American urban development that occurs where there is nothing to contest its emergence in the past 20+ years: “Edge City”, pace LJ/UTC.¹¹ Furthermore, the development that we are now focusing on anticipates an arguably more contemporary institutional agent than that of post WWII and cold war mobilization: the University of California, San Diego. Originally subdivided in 1960, developers speculated that University City would function as a residential haven for faculty and staff alike from the adjacent UCSD campus, which had been cited by the University of California Regents at its current location on the south end of Torrey Pines mesa in 1956 (catty-corned, across Rose and Gilman canyons, from University City).¹² Although University City never quite became the unofficial residence of UCSD’s staff and faculty, it has maintained status as a relatively newer, without becoming a condo complex or duplex enclave, middle-class suburban neighborhood.

*In 1984, the University City Community Association was formed, amidst the territory acquiring the moniker “Golden Triangle” (the territory bounded by SR 52 to the south, I805 to the east, and I5 to the west) and concerns over new “high density” development north of Rose canyon.*¹³



Figure 4: +02:10:24, Clairemont, Linda Vista, and Kearny Mesa. SR 52 enters the frame in the bottom left.

Figure 5: +02:26:28, Clairemont, left. SR 52 and San Clemente Canyon, middle. University City, right.

On the vast, flat mesa further into the distance in the east and toward the horizon, we can see the airstrips of Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, formerly Naval Air Station Miramar, and former home base of United States Navy Strike Fighter Tactics Instructor program (colloquially know as TOP GUN, the film was both based upon this and shot here) [figure 6]. The mesa on which University City is sited comes to a discernible end as it descends into Rose canyon. Currently an open space reserve and park, it otherwise contains the rail lines used heavily by Amtrak, “The Coaster” commuter rail, and Union Pacific freight. As a bifurcation of north and south “UC”, or University City, there is currently a contentious, yet banal debate between planners looking to ease traffic congestion and eco preservationists regarding a proposal to extend a bridge over the canyon along Regents road.

The more prominent legacy of UCSD extra-institutional fallout would occur north of Rose canyon: as our pan continues we arrive at the next distinctive high-rise cluster north of downtown by approximately 12 miles. This apparent ‘center’ north of downtown epitomizes what Joel Garreau would call the “edge city,” and what will become our primary subject of interrogation [figure 7]. In his 1991 text of the same name, Garreau elaborates on the urban obsolescence of ‘downtown’ in any nineteenth century sense of it as the commercial core of an industrial city, pointing instead toward clusters of office and lab ‘parks’, multi-unit luxury housing complexes, and franchise amenities, such as before us now, as the new and most viable centers of technological and economic progress.¹⁴ Here, In LJ/UTC, we encounter the conjunction of development that has emerged at the behest of “technology transfer” initiatives, and developers eager to provide services and amenities to both university affiliates and an emerging white-collar workforce. Mike Davis:

... the coming of General Atomics, the Salk Institute, UCSD, and the Veteran’s Hospital made Torrey Pines Mesa and nearby Sorrento Valley into a second urban core: an eventual Golden Triangle defined by its three intersecting freeways. It was a classic formula already well rehearsed in Palo Alto and Boston [incidentally, two areas discussed by Garreau in his edge city homage]: big public science promiscuously births private-sector spin-offs; engineers, medical researchers, and administrators, in turn, need upscale housing, golf courses, and adjacent shopping.¹⁵

On august 1st, 2003, a fire was set at a 200-residential-unit construction site on the corner of La Jolla Village Drive and Towne Center Drive (at the eastern edge of the high-rise cluster before us now). The conflagration burned hot enough to shatter windows in neighboring developments and necessitate their evacuation.¹⁶ It caused some \$50 million in damages, including toppling a 100-foot crane.¹⁷ A large banner was found near the site that read, “If You Build It, We will Burn It. E.L.F.” [figure 8] The abbreviation, for “Earth Liberation Front,” whom would eventually claim responsibility for the arson, are known to leave slogans at their sabotage sites. Among others, “Stop Sprawl” is common. According to the *Earth First! Journal*, the La Jolla Crossroads fire (the name of the development that was burned) was the largest act of eco sabotage in U.S. history.¹⁹ The journal article also notes that



Figure 6: Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, as visible from Mt. Soledad.

Figure 7: +02:57:16, our pan arrives at LJ/UTC.

14. Garreau, *Edge City*, x.

15. Davis, *Under the Perfect Sun*, 85.

16. Kristen Green and Joe Hughes, “Militant Group Suspected of Torching Condo Project,” *Sign on San Diego*, August 2, 2003, http://legacy.signonsandiego.com/news/metro/20030802-9999_1n2condos.html.

17. Ibid.

18. Rod Coronado, “San Diego Fire” *Earth First! Journal*, September, 2003. www.geog.ucsb.edu/~sweeney/g108/lectures/ELF5.pdf.

19. Ibid.



Figure 8: The banner in question near a dumpster, © 2003 KGTV Channel 10.

20. Ibid.

21. *San Diego Magazine*, June 1996, 123.

22. Defense Environmental Restoration Program, Site Survey Summary Sheet for DERP – FUDS Site No. J09CA111000, August 17 1999, http://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/regulators/deliverable_documents/5631803214/CA1110E1_UCSD-Camp_Matthews.pdf.

had the fire not been timed when it had i.e. had the weather conditions been perennially hotter and dryer, it is likely that the blaze would have spread into nearby Rose canyon, a remnant of threatened natural ecology that it was E.L.F.’s impetuous to raise awareness concerning.²⁰ La Jolla Crossroads has since been rebuilt, along with a biotech research facility on an adjacent 42 acre lot.

Our pan continues on a somewhat unsteady and variably timed arc, passing other high-rises and similar development, prominently the VA hospital noted by Davis earlier. Visible in the distance is Sorrento Valley; loosely referred to as “Spook Valley” by several journalistic sources for its critical mass of security, intelligence, and defense contracting corporate headquarters.²¹

Continuing further, our arc comes to its conclusion, approximately 180 degrees from whence we started, when the Pacific Ocean enters the frame from the left [figure 9]. After my shoulder clears the frame, we are now looking almost due north along Torrey Pines Mesa, as it slopes down into the canyon that separates it from Mt. Soledad: the location of the Rose fault line (accounting for La Jolla being a peninsula). On the crest of the Mesa, only several buildings are evident above the eucalyptus tree line; notably the Geisel Library, as we are now looking in the direction of the UCSD campus. Continuing along the mesa into the distance, what remains occluded, yet would fall along this perceived trajectory, are a myriad of biotech firms among others, lining North Torrey Pines road as it proceeds north to Del Mar, Including the relatively new Pfizer campus, General Atomics, Scripps Hospital, and, of course, the world renowned Torrey Pines golf course.

*UCSD was sited on land that was formerly Camp Matthews, a rifle training range administered by the U.S. Marine corps, and Camp Callan, a U.S. Army anti-aircraft artillery training center. In 1999, a construction project on a hillside sloping down into I5 uncovered a crate of unused practice rockets. Their discovery rekindled the fears that were initially spurred by an incident in what is now the Tierrasanta community, approximately 15 miles to the east, when two boys were killed when they discovered and ignited unexploded ordinance. The site was formerly Camp Matthews’ “range H,” a grenade, mortar, and bazooka rocket range.*²²

The preceding pan has been conducted from the top of Mt. Soledad, a hill defined by sharp escarpments along the Rose fault. Access to this vantage is facilitated by a park whose sentinel is a thirty-foot tall brutalist concrete Latin cross, the centerpiece for a Korean War memorial. The cross has been central as well to a continuing legal saga that implicates the proprietorship of the land on which it sits. This long and complicated debacle primarily concerns whether public institutional involvement in the site amounts to an endorsement of one religion over another—leading to federal motions that would determine an appropriate proprietary circumstance for the cross’ continued presence. Whether it is the Korean War memorial or the Mt. Soledad Easter cross is ambiguous. Implicitly, it is a totem to a confluence of the dominant cultural institutions in the region: the military, and conservative Christianity, and the spectacle of its removal would likely be met with significant backlash rippling from regional to national scales. Whether or not the site is hypothetically and symbolically inclusive of all, it is a winding and arduous climb to the top, flanked by affluence and exclusivity on all sides.



Figure 9: +03:18:23, Torrey Pines Mesa: final framing of our pan, shoulder in frame, UCSD, The “cathedral on the bluff”: center frame, toward the horizon.



Notes on the Visibility of the “Postindustrial” Landscape in San Diego

Invoking Engels some 170-odd years hence, he discusses mid nineteenth century Manchester, England:

the members of the money aristocracy can take the shortest road through the middle of all the laboring districts to their places of business, without ever seeing that they are in the midst of the grimy misery that lurks to the right and the left. For the thoroughfares leading from the Exchange in all directions out of the city are lined ... with an almost unbroken series of shops ... [that] suffice to conceal from the eyes of the wealthy men and women of strong stomachs and weak nerves the misery and grime that form the complement of their wealth.²³

This frequently quoted observation encapsulates one of the primary Marxist critiques of so called “postindustrial” economic geography: that the present means of material production have not, in fact, been transcended, but rather globally displaced, and by effect, strategically occluded. This notion has been widely explored and for sometime now. If a theory of commodity fetishism, whereby an object estranged from the labor that produces it entrenches a kind of metaphysical entitlement and superiority in its consumer, emerges from the industrialization of the west, then within an ostensibly ‘postindustrial’ epoch, this dynamic implicates global geography: the sites and means of material production have been relocated by half a globe, while the west militantly promulgates a myth of autonomy and exceptionalism. In his critique of the western canon of analysis concerning ‘postindustrial’ culture, Grant Kester asserts:

While the office parks, postmodern hotels, . . . [etc.] hold the fascinated gaze of Western theorists, we must also account for other, less glamorous spaces; the maquiladora plant and the microchip factory, the shantytown and the border camp. If these sites are less rewarding to study as arenas for the play of signification, they are no less symptomatic of postindustrial capitalism.²⁴

This passage from Kester’s 1993 essay is of critical importance for two reasons. On the one hand, it implicates a spectrum of postindustrial urban problematics: the built environment of LJ/UTC on the end of the benefactor (congruent with a typology of “office parks, and postmodern hotels”) and an environment such as the mesa top and canyons just south of the U.S. / Mexico border described earlier (congruent with a typology of shantytowns, border camps, and maquiladoras) on the end of the subjugated. On the other, it alludes to a critical fascination with the existential, philosophical, and spiritual dilemmas of postindustrial culture at the expense of a markedly uncritical presupposition of western autonomy, i.e. the mythos that the material demands of the west are either magically independent of an agency to exploit the labor capacities of the rest of the world, or that dependence on such is grossly under-examined. In the context of

this essay, Kester is addressing a tendency among western theorists, regardless of their specific ideological convictions, to hyperbolically underscore the misgivings of the global benefactor class and simultaneously laud the emancipatory potential of advanced technology in the face of this malaise (ironically upholding the ethos of technological progress that is part and parcel of such a presumed malaise in the first place). His concluding remarks:

No matter how deeply a hacker can penetrate into a given data bank, or how ‘interactive’ a given piece of software is, no matter how many hours a day the average American spends in a VR playhouse, the underlying system of postindustrial production and the vast inequities in the quality of life between First and Third World will remain both unrecognized and unchallenged.²⁵

In the near on 20 years since this essay has been published, there has been a concerted discursive and representational effort to address the otherwise invisible conditions of global labor and the explosive urban crises that befall it. However, I will argue, these projects, while ostensibly more cognizant of the other end of the spectrum that Kester criticizes earlier theorists for ignoring, spin the spectacle of these conditions to inadvertently entrench the privileged solipsism and observational remove of the western beneficiary subject.

I will start with the more laudable efforts. Mike Davis’ 1996 encapsulation of the potential for a theoretical and practical recognition of 3rd world urbanization, Learning from Tijuana (a jab at Venturi’s iconic Learning from Las Vegas) would point toward the programmatic genius of Tijuana’s citizens to improvise infrastructure in the face of municipal incapacities, if not neglect.²⁶ In this brief text, whose impetuous is to review the efforts of ADOBE LA, a collective of architects initiated in Los Angeles in 1992 after the King riots, would also inquire of the iconic and monumental presence of *la linea*, the steel wall bifurcating the same regional ecology into U.S. and Mexican territory, as begging its own subversion.²⁷ This project gains further traction with the work of Teddy Cruz, who would work to mobilize this critique as a way to practically retool developmental policy north of the border. Cruz’s project also responds to the excessive praise and recognition that befell architects such as Zaha Hadid and Rem Koolhaas, and cities such as Dubai and Shanghai, during the real estate development “bubble” of the early 2000’s, focusing on a complicit hyper-formalism and its international playgrounds, rather than on the new programmatic and infrastructural terrain being explored in Latin America.²⁸ Although these efforts allude to the short-sightedness and obtuse complicity of the dominant architectural canon, they run the risk of reductivism if and when the adaptive strategies of the 3rd world are co-opted as an object lesson for more “sustainable” or “responsible” development in the west and north. While belying the systemic crises to which these strategies are an ad hoc response, such co-optation is potentially guilty of the same western-centric logic the Kester criticizes earlier: ultimately, immiserated adaptation is positioned as the R and D center of sustainable development in the north and west, in a narrative of a kind of soft imperialism.

23. Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1980), 78.

24. Kester, *Out of Sight is Out of Mind*, 87.

25. Ibid., 88.

26. Mike Davis, “Learning from Tijuana,” *Grand Street*, No. 56 (Spring, 1996): 33-36.

27. Ibid., 34.

28. Teddy Cruz, Interview by Caleb Waldorf, *Triple Canopy*, http://canopycanopycanopy.com/7/learning_from_tijuana.

Far more suspect are projects such as *Slumdog Millionaire* on the register of hollywood blockbusters, avant-pop visualizations such as Rem Koolhaas’ *Lagos Wide & Close* and Edward Burtynsky and Jennifer Baichwal’s *Manufactured Landscapes*, or neoliberal theoretical postulations such Hernando De Soto’s *The Mystery of Capital*. The attuned focus of each of these works on the condition of the global slum and/or the global mega-factory serves either to uncritically marshal a questionable myth of western determinism, and/or encapsulate the situation at hand as a sublime object for detached, bourgeois titillation. *Slumdog*’s epic melodrama is matched by its epic portrayals of urban peasantry in Mumbai, and any apparent effort at considering the more probable outcomes of attempting to challenge a contemporary caste culture, replete with hegemonic racial and economic violence, are ultimately bulldozed by Danny Boyle’s Dickensian picaresque: with hard work and toil, and little luck, you too can primitively accumulate your way from rags and marginality to rights and privileges, or, er, true love!, rather.²⁹ The formalism that *Slumdog* achieves with its breathtaking backdrops of contemporary Indian slums slurred into a sublime melee with montage off the style sheets of MTV is both crystalized and subdued by Koolhaas’ *Lagos* and Burtynsky’s *Manufactured*. Although canning melodrama and focusing solely on form and image, these works still avoid addressing the injustices of oppressive and repressive political and economic regimes as agents affecting the poverty and/or environmental degradation to which their subjects must adapt. Koolhaas and Burtynsky’s privileging of this adaptation, or the sheer spectacle of “extraction and production” industries (that both work’s viewership only otherwise has a completely distant and abstract relationship to) could actually serve to legitimate these regimes by precluding their questioning in the din of such gesamtkunstwerks. Baichwal’s halfhearted filmic attempts to help the viewer understand how Burtynsky gains access to his subjects are undermined by her cinematographic explorations of the subjects that Burtynsky would congruently freeze as still image. Burtynsky asserts that he wishes to “just look at something as it is,” which is to drolly imply that he wishes to regard a situation as superficially as possible.³⁰ The presumption that such work is “apolitical,” (which he asserts explicitly in other contexts) is highly convenient for his project, because it absolves him of any responsibility to his subjects and the narratives by which he gains access. With the help of Baichwal’s subtle hints, the viewer might infer that Chinese factory and coal mine proprietors are either not threatened by the prevailing formal aestheticism of his final product, or rather see his interest as an opportunity for cultural diplomacy working to their advantage. I can imagine what might have gone into the trash bin in Baichwal’s editing room: “Keep working! Don’t look at the camera dolly! You’ll get written up!” Meanwhile, De Soto’s confounded analysis as to why the pioneer spirit of 3rd world urban squatters never seems to be able to claim the rewards of monetized equity is rife with, as observed by Davis, “epistemological flaw”.³¹ Davis asserts that while relying on an inadequate binary of “formal” and “informal” sectors of a given economy, De Soto’s postulations fail to acknowledge the “double-edged sword” of land tenure, in which an “informal” petty-bourgeois of slumlords and gangsters is empowered despite the largely invisible renting and indentured majority. Furthermore, De Soto’s “neoliberal populism” glosses over the propensity to transmute social differentiation into “ethno-religious dif-

ferentiation and sectarian violence” which emerges as a convenient means for policing access to equitable amenities and assets in the absence of any enforced labor rights.³² While making effort towards solving the representational crisis of embodied capital in the global slum, De Soto inadvertently champions the representational reliability of the myth of entrepreneurial perseverance symptomatic of his privileged perspective.

If many of the projects that would answer Kester’s challenge of regarding the “less glamorous spaces” endemic to a postindustrial epoch would seem to fall prey to the ideological entrapment of a distant perspective from an entitled position within the global safety zone, then is there any agency that a representational project within as much might be able to recoup in order to challenge the seemingly hegemonic matrix of postindustrial geography? I do not mean to suggest that there is a total absence of reflexive projects that effectively address this problem; indeed, much of my above critique has been aggregated from what I regard as such. However, I move to assert that there is an under-explored visual terrain for such work, and in as much as there is a surplus of visual projects that take on the contemporary urban conditions of global economic subjugation, then the sky harbor and the edge city of the global north, the technology park and the mall, usurping gluts of free infrastructure in order to render former BLM territory and/or farmland into securitized enclaves for white-collar clients and capital accumulation in a narrative devoid of contestation—would appear all the more banal.

Is it a unique situation then, that one would from a single vantage be able to see both sides of the spectrum? Is there a unique opportunity in San Diego, or rather, in the San Diego / Tijuana region, for example, to develop a project that visually communicates the entirety of the postindustrial spectrum within one regional ecology? Given that the narrative of postindustrialism implies that the sites of production are elsewhere, at a global remove, out of sight is out of mind if you will, then the mere 30 mile remove between La Jolla/UTC and the shantytowns of maquiladora workers in Tijuana is a unique and potentially productive confluence.

My knowledge of the mesa in Mexico visible from the position of the pan atop Mt. Soledad comes from participating in the production of a documentary spearheaded by Keith Pezzoli and Hiram Sarabia, produced in conjunction with UCSD TV. The documentary traces an effort to address the “water/climate/poverty nexus in human settlements at risk,” focusing on, in this instance, Laureles canyon in Tijuana: a settlement resembling closest the situation I described earlier. I had a chance, in the fall of 2009, to discuss the documentary with Keith Pezzoli after it had been produced and released.

Charles Miller - . . . it has some interesting regional specificity around here, especially when we consider the role of myth in the development of Southern California, and this is something that I am trying to deal with: is there something special about this landscape in terms of myth and narrative, or is there something special about the way that these problems and these structures seem to be hyper-visualized in situations like Laureles canyon where you have two vastly different socioeconomic foundations within the same

32. Ibid., 181. My critique expresses the gist of Davis’ critique, in an effort to challenge De Soto’s project as a representational project.

29. Eric Hynes, “Trivial Pursuit: Danny Boyle’s *Slumdog Millionaire*,” *Indie Wire*, (November 11, 2008): http://www.indiewire.com/article/review_trivial_pursuit_danny_boyles_slumdog_millionaire/

30. *Manufactured landscapes*, directed by Jennifer Baichwal and Edward Burtynsky (2006; New York, NY: Zeitgeist Films, 2006).

31. Davis, *Planet of Slums*, 179.

regional ecology, an artificial geopolitical divide, development despite instability of the land and lack of infrastructure, and that sort of conjures all of these problems up to the surface?

Keith Pezzoli - I'll give you 30% on that, in the sense that I think it's remarkable and exaggerated some, but I think overwhelmingly, this is kind of par for the course; more so than remarkable in its "hyper" attributes, because most of the urbanization around the world is taking place under these circumstances. . . extreme affluence abutted against a national border? Yes, there is a fair amount of that going on too, but within cities, you see this hyper wealth abutted to abject poverty; it's a different kind of "border", but the thematic of hyper-wealth juxtaposed to poverty: that's par for the course. What we see happening down there [Laureles canyon on the U.S./Mexico border] isn't anything special in that regard. But, I said I'd give you 30%, because I think the knobs are turned up just a bit for the very reasons that you pointed out, so the contradictions are a little bit brighter on the screen than normal.

CM - I might also add to that that they might be a little bit "brighter on the screen," because of the ecological situation around here: it being a very fragile landscape that's very topographically dynamic and is evacuated of any local resources, namely water.

KP - That's true, but it's a pretty standard problem worldwide, though. The gross lack of infrastructure for water, or to get access to water, or a lot of development happening on unstable hillsides and earthquake prone areas, or fire prone, or flood prone, the list goes on and on and on; pick your threat. We happen to have sandy soil that's easily eroded, so it's subject to flash floods. Other places? Earthquake hazards, tsunamis, sea level rise . . . So I would be hard pressed to say that this is especially remarkable. I'll come back to 30%. Undoubtedly, this is evident here, but I wouldn't give the territory superstar status in the scheme of things.

Pezzoli's caution is well warranted: it would be irresponsible to assert that this landscape is of some unique global significance when one considers the technology parks and luxury condo high-rises separated by ramshackle corrugated steel and razor wire from huge squatter encampments in say, Hyderabad, India, for example. The fact that one can see Tijuana from La Jolla, and vice versa, does not render immediately salient that there is diametrically opposed, yet interconnected set of socioeconomic determinants that affect the material conditions of and cultural responses to the geographies in question. The mesa through which Los Laureles canyon cuts would appear as any other hilltop in the distance, and the skyline of San Diego visible from within Los Laureles canyon is not necessarily fundamentally different from the empty brand-new high-rises in Tijuana proper, for example [figure 10]. It is only by discursive and representa-



Figure 10: Looking north through Los Laureles Canyon, one can discern the skyline of San Diego. Center frame.



tional extension that the contradictions rehearsed within this continuous landscape become fodder for theoretical parsing and critique. There is a doublebind then, when we consider the San Diego/Tijuana region as a case study for the uncharacteristic proximity of the conditions of global privilege to the conditions of globally marginal. One the one hand, the relative distance between these two poles is strikingly small. Again, 30 miles or so between over-determined edge city enclaves and maquiladora-centric shantytowns. On the other, however, this is plenty of distance that the twain never need trip over one another. The residents of LJ/UTC might purchase a Samsung TV assembled in Tijuana, and on that fateful winter rainy day when they are watching their Slumdog Millionaire Bluray in High Definition, the same rainstorm washes out numerous houses, traps commuters in flash-floods, and over-silts 20 acres of fragile estuary just 30 miles to the south, but they would never know.

It is such a doublebind that sums up a characteristically Southern Californian dilemma. Let us consider the Military slang term “Hollywood Shower”. According to Special Document 333: SSC San Diego Guide for Fleet Support Personnel, a ‘Hollywood shower’ contrasts to a “Navy shower” and refers to long lavish showers without limits on water usage.³³ On a naval ship where supplies of fresh water may be scarce, a ‘Navy shower’ refers to wetting, soaping, and rinsing in intervals so as to achieve cleanliness without undue use of water. If one actively acknowledges that the qualifier ‘Hollywood’ refers to a specific place in Southern California, a place that despite pulling all but 10% of its water resources from 250 miles or more away is the mythic center of filmic stardom and celebrity subjectivity, then it might strike one as both ironic and yet completely banal that such a regional entity has become synonymous with the decadent over-use of resources. To this extent, every visual, metaphoric, and mythic indicator that this region stands in a potentially dangerous cultural defiance of ecological reality is met with and overcome by stubborn nonchalance and complacency.

“Forget it, Jake; it’s Chinatown.”

I quote Thom Anderson, from his film essay Los Angeles Plays Itself, regarding *Chinatown*, Roman Polanski’s 1974 fictionalization of Los Angeles’ usurping of water from Owens Valley; producing wind-fall profits for a group of land investors in William Mulholland’s inner circle (preserving this premise, Polanski changes the specific names, times, places and scenarios). Anderson begins by quoting film critic David Thomson: “I know the additive of corruption in LA’s water. I’ve seen Chinatown.” In the film’s apparent anticlimax, in which the gumshoe protagonist, Jake Giddes, having solved and publicly exposed the mystery, is met with a ho-hum, despite having risked his freedom, career and life. Anderson states, “Chinatown teaches that good intentions are futile. It’s better not to act, even better not to know. Somehow, this dark vision hasn’t offended anybody.”³⁴

Contradiction begets meta-contradiction. Despite the high visibility of the crisis prone, and privatization willing to power over the public, whether it be “FEMA-insurance” for the perennial engulfing of Malibu estates, the preclusion of any critique of NAFTA behind the racialized ‘others’ on their way up from Latin America ostensibly to wage war on “American” exceptionalism, or that the excesses of ma-

terial entitlement can be located a mere 30 miles away from the urban and social effects of material privation, the prescience of these contradictions, capping off a totalizing meta-contradiction, would seem to illicit only a paucity of critical cultural response, if any.

I am compelled to push against Pezzoli’s caution. To the extent that we can observe phenomena such as Ju Jun (Orange County, China), or the “New Towns” of Java—for which one of the principal development consultant is the Irvine Ranch Corporation—then the representational agency of Southern California as it sits is replicating, along with its form, its ecological and socioeconomic risks, and its socially differentiating ethos of privatization.³⁵ The implications of Southern California are indeed exceptional, as this landscape emerges as both an object lesson in the crises of ecological degradation and socioeconomic fragmentation at regional and national scales, as well as R and D for the material demands of an emerging global consumer class. To this there is an urgent necessity of active engagement to break the dialectical tension as I have outlined earlier, as such would hold that the bellwethers of crisis remain hidden in plain sight. That is, that we may return the lens to LJ/UTC in order to frame this Garreaudian edge city as, say, a counter-sublime of the seemingly innocuous, answering Burtynsky’s sublimation of ecological and environmental catastrophe. Wherein, it may become immediately salient, for example, that the present border militarization project 30 miles to the south is merely a publicly funded first-line-of-defense in a security project of which the terminus is a household subscription to ADT. Wherein, for example, that it becomes readily evident that the seemingly uncontested sprawling out of private sector interests into *terrain vague* with the public’s blessing does not amount to a mitigation, but rather an abstracting, displacement, and socialization of violence.

35. Robert Cowherd and Eric J. Heikkila, “Orange County, Java: Hybridity, Social Dualism, and an Imagined West,” *Southern California and the World*, Ed. Eric J. Heikkila and Rafael Pizarro, (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 211.

33. *Special Document 333: SSC San Diego Guide for Fleet Support Personnel*

34. *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, DVD, directed by Thom Anderson, (2003; Los Angeles, CA: self published, 2003).



Figure 11: Allan Sekula's **Meat Mass**, represented in his Generali Foundation retrospective catalogue: Allan Sekula, *Performance Under Working Conditions*, 2003. The originals were shot in 1972. The "Genesee Ave" exit sign is visible in the background.



Figure 12: "Genesee Ave" exit sign, photographed from the Voigt Drive overpass, September, 2010.

II

A Body Doing, A Body Seeing: Allan Sekula and William Wegman at UCSD

In January of 1972, it is reported that Allan Sekula, a student in the recently formed visual arts department at the University of California, San Diego, stole expensive cuts of beef from a supermarket and stored them in a freezer.³⁶ Once removed, the thawing steaks were lobbed under passing freeway traffic.³⁷ While Sekula would self critically dismiss the quasi-heroic theatricality of projects such as Meat Mass (MM) here, and subsequently let them slip into art historical obscurity, we can thank the Generali Foundation, and the chronocentric imperatives of retrospective curators for assembling a show and catalogue tome in which these early, perhaps less developed projects have been enshrined.³⁸ Indeed, it was in my casual perusal of this catalogue: *Performance Under Working Conditions*, that I happened upon the documentation of this project, and eventually recognized the location of the performance as a landscape with which I am specifically familiar [figure 11, 12].

36. Allan Sekula, *Meat Mass*, performance documentation, 1972, in *Allan Sekula: Performance Under Working Conditions*, (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 2003), 68.

37. *Ibid.*, 68–72.

38. Allan Sekula, Interview by Debra Risberg, "Imaginary Economies," *Dismal Science: Photo Works 1972-1996* Allan Sekula, (Normal, IL: University Galleries and Allan Sekula, 1999), 237.



Figure 13: Once again, photographed from Performance Under Working Conditions, 2003.

The images on the second and third pages of this document are taken mostly from a high perspective, which would imply that the photographer is located on an overpass. However, the indexical clinchers are taken from a ground-level perspective where the steep bank meets the freeway: the first is an exit sign for Genesee Avenue in the background, and the last is a shot of the artist running back up the embankment; the overpass from whence the first images in the sequence were taken enters the frame in the bottom left corner [figure 13]. The conjunction of these clues would imply a perspective that I am familiar with, frequently crossing this very overpass as I walk from my apartment in the Mesa graduate student housing complex to my studio on campus. This was confirmed by considering that Genesee Avenue only interfaces with three major free ways: Interstate 5 to the northwest, State Route 52 centrally, and State Route 163 to the southeast. As the interchanges for Genesee and 52 and 163 clearly do not resemble the background in these images, while the 5 interchange however does, one could confidently deduce that the overpass in question is along Voigt Drive, what was then known as Old Miramar Road.

The image wherein we find the Genesee Avenue exit sign hints of the mesa rising up in the background on the opposite side of the freeway. Were this image taken today, the horizon in this shot would be dominated by a huge, multilevel parking structure: part of the expansion of the Scripps Medical Center campus occurring since. In fact, when this image was captured in 1972, very little development beyond Scripps hospital and the Mesa housing complex existed east of Interstate 5 in this vicinity: the primary direction that the lens was aimed in this image. In retrospect, one could critically develop the metaphoric significance of Sekula's gesture, assuming we are confident in the images' referents.

The seeds were planted for the eventual development of this landscape as a sprawling conglomerate of lab parks and research facilities when the Regents of the University of California, after a tumultuous series of bargaining and compromises, eventually sited the new San Diego campus to be built on the south end of Torrey Pines Mesa.³⁹ This conclusion occurred in concert with Scripps Institute of Oceanography (several miles to the south on a coastal bluff north of La Jolla proper), local real estate speculators such as Bill Black (namesake of California's most notorious nude beach), The Salk Institute, and General Dynamics (splitting and expanding their enterprise into what would become General Atomics). While Black would reap the profits from the eventual subdivision of his hobby stable into La Jolla Farms, an affluent residential development atop the cliffs overlooking Blacks beach and the Pacific ocean, UCSD, the Salk Institute, and General Atomics would establish themselves adjacently in rapid simultaneity in the late 50's and early 60's.⁴⁰ Given that all of that the adjacent territory to the east at the time was little more than decommissioned munitions training ranges and undeveloped, city-owned pueblo lands, the geography was prime for the form of urban development that would ensue as the end of the Cold War would eventually draw nigh. The various economic restructurings of the post world war II military industrial complex, in addition to federal policies that would encourage land speculation and development on the urban fringe, would seal the deal for the emergence of a technological innovation-based urban center sprawled a dozen miles north

of downtown proper.⁴¹ One might map out a hierarchical profile: The primary capital-generating agents would be the defense, high tech, and eventual biotech companies emerging in large part through technology transfer initiatives, with UCSD as a stable, public, institutional anchor in the territory. The secondary or accommodative industries would be real estate and financial services, and the tertiary amenities would amount to luxury retail, housing, and recreational accommodations for the influx of students, university affiliates, and professionals. This relationship almost diagrams itself on what has been regionally termed the "Golden Triangle" [following spread].

The most frequent critical rhetoric that has framed Sekula's project since its resurrection has functioned to abstract the 'steaks' as pilfered luxury items rendered abject via Sekula's intervention, by the very means with which they are circulated.⁴² While such a narrative of undifferentiated theft and waste is certainly welcome for my purposes, I am more interested in cataloging this gesture as one representational and performative instance of reflexive absurdity that would strafe against the grain of the programmatic imperatives of the urban space in question. In retrospect, the gesture could be framed either as a metaphoric harbinger of what would emerge as the urbanism and culture in this specific locale, or perhaps more cynically as a measure of practice that would eventually become all but entirely precluded by the developmental paradigm that it indirectly purports to oppose.

Perhaps Sekula's bodily presence at the awkward and restricted interface of superhighway and steep embankment is analogous to the tenuous entrapment of existence in the then nascent urban terrain that has since come to full fruition. Indeed, it is the means by which Sekula consciously breaks the implicit contract governing bodies in this urban landscape that gives his project critical thrust for my purposes. His trespass is both literal and figurative: the latter, because he makes a conscious effort to occupy a liminal zone: a buffer between "safe" civic space and the violent torrent that might symbolize the hegemony of technological progress [freeway traffic]. I will assert that as the existence of civic space becomes subjugated to the encampment of an emerging upper middle class and the architectural necessities of technological progress, wedging residents between their demands as client / consumers and their rights and responsibilities as citizens, then to merely occupy the space that Sekula does, is to produce a critical metaphor for such a state of existence.

The treatment of the "steaks" themselves, both luxury items and raw, biological matter would establish a congruent narrative. A stand in for the privileged body; the body of the beneficiary, at once the globally overrepresented subject, and, once again, raw biological material-rendered gelatinous smear, undifferentiable and abject by the mechanistic violence and indifference of freeway traffic. Furthermore, the trespass at their point of origin: their petty theft from a Safeway supermarket, would draw the space of the supermarket into the violent continuum of the freeway: part and parcel of the same urban system, otherwise compartmentalized and differentiated by their conditions of access, and of utility to the consumer.

It would necessitate a much lengthier discussion to consider the industries of the body that would eventually populate this landscape: 'biotech' and pharmaceuticals, for the maintenance of the body as biological matter, and 'defense'; for the maintenance of the body and

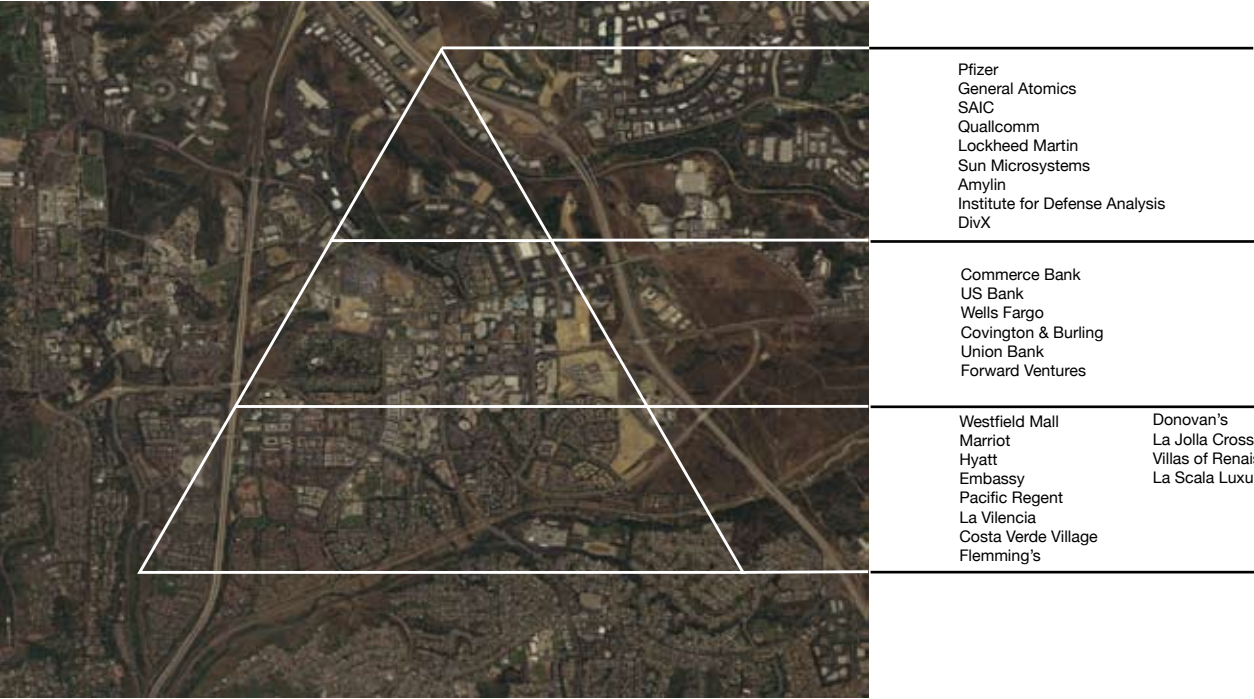
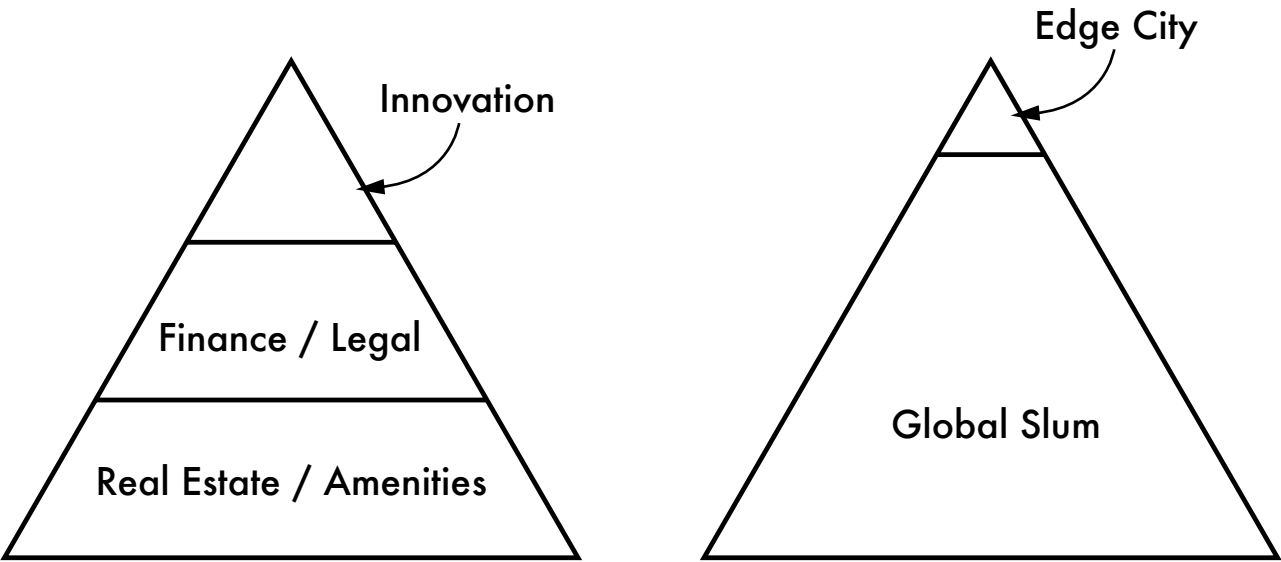
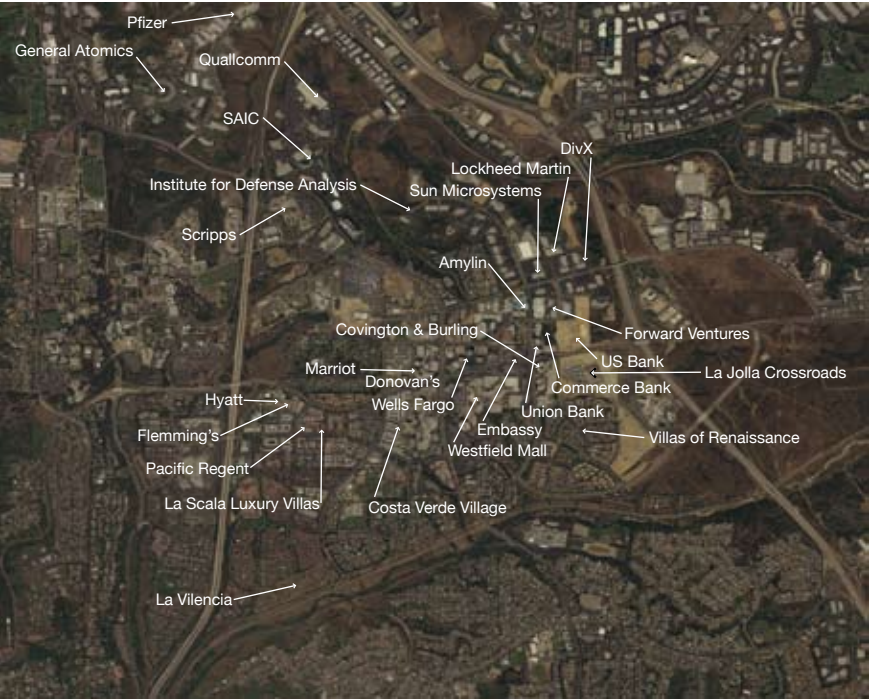
41. See John McCrory, *The Edge City Fallacy*, <http://johnmccrory.com/selected-writings/the-edge-city-fallacy/>, and *San Diego Magazine*, June 1996, 52-122.

42. R.C. Baker, "The Abjection Collection," *The Village Voice*, April 3, 2007, <http://www.villagevoice.com/2007-04-03/art/the-abjection-collection/>.

39. See Nancy Scott Anderson, *An Improbable Venture: A History of the University of California, San Diego*, (La Jolla: UCSD Press, 1993), 25-77, and Mike Davis, "The Next Little Dollar," *Under The Perfect Sun*, 72-73,85.

40. Davis, *Under the Perfect Sun*, 72-73, 85. See Also Glen Ricks, *San Diego, 1927-1955: Recollections of a City Planner*, (San Diego: self published, 1977), 80-81.

The Golden Triangle



The I5, the I805, and Rose Canyon forming the northern portion of the coined region



Left: Obelisk and reflecting pool at the center of the Amylin Campus. **Right:** Sculpture in Eastgate Technology Park, photo courtesy of Grant Kester.

its North American geographical parlance as preeminent subject. Leaving an elaboration on the implications of these assertions for another discussion, Sekula’s performance stands as a critical sentinel of what was to come from the late 70’s to the present. However, such an endeavor undertaken now, whilst automotive traffic continues to become ever more dense, and in the midst of post-9/11 paranoia, would likely be read as exponentially more suspicious and threatening, and met with immediate authoritative reaction. Concurrently, these are not the only reasons that such an intervention is unlikely. As the adjacent “edge city” grows denser, it would further entrench an anti-citizen, pro-client based program with an occupant throughput oscillating on the temporal scale of academic programs and white-collar mobility. The citizen/subject/body in this territory would likely read this landscape, perhaps less critically, however similarly to Sekula, as implied by the absence of elaboration on the project’s specific locale in its documentation: an abstract and omnipresent suburbia, a banal non-place, wherein no body, smaller than moneyed corporate bodies, takes a stake, be it critical or productive; they won’t be here for very long.

~ ~ ~

*For the Stuart Collection [William] Wegman created his first major outdoor permanent sculpture: he installed a scenic - or nonscenic - overlook at one edge of the campus, near the location of the university’s theater and dance complex. The site commands a view not of the Pacific Ocean, visible from the other side of the university, or some other pristine wilderness view, but of La Jolla’s suburban sprawl. The centerpiece of La Jolla Vista View is a long bronze map; it transposes from Wegman’s idiosyncratic drawing the supposed “points of interest” discernible from the overlook. These include housing developments, construction sites, and the footbridge connecting UCSD with the shopping center adjacent to the campus. Wegman’s overlook, complete with a telescope, drinking fountain, and picnic table set under a palm tree, makes a simple cartoon like connection between Southern California’s still-picturesque natural scenery and its booming economic growth/development which places an ever-increasing strain on the region’s environment . . . Many of the sites Wegman has marked on his bronze map are temporary - building construction, birds in flight, or a group of people walking their dogs. These immediately “outdated” points of interest cause viewers to contemplate the rapidity of change in everyday life, and the constant revision of history which results. New buildings constructed since the drawing was done in 1987 become markers of time as well as place. By defamiliarizing the ordinary world of suburban life - through its transformation into an exotic or scenic overlook - Wegman encourages the university community to view its surroundings with fresh and newly critical eyes.*⁴³

–Description of William Wegman’s La Jolla Vista View on the Stuart Collection website [figure 14].

About a mile to the southwest of the site of Sekula’s performance, on a crest looking out across LJ/UTC, Clairemont, and Kearny Mesa, one will find William Wegman’s La Jolla Vista View (LJVV), a commission for UCSD’s Stuart Collection: a set of monumental site-specific



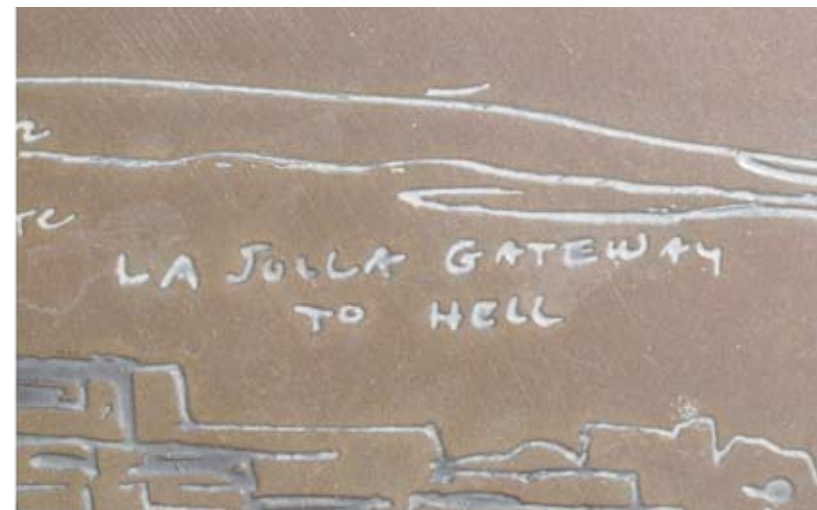
Figure 14: La Jolla Vista View

43. William Wegman, *La Jolla Vista View*, 1988, project description, <http://stuartcollection.ucsd.edu/StuartCollection/Wegman.htm>.

works that scatter themselves athwart UCSD's 1200 acre campus. The project was undertaken 15 years after Sekula's, completed in 1988. While a significant portion of the vista monumentalized in Wegman's bronze panorama was developed since Sekula's performance, and further changed in the 20+ years since its siting (and this was doubtlessly what Wegman was anticipating as a crucial dimension to his aesthetic gesture), like Sekula's project, I was initially compelled by the contemporaneous vision of the persistence of the landscape in question—here conveyed by the bronze permanence of an otherwise ephemeral and subjective semantics of developmental geography. Scrawled captions in the idiosyncratic bronze landscape drawing: "Student Test Site", "Barren Wasteland", "A Big Development", "Meow, Meow" (above a tree), and my point of embrace: "La Jolla Gateway to Hell" would seem to convey a critical tenor toward a developmental regime that renders liminal spaces barren if not speculative. The "Gateway" assertion in particular, in that it was scrawled as a caption over a part of the drawing representing what would be further developed as the LJ/UTC edge city conglomerate [figure 15]. By comparison, the other captions are critical only in their sardonic tone, and their reverence for the otherwise banal. The "Gateway" caption stands out in its exasperated frankness.



Figure 15: The bronze panorama, and the infamous scrawling.



While this caption would concur with my personal view of this landscape as a bellwether to Hell incarnate, perhaps I should first give credit to the consistency between the monumentalized ephemeral and liminal spaces in Wegman's drawing and the organic spatial programs manifesting in its vicinity. Wegman's work is probably the least visited amongst other Stuart Collection entries, at a considerable remove from otherwise well-trod campus thoroughfares. It's position adjacent an unmanaged eucalyptus grove, a hill embankment leading down to La Jolla Village Drive, and the Theater / Dance complex, would have it amongst the liminal spaces that it representationally encapsulates. Within this territory, given merely nominal exploration, one would find an ad hoc garden trail along the south side of the theater dance complex. The trail leads through a nodal complex of hidden meeting places replete with sun-decaying lawn furniture, DIY vine lattices, and various detritus that would imply found-object sculpture.

The trail leads out to a lawn in the southwest corner of campus, where one would find the decaying terminus of a road planned, but never connected to Torrey Pines Road across the adjacent La Jolla Village Drive [figure 16]. On a slope in the eucalyptus grove on the northeast side of Wegman's project one finds an active, ad hoc vegetable garden. The planting beds are organ shaped, occurring together with no discernible master plan. There is a small sprouting hothouse, a compost pile, and garden hoses hacked from the nearest structure: The Che Cafe, the proprietors of which are the most likely suspects to have started this garden in the first place. The cafe is a student initiated and managed co-op, housing an on-and-off-again vegan eatery and catering services, an activist resource center, and is more frequently a haunt in the meanderings of an underground post-punk music scene. While "CHE" is an acronym for "Cheap Healthy Eats," on the university's official registry (ostensibly to avoid the political consternation if it were a direct reference to the Argentine Marxist revolutionary), it is, nonetheless, a referent to the obvious. The most prominent aspect of the cafe amongst campus constituents are likely the muralized renditions of Angela Davis, Che Guevara, the Black Panther logo, Karl Marx, Cesar Chavez, among many others that emblazon the cafe's otherwise shack-like facade [figure 17]. Here in this relatively seedy and overlooked portion of campus, one finds the otherwise unlikely manifestations of organic social space—a soft infrastructure for critical gazing and subversive passivity wedged into a buffer between the sub-freeway drone of La Jolla Village Drive and the sanitized sprawl of campus proper. [photo of garden] Various degrees of officiation will likely protect the space as such for the foreseeable future, despite the budget crisis-defying building boom on campus at present. The university's commitment to the Stuart Collection would hopefully solidify its DIY district by sanctioning the sentinel presence of a rare instance of urbanistic dabbling by an artist otherwise canonized for his quirky portraits of weimaraners.

Let us consider the confluence of Meat Mass and La Jolla Vista View. While they would both emerge from a context of aesthetic production, I draw them together here, however, because of their direct address to the specific urban conditions adjacent to the UCSD campus. Their measures of critical regard and resistant participation



Figure 16: The Theater District's hidden garden path, to the west of LJVV.

Figure 17: Che Cafe, to the northeast of LJVV.

within an arguably over-determined landscape could establish a kind of reflexive matrix with which to assert a cultural stand against the otherwise unchecked imperatives of development in what was *terrain vague*. Furthermore, these projects would be iconic of such a struggle given their relative historic status, and because, I will argue, a measure of symbolic resistance in the face of the now entrenched developmental paradigm is indeed rare; as such a paradigm would typically function to preclude such critical consciousness.

So what of this so-called reflexive matrix? A gesture such as Sekula's would foreground the specificity of the body/subject while abstracting the geographic specifics and institutional determinants of its environment (heroic performance within any interchangeable western, postindustrial landscape). A gesture such as Wegman's, on the other hand, would function to foreground the specificity of the geographic context while abstracting the bodies of its occupants as unspecific observers (carving out a space for passive occupation and gazing within a specific instance of the western, postindustrial landscape). I propose a tense cooperation of the diametric prerogatives of the projects in question: defining and identifying the body/subject within the historical, geographic, social and economic matrix of such a landscape and vice versa, but moreover the reconciliation of a space for critical representation (occupation, passive observation) with a space of counter-programmatic action (occupation, active intervention), wherein the critical gaze can become an active gesture, and the counter-programmatic action acknowledges its background in a literal sense. That is, it becomes more than a mere instance of activism, but also a kind of cinematic/theatrical representational assertion. Perhaps it is within a final mediation of these and such narratives that we can begin to map out a counter-mythos of "place" within a postindustrial landscape. On the other hand, it might signify the potential for critical leverage within the otherwise hegemonic matrix of Lefebvrian spatial production: the subject produces space; space produces the subject.⁴⁴

I return to the question of the very necessity of such, concerning the programmatic effects of the urbanism in question to placate criticality. One might note the curious correlation between this and the popular myth of UCSD's student body as the most apathetic and politically complacent amongst the UC campuses (challenged, of course, in recent history by the March 4th protests, among others). If such inferences are not without merit, then one might ponder what the social face of reflexive resistance in such a landscape might look like, if indeed such a landscape would epitomize that which is not conducive to the visibility of opposition, considering both its demographics and its manicured, spatial pleasantries. I return to Kester.

If the concentration of large numbers of industrial workers in urban centers "produced" class consciousness (or produced a situation in which the working class could narrativize itself as a class), the postfordist logic of fragmentation and deconcentration resists the narrative construction of a working class, or resists the formation of discursive communities that might lead to a class consciousness.⁴⁵

Kester is of course referring to a 19th century urban context in which polarized economic realities evident within the same geography led to contemporary notions of class identity and class struggle. The constituents of an edge city geography such as LJ/UTC are basically rendered nomadic clients—the upwardly mobile, ostensible beneficiaries of postindustrial capitalism. In effect, they are isolated from the social costs undergirding this mode of existence, and therefore are without the visual cues that would enable a distinct socioeconomic identity to emerge. Here, what is a beneficiary class is the norm, or is the only; it becomes as unquestioned as its urban environs. Where then, within such a space-time, might one locate the impetuous to resist such a dubious narrative? Within a discussion of Meat Mass and La Jolla Vista View, a kind of monadic agency is implicated at the center of resistant gestures and occupations. Furthermore, the privileging here of gestures such as the aforementioned would function to posit the locus of resistance in the terrain of the symbolic, the representational, and the archival i.e. it is only by balancing the equation with discursive acknowledgment and elaboration that such interventions can be evaluated in terms of dominant and resistant narratives. They would not, in and of themselves, work toward a more equitable social program in this terrain; however, is this what is at stake? Absent any traditional conditions of urban political identity formation, such as class difference and/or the myriad violences of redevelopment, what becomes of a narrative of contestation; what is there to contest? One might consider the broader political terrain in terms of what collective agencies may be at play.

Let There Be Light . . . May that it Cast a Shadow

If the question is what forms of agency could emerge in an urban landscape that precludes traditional forms of community and political consolidation, then chances are these modes of agency form in defense of class preeminence more so than in its opposition. Joel Garreau's most compelling chapter from *Edge City*, for its informative and ontological developments if not for its predictably dubious conclusions, concerns a phenomenon that he coins "Shadow Government", and investigates its emergence in the Phoenix, Arizona metropolitan region. Whether the ominous tenor of the term he employs to refer to this phenomenon registers to Garreau is unclear; what starts off appearing as a genuine critique would drolly devolve into yet another permutation of indirect praise for the prerogatives of wealth. Garreau's "Shadow Government" basically amounts to a collective formulation that garners and wields political power and was established from the bottom up, so to speak, in response to a vacuum of municipal administration, if not for the mandating of extra-legal covenants and regulations. In fact, Garreau would note that many newly formed "Edge Cities" stridently resist incorporation as a means to circumnavigate taxation, ironically imposing "fees" instead of taxes for the private administration of what amounts to a private developmental enclave. Pondering the causal narratives, he would assert,

These governments are highly original, locally invented attempts to bring some kind of order to Edge Cities in the absence of more conventional institu-

44. See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, (Oxford, Cambridge: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992).

45. Kester, *Out of Sight is Out of Mind*, 72.

46. Garreau, *Edge City*, 185.

47. Garreau, *Edge City*, 201. He makes the statement “government by the wealthy for the wealthy,” and would only acknowledge class when considering how his subjects would work to defend themselves from the class below them. And in his introduction, he declares that Edge City is not a “theoretical work” and he himself is not a “critic”, rather, he is a “reporter”. (xiv). It would indeed appear that either the myth of journalistic objectivity is in reality perniciously bound up in defense of bourgeois worldviews, or his declaration would underhandedly position Edge City as a promotional work by negation.

48. *University City Community Association*, <http://universitycitynews.org/history.html>.

49. Garreau, *Edge City*, 193.

50. Ibid., 193.

tions. Edge Cities, after all, seldom match political boundaries. Sometimes they do not even appear on road maps. Few have mayors or city councils. They beg the question of who’s in charge. Are these places exercises in anarchy? Or are they governed by other means? The answer is--government by other means.⁴⁶

This assertion most specifically implicates entities that are commonly understood as Home Owners Associations (HOA’s). These emergent governing bodies usually garner their power through non-negotiable covenants in property deeds within a given HOA’s jurisdiction. This voluntary concession usually subjects the new property owner to a barrage of regulations of otherwise challengeable constitutionality, such as, for example, the disallowance of any visible trappings of the working class: no trucks in driveways, no RV’s, no chain-link fence, no large dogs, etc. HOA’s ultimately amount to governance in defense of property value, in which the normative democratic model of one person, one vote is bracketed by an economic model of one dollar, one vote, or one acre, one vote.⁴⁷

One can find a potential instance of this in University City (Rose canyon runs between LJ/UTC and University City; to re-note, LJ/UTC is sometimes referred to as North University City; regardless of their bifurcation, the twain comprise the entirety of the “Golden Triangle”). The degree to which the University City Community Association enforces a set of extra-legal covenants and restrictions is unclear; the information on their website seems benign enough. However, one is given a faint glimpse of the ideology underpinning the formation of what otherwise appears as merely a community volunteer coordinator, and quasi-chamber of commerce.

The Golden Triangle label, referring to the 805 and 5 and 52 freeways carving out the community, was given to University City in 1984 when traffic, new residences in North U.C., and high density fears began. At the same time, University City Community Association was born . . .⁴⁸

As if “high density fears” are a given consensus and require no further explanation. The “high density” condo developments being constructed north of Rose canyon at this time (early 1980s) were apparently the impetuous for University City, an otherwise middle class suburban community that was originally master planned as UCSD’s would-be residential enclave, to “narrativize” and assert its “single-family-detached” identity. Presumably, any impetuous to collectivize in a suburban context would always be contingent to a perceived threat against its privileges.

What may be more compelling within Garreau’s Shadow Government chapter is the notion of a “quasi-governmental” agency whose powers and mandates eventually extend significantly into aspects of life well beyond their original charters. His case study in this regard is the Salt River Project (SRP), an institution formed in 1903 at the behest of Theodore Roosevelt’s National Reclamation Act.⁴⁹ SRP’s mandate was to irrigate and “reclaim” the arid Salt River Valley in which metropolitan Phoenix is now situated.⁵⁰ Given that the ability to

usurp and redistribute water resources is the lynchpin of all development in the American Southwest, SRP’s de facto influence eventually extended into every conceivable tangent of this process. Furthermore, as SRP’s developmental influence continued to expand, so did their institutional profile. At once, it operates as a for-profit corporation, an unregulated utility, an agent of the federal government, and a quasi-municipal subdivision of the state.⁵¹ When Garreau drafted his research in the early 1990’s, it had a double-A bond rating, a \$1 billion per annum intake, and a staff of 5000 people, 13 of which are full-time lobbyists.⁵²

While certainly not exerting influence on such a vast scale, yet significant nonetheless in the LJ/UTC region particularly, would be that of the UCSD “CONNECT” program. CONNECT was founded in 1987 by the late Bill Otterson and a consortium of other high power entrepreneurial and academic UCSD affiliates, primarily associated with the University’s robust engineering and biology departments.⁵³ Empowered by the Bayh-Dole Act of 1980, which federally legalized the private licensing of publicly funded research, and responding to the pleas of San Diego business consortiums as the region’s traditional defense industry was ramped down along with the Cold War, CONNECT sought to re-assert the region’s economic preeminence and amplify the University’s extra-institutional influence.⁵⁴ Their expansive programs for training researchers as entrepreneurs, whose successful start-ups would in turn be beholden to the university, as well as to the CONNECT program itself, would birth a vastly influential amorphous blob of trans-disciplinary, public/private symbiosis. This “Technology Transfer” initiative becoming nebulous consortium of university-spawned “innovation” industries sprawled out across the nearby mesas and valleys, otherwise undeveloped. The drop-down menu on CONNECT’s home page under the “Programs” tab boasts an overwhelming two dozen options, from “CEO Strategy Forum” to “National Security Innovation Support” to “Stem Cell Meeting on the Mesa” to “Wireless-Life Science Alliance”. The organization would assert its pivotal roll in developing one of the nation’s most robust “convergence clusters” i.e. the close geographic proximity of research institutions such as Burnham, Salk, and UCSD to high-tech, biotech, pharmaceuticals and defense industries [figure 18].⁵⁵ By the 1990’s, CONNECT had severed its official ties to UCSD, as it could rely upon the support of its 200+ member companies for its operative programming and budget.⁵⁶ By the mid 2000’s, it had opened a Washington DC office (read: lobbying arm). Here, we can begin to see how CONNECT may resemble Phoenix’s Salt River Project, in as much as CONNECT’s facilitation of the emergence of industry “clusters” would subsequently require the vast development of lab and office space along with all of its infrastructural trappings, then its stake would begin to extend well into realms beyond its original charter. The municipality of San Diego and San Diego County couldn’t have been more enthralled, as this would become a major selling point for the region’s economic viability, not to mention political careers. These municipalities have made all form and number of sprawling infrastructural donations and tax incentives. According to CONNECT’s website, San Diego’s “cluster” industries pay on average 90 percent higher than the regional median, comprising a full 25 percent of wages in the region as a hole.⁵⁷ The veritable Oz of lab-space urbanism popping up immediately east of the UCSD campus emerges as the

51. Ibid., 194.

52. Ibid., 195.

53. See Anderson, *An Improbable Venture*, 237., and Davis, *Under the Perfect Sun*, 131.

54. Ibid., 237, 131.

55. *CONNECT: Accelerating Innovation in San Diego*, <http://www.connect.org/about/>.

56. Ibid., See also CONNECT’s commemorative 25 year timeline: <http://www.connect.org/email/Newsletter/doc/25th%20Anniversary%20-%20Timeline%20for%20Program.pdf>.

57. Ibid.



Figure 18: “Cluster” Urbanism.
© 2010 CONNECT.

core of what is frequently leveraged as the region’s preeminent economic attractor.

What is perhaps most curious about the CONNECT Shadow Government is that it does not sell its services.⁵⁸ Its representational influence and start-up support works into a grey gift economy in which the successes it helps initiate are in turn supportive of its programming. CONNECT is a representational project, an organic social agency, that works to develop the promotional spectacle of the innovation “cluster”, such that it and the industry it represents may be optimally allied with institutional support. It is a prototype for as many as 40 similar initiatives worldwide.⁵⁹ Furthermore, via its lobbying efforts it is a strident agent of conservative fiscal policy, as well as against initiatives that would limit the tapping of global markets and labor pools.⁶⁰ While the definitive utility of CONNECT is ambiguous (why can’t the passive wisdom of the market resolve itself without the facility of non-profit, sentinel organizations?), its position between utility and rhetoric, between informal, collective representation/legitimation, and as a facilitator of services, it would indeed begin to suggest a governmental and political project.

CONNECT’s prototypical influence, as the most successful type of agency consolidation in support of technological progress within an urban milieu, was and is far reaching. Although CONNECT was not likely a causal factor, its organizational structure, and the form of development it would facilitate was closely mimicked by Johns Hopkins University (JHU) in Baltimore Maryland, albeit a vastly different urban geography than the pueblo mesas in the northern portion of San Diego. Pegged in a JHU newsletter as “Biotech Park to Fight Blight”, the JHU Medical Campus in east Baltimore sited a 90-acre swath of mostly vacant and blighted row homes (about 20 city blocks, 800 structures in total) for razing to be replaced by a new crop of university-spin-off biotech firms, as well as new upper scale housing and amenities.⁶¹ Despite the heroic implications of the newsletter’s headline, common knowledge in the area would assert that JHU, in concert with Baltimore City, was the chief agent of disinvestment that would result in the ostensible “blight” in the first place. The “white flight” that would depopulate these neighborhoods in the 1950’s and 60’s was in subsequent years exacerbated by checkerboard “land banking” wherein the city and university would buy up newly vacant homes. Their new proprietors would board them over and let them sit idle and vacant, asserting that their renovation would not be in step with an otherwise mystical multi-stage “master plan”.⁶² As more and more houses were boarded over and left to decay, and fewer and fewer home-owning residents remained in the neighborhood, the city would incrementally curtail its social services, and property values would be driven down in turn: a typical narrative of “disinvestment”. The final nail was driven into the coffin for Middle East Baltimore (the neighborhood in question) with the Kelo vs. New London Supreme Court ruling in 2005, which empowered municipalities to scoop up properties with the authority of eminent domain, and hand them over to the highest bidder. Positing the blighted nature of the neighborhood (convenient, given its arguable artificiality), the East Baltimore Development Inc. (EBDI), yet another developmental “Shadow Government”, was able to easily coordinate the final, necessary acquisitions. It would turn out, however, that this narrative was not uncontested.

The Save Middle East Action Committee (SMEAC) was formed in 2001, shortly after the plans of JHU and Baltimore City were publicized. It was comprised of remaining community stakeholders and representatives, and via an active door-knocking campaign, as well as programs profiling the degree of blight affecting the neighborhood, educating residents about their rights, and leveraging the media, SMEAC was able to consolidate the political will to effectively address the otherwise obtuse will of EBDI and its clients.⁶³ According to Marisela Gomez, a public health scholar and one of SMEAC’s chief organizers, by 2004,

As a result of SMEAC’s organizing, resident homeowners received as much as a threefold increase in the relocation benefit, up to \$70,000 plus the fair market value of their homes; renters also got a better resettlement package. Geographical restrictions were lifted, so residents could move anywhere and still receive the benefit. EBDI agreed to an increase in the number of low-income housing units in the redevelopment plan. They also halted the demolition of more than 900 houses in the first phase until it could be done more safely and agreed to demands for an objective panel of experts on housing demolition. In addition, a resident-selected representative will now sit on the EBDI board.⁶⁴

Here we can regard an emergence similar to that of Garreau’s “Shadow Government”, however originating on the opposite end of the socioeconomic spectrum otherwise presumed the norm in Garreau’s discussion. Now 10 years after JHU and Baltimore city celebrated the biotech redevelopment of Middle East Baltimore as producing a plethora of new jobs and net gains in the tax base, the majority of the cleared urban terrain sits vacant, while the biotech industry of Montgomery County, Maryland would thrive.⁶⁵ Incidentally, Montgomery County, comprised mostly of sprawling suburbs interfacing with rural farmland, would far more closely resemble the uncontested developmental geography of LJ/UTC than would inner city Baltimore. In fact, the very initiative spurning the case upon which the Supreme Court would set a precedent (Kelo vs. New London) has befallen a similar fate. As New London drove in the bulldozers to prime the soil for of a Pfizer Pharmaceuticals-centric redevelopment project, Pfizer (incidentally also a major establishment on Torrey Pines Mesa, across the I5 from LJ/UTC) re-evaluated its priorities and abandoned the New London project.⁶⁶ The warnings in Clarence Thomas’ originalist dissent, in which he accuses the majority of distorting the Fifth Amendment by replacing a “public use” clause with a “public purpose” test, were thus confirmed:

This deferential shift in phraseology enables the Court to hold, against all common sense, that a costly urban-renewal project whose stated purpose is a vague promise of new jobs and increased tax revenue, but which is also suspiciously agreeable to the Pfizer Corporation, is for a ‘public use’.⁶⁷ [emphasis mine]

63. Marisela Gomez, “Demanding a Better Deal,” *NHI Shelterforce Online*, No. 144, November/December 2005, <http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/144/organize.html>.

64. Ibid.

65. Jon Aerts, “East Baltimore Biotech Park Remains in Limbo after 10 Years,” *Corridor Inc.*, May 25, 2010. <http://www.corridorinc.com/corridor-news-mainmenu-119/4623-east-baltimore-biotech-park-remains-in-limbo-after-10-years>, and Stephanie Gleason, “Maryland Biotech Industry Thrives, but not in East Baltimore,” *Corridor Inc.*, May 24, 2010, <http://www.corridorinc.com/corridor-news-mainmenu-119/4618--maryland-biotech-industry-thrives-but-not-in-east-baltimore>. Additionally, these articles are an interesting account of the utility of the “cluster” development footprint in the biotech industry in general.

66. Katie Nelson, “Conn. Land Taken from Homeowners Still Undeveloped,” *Associated Press*, September 25, 2009, http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D9AU92VG0&show_article=1.

67. Kelo v. New London (04-108), Supreme Court of the United States, J. Thomas, dissenting, 2005, <http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/04-108.ZD1.html>.

Given that JHU and EBDI’s intentions would require enacting the violence of the dislocation and demolition of a fragile generational community within an analogous urban space, this palpable, and eventually visible threat would be met with the will to contest it. However, in a geography such as LJ/UTC, otherwise undeveloped before the “techopole” urbanism at present, there is a notable absence of contestation, as the bulldozers would only need encounter the sage scrub, cottontails, and coyotes. While the same economic benefits that are touted on a local scale by the progenitors of such development in the case of Baltimore or New London, would be scaled up and asserted regionally in the case of San Diego, whose critical asset to leverage is the abundance of undeveloped open space, we can begin to trace an inverse relationship between the scaling up and distributive dissolve of developmental benefit, and the potential for cohesive communities with a powerful enough voice to question such imperatives. Is this to absolve such imperatives? Can a stronger ethical justification be made for this developmental system when it targets open space as opposed to urban space occupied by an already threatened working class? Is this a false dilemma? In what terms then could one critique the urbanisms produced by such developmental paradigms? When we consider CONNECT, in one of its promotional timelines, touting SAIC and General Atomics’ development of submarine-launched Trident Missiles and unmanned Predator Drones respectively, one might begin to make the case that the absence of visible and palpable violence at the local level does not signify the mitigation thereof, so much as it does its occlusion via the macro-socialization of risk [public assets funneled into private licenses], and the global displacement of conflict [the confluence of a massive defense infrastructure with the sites of production and exploitation, embodied by the global factory and the global slum, being globally elsewhere].⁶⁸ Might we posit that within the industrial urbanization of the east coast pace Baltimore and New London, we can witness the narrative of gentrification rehearsed on a micro/local scale, while the post-Manifest Destiny sprawl of the west has affected a scaling up and globalization the same dynamic? Although tracing this specific narrative exceeds the breadth of this discussion, I will eventually return to the core of this problem with a performative example. Before this, I would like to take account of what cohesive communities, of what organic and oppositional agencies have worked to counter the systems at play in the terrain of and adjacent to UCSD.

Mike Davis asserts in passing, in his discussion of the development adjacent to UCSD:

CONNECT, whose goals were the privatization of public science and the training of researchers as entrepreneurs, was the triumph of an antipodal agenda to the New Left’s earlier attempt [led in part by Angela Davis, Carlos Blanco, Herbert Schiller and Herbert Marcuse at UCSD] to build an inner city–UCSD alliance.⁶⁹

Similar to Kester, who implied a socioeconomic spectrum of postindustrial urban form discussed earlier, Davis implicates an ideological spectrum of UCSD’s extra-institutional developmental agency. On the one end, CONNECT would represent a typically dominant sym-

biosis between the university and the proponents of capitalism, on the other end, Davis’ allusion is to the contestation that occurred over the establishment and curricular mission of UCSD’s third college in the late 1960’s. Had the sitting ‘New Left’ at UCSD at the time had its way, the college’s name would be “Lumumba Zapata College”, a program designed for students of color, with a primary circular focus on ethno-political studies, and explicitly committed to leftist revolutionary struggle. In an attempt to solidify the agenda of the college as such, the proponents of this effort allied with and enlisted the downtown-based Black Panthers and Brown Berets.⁷⁰ While the title would never fly with the university’s administration (The college was eventually titled Thurgood Marshall College in 1993), these struggles were effective in defining the curriculum that would be established, albeit not ‘revolutionary’, to any extent.

Davis’ assertion, although a brief meditation, is also important to the extent that it implicates the 12 mile remove between the campus and downtown, a condition seemingly as strategic as it was pragmatic. While the narrative of the Regent’s decision for the siting of the campus could be attributed to the pragmatic considerations previously discussed (cheap, empty land, Scripps, speculation, etc.), Roger Revelle, the university’s main proponent before the regents board, became enthralled in notions of the new campus as a “cathedral on the hill”; an ivory tower at a remove from the seedy reputation of downtown, despite popular push-back that the regents would do a better service by siting campus closer thereto (Revelle himself would eventually stand to profit from the siting of campus as it was in La Jolla).⁷¹ If this would suggest of the campus’ innate ideological marshaling of geography, then it would from the outset be to the disadvantage of Lumumba-Zapata’s proponents, as the absence of a cohesive and contestable urban terrain adjacent to or in the vicinity of campus (such as that adjacent to JHU in Baltimore), wherein radical elements had no territorial stake, would more likely benefit and empower the interests of university administrators in concert with developmental speculation. It’s not simply a matter of the inconvenient 15 minutes it takes to shuttle between campus and downtown (by car); the unification of radicalized students and revolutionary urban collectives as a cohesive agency perhaps lacked a territorial element that the unification of capitalistic imperatives with university research (as a cohesive agency) [CONNECT] was able to control. Perhaps the urban conditions adjacent the campus at present stand in droll contradiction to Francois Cusset’s characterization of the campus milieu during the turbulent period of the early 70s.

At the limit, the experience that came the closest to the countercultural fever of the 1970s was no doubt that of a number of French thinkers--Lyotard, Baudrillard, Derrida, Bruno Latour, Louis Marin, Michel de Certeau--who went to teach at the mythical campus of the University of California located in La Jolla, by the San Diego Bay, Between the tutelary figure of Herbert Marcuse, the skirmishes with Marxist or gay activists, the omnipresence of the beach and its bonfires, the fashionable nightclubs (the Jesuit de Certeau is said to have visited “as an anthropologist” the famous Barbicos), the campus in La Jolla was at the time a hot spot of political contestation and liberated lifestyles . . .⁷²

70. Jim Miller, “Just Another Day in Paradise? The Episodic History of Rebellion in America’s Finest City,” *Under the Perfect Sun*, 225. The iconic moment in this struggle stands as Angela Davis’ and others’, with the support of the aforementioned groups, occupation of the university Registrar’s office, eventually involving a the droll episode of Marcuse himself paying for the office’s door, smashed in during the encounter.

71. Anderson, *An Improbable Venture*, 67–91.

72. Francois Cusset, *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States*, trans. Jeff Fort, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 69.

68. *Celebrating the CONNECT Entrepreneur Hall of Fame*, pdf timeline, http://www.connect.org/images/annual-report/HoF_timeline.pdf.

69. Davis, *Under the Perfect Sun*, 131.

And would then acknowledge the crux foreshadowing the eventual irony: “. . . while remaining a campus nonetheless, largely isolated from the rest of the world.”⁷³

It is important to note that there is a rich history of political contestation and protest specific to the campus geography. However, though I would argue that geography was a crucial element determining an imbalance of power between protest groups and campus authorities (as agents and extensions of the larger institutions being critiqued), the subject of contestation was never the geography itself. Indeed, why would it be? The campus as a geographic entity never threatened a stake in “place” per se (as JHU had done in East Baltimore). The campus only ever served as a quasi-arbitrary platform for the contestation of larger issues. During its formative years, of primary concern was the Vietnam War, and during the same time, the 3rd college struggle would center on the symbolic and discursive space of curriculum and official titling. Later, protests would ensue when affirmative action in California was overturned by popular referendum in 1995, and at present, as the question of whether or not the University of California constitutes a “public” entity (with all of the subsequent political and socioeconomic implications) has been pressed by hyperbolic fee hikes. In this model, campus would constitute the center of contestation simply because it functions to temporarily consolidate a critical mass of political participants.

Here again, we arrive at the tyrannical doublebind of the banal. We can behold the dominant agents of development, be they formal or informal or challenging of that very binary, articulating the urban conditions present adjacent UCSD. In so doing, they would entrench their monopoly by determining, whether inadvertently or intentionally, the programmatic imperatives governing access to and tenancy within such space. I argue that this is characterized by a truncated temporality on all fronts; be it a day of classes, a quarter, two years in a dorm, an academic degree program, the work day at a biotech firm, a stint climbing the ladder or before moving on to a new company, or several years living out the bachelor phase of one’s professional advancement. In combination with municipal infrastructural donations, master planned amenities, and provisions of security, the question of a vested interest in horizontal civic space is difficult to grasp if not nullified by the brevity of tenancy and the imperceptibility of that which a consumer might lack. This functions to preclude the formation of a cohesive community such that might contest the will of the ‘dominant agents’ in the first place. In effect, the passive client therein becomes passive agent in the advancement of such a narrative.

In conclusion, I do not mean to discount the struggles that have taken place on the UCSD campus in as much by not reflexively acknowledging their geopolitical context, fail to understand their complicity with hegemonic regimes, or their ostensibly predetermined fate. I would however suggest that this set of concerns could somehow enter the discourse; and I would like to call to task the recent initiative of the Visual Arts department to formalize a “Public Culture” facet of the program. In my understanding of the program’s loosely articulated agenda, its purpose would be to facilitate productive collaborations between the department/university and the larger community in an effort to challenge the dominant conceptions of and explore new critical potential for public space and discourse. Is this merely a historically obtuse reiteration of the New Left’s attempt to

accomplish something very similar 40 years ago? Or is this quixotically naive to the predominant forms of external engagement that imbricate the university’s development with the development of the adjacent landscape, in effect bolstering UCSD’s own progression toward privatization? Perhaps. Of anxious concern, it may be, under the constraints of present fiscal crises that the program never establishes a legacy before it is subsumed by a technocratic scaling back of ostensibly expendable departments such as Visual Arts. On the other hand, perhaps its elastic agenda, programmed from the outset with the imperative of critical reflexivity, has the flexibility to adapt to a concurrent crisis in disciplinary distinction and sits at the forefront of both a theoretical mapping of a contestable terrain amidst rampant spatial homogenization and socioeconomic polarization, as well as articulating and enacting poignant interventions within and against this narrative, answering Jameson’s demand 20 years ago for the preeminence of the cartographic and the pedagogical in politically engaged cultural production. To this, and given the relative brevity of my own tenancy within this landscape, I would like to conjure the nexus of Wegman and Sekula outlined earlier vis-a-vis their explicit engagement with the landscape in question, in order to construct a counter-ontology, counter-genealogy, and counter-mythos of the urban terrain that may prove Public Culture’s most strident foil.

73. Ibid., 69.

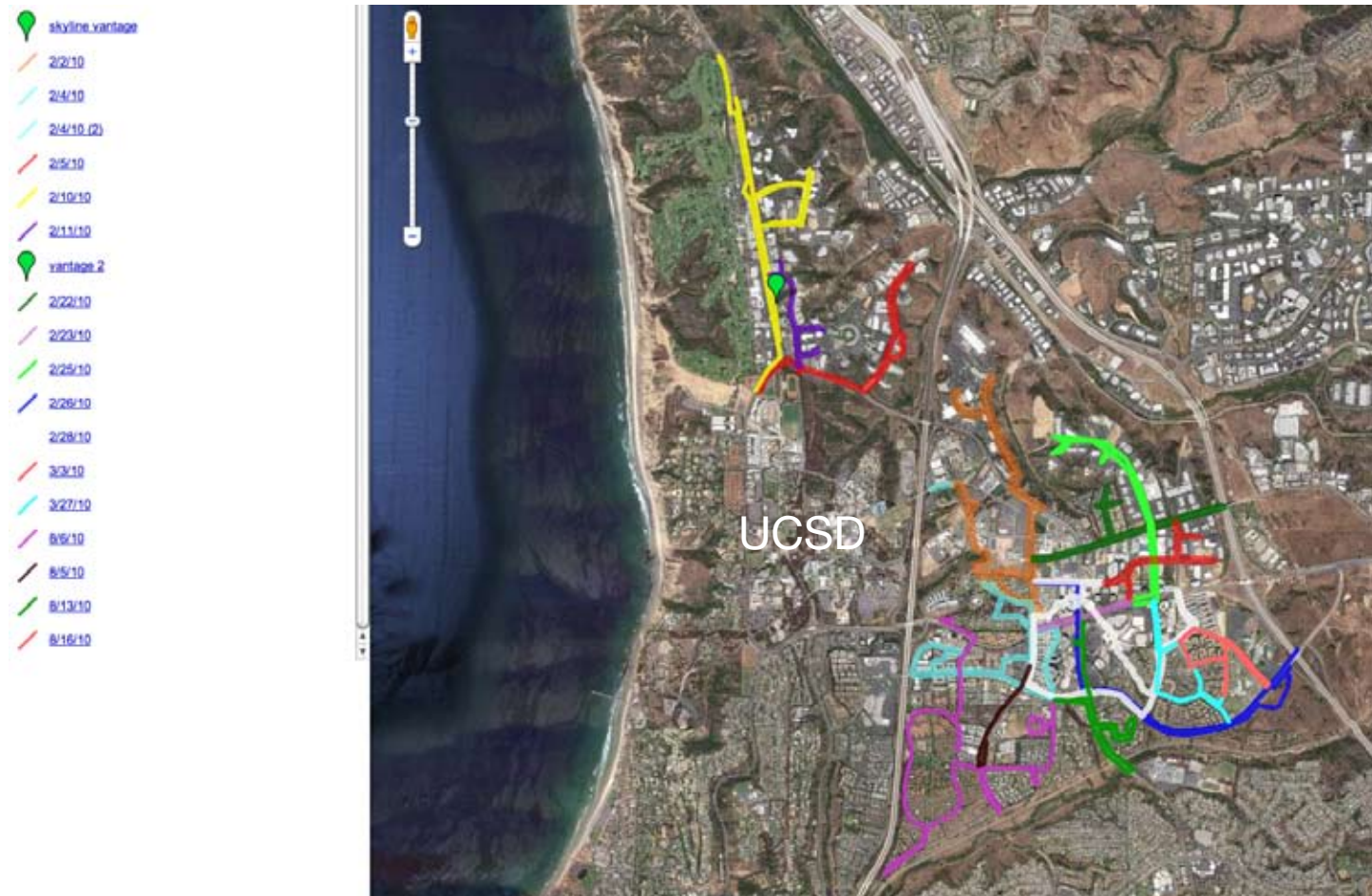


Figure 19: Several walks in LJ/UTC, Winter–Summer, 2010



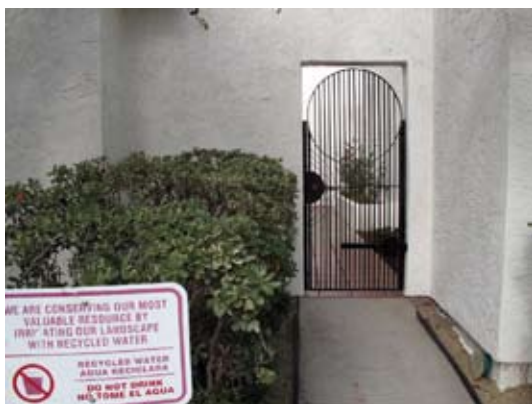
Figure 20: An “Entity”.

III

La Jolla / UTC and the Flaneur

Starting on February 2nd, 2010, and after several hiatuses, through the beginning of August, 2010, I have been completing a walk along all public streets in the vicinity of University of California, San Diego; specifically, all those on “Torrey Pines Mesa” (the territory along North Torrey Pines Road (County Highway S21) until it proceeds downhill along Torrey Pines State Park) and all those within a perimeter defined by I-5 (West), I-805 (East), and Rose Canyon (South) [figure 19].

The purpose of these walks (which I have formed into a daily practice; previous responsibilities permitting) is several-fold. The most direct function is to produce a complete photographic record of the territory, starting with a set of terms, or “tags” as a semantic means for selecting subjects. “Entities” denotes structures whose significance is symbolic, such as architectural signage [figure 20]; “Structures”, denotes specific buildings, or wings or portions of buildings if they do not fit in the entire frame; “vantages” for all those images that present a landscape rather than a discreet structure i.e. framed subjectively, with multiple subjects in the back, mid and foreground; Apertures (rare, I might add) for images of unintentional, yet unobstructed paths and/or passages; and “obstructions” for images of passages that have been intentionally secured and/or impeded. Thus far, the images have been uploaded to and geo-tagged with the location of the image’s subject on “panoramio.com” (through this site, the images will eventually appear on Google Map’s image layer). What emerges is an eye-level image database of the territory, organized temporally, geographically, and by subject. The database is pending the development of additional permutations.



In Order: A “structure”, a “vantage”, an “aperture” and an “obstruction”.

In order to complete this process, I transitioned my appearance from that of a bohemian graduate student to a some-what-more-presentable low-level corporate drone / technocrat. This includes a professional haircut and disposing of a 2-month thick beard, and adopting a cheap pair of khakis, several cheap polo shirts, a pair of cheap orthopedic New Balance walking sneakers, a UCSD lanyard holding my grad student ID, a 3M visibility vest, and a camera monopod [figure 21]. On the one hand, such costuming, while ostensibly unnecessary, was a convenient measure, given the suspicious response that is engendered by the blatant and unsanctioned act of photographing the built environment. This environment in particular, when considering not only the competitive secrecy of individual companies, but also the potentially dubious connotations of the industries typical to the area (biotech / pharmaceuticals, defense, digital-technology, finance). Furthermore, because office and lab parks (which usually establish proprietary amenities) parking lots, and arterial linkage streets dominate the landscape, the presence of anyone not employed by specific companies and/or their guests is potentially suspicious (why else would anyone be there?). The use of an innocuous disguise would hopefully mitigate the suspicious response of perceptive security personnel.

Hi, My name is Charles Miller, I am Urban Studies and Planning-affiliated researcher working out of the Visual Arts Department at UCSD. I am presently collecting data for a project assessing the tech park development adjacent to the UCSD campus. If you don't mind my asking, do you live and/or work around here?

Upon confrontation (my presence was, despite the disguise, still somewhat out of place), this is the line I would deliver. It is entirely true. My delivery and the complexity of the statement were sufficient to overwhelm my interrogators and muddle their suspicions. Of course, the formal implications of the message and its mode of delivery would suggest that I am undertaking something other than an “art” project—perhaps to present myself in a way other than with this requisite disingenuousness would engender an immediate dismissal.

A measure of “performance” in the theatrical sense:

Presenting myself as the personified extension of the environment in question: a young, low-level yet upwardly hopeful corporate technician, I purposefully avoid being cognitively singled out by a passerby as something threatening or invasive.

Do you work for Google?



figure 21

74. The most comprehensive effort toward developing an ontology of micro-architectural “interventions” in public space is, by my account “The Interventionists”, a major group exhibition at Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in 2004, curated by Nato Thompson. See: *The Interventionists: Users’ Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life*, ed. Nato Thompson and Gregory Sholette, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004). Other recent significant exhibitions have implicated this specific form of intervention; of regional specificity to San Diego/Tijuana: the series of “InSite” exhibitions (1994,1997, 2000, 2005). See: *InSite: Art Practices in the Public Domain: San Diego Tijuana*, (San Diego: InSite, 2005)., for the most recent example.

75. From my personal experience with Michael Rakowitz, and his graduate mentor, Krzysztof Wodiczko.

My outward visibility, in this sense, lends itself interestingly to a kind of cognitive invisibility. This dynamic has not been left unexplored within contemporary artistic practice, especially those attempts to critically engage with public space in recent history.⁷⁴ Often, however, this work endeavors toward the opposite affect-- disrupting the visual and spatial continuum of quotidian urban space as means of shocking an unthinking, socially conditioned and channeled public into cognitive awareness of the distribution of power (otherwise invisible) within such space.⁷⁵ To the extent that this project could be regarded as a “performance”, it is one that plays at a semantic paradox between visibility and invisibility, furthermore one whose audience is myself, a pedestrian public otherwise unaware, and one virtual: e.g. discursive engagement with a written text such as this. Simply put, a degree of theatricality is achieved by assuming the appearance and behaviors of a roll other than those presumed of one’s stated identity and profession. However, were I not an artist, doubtless my identity and profession would follow closely the form I am merely performing here. While not an intervention in any immediate sense, such a gesture may become an intervention discursively, pointed toward the potential of cultural reflexivity within a landscape that has nearly perfected its resistance to critical cultural reflection.

A measure of “performance” in a utilitarian sense:

The term could hardly be more prevalent in rhetoric addressing strategies for managing a corporate workforce. Mobility is directly contingent to an employee’s performance in a competitive context: out-performing one’s coworkers, notwithstanding political considerations, is how to ensure one’s position on the next ladder rung. Corporate strategists and managers advocate for and boast of cultures of “high-performance” in their companies. Pejoratively, however, this terminology is strikingly resonant with Herbert Marcuse’s notion of the “performance principle.” In his seminal text, *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse elaborates upon Freud’s ontogenetic psychological principals e.g. the reality principle, which refers to those external conditions that prompt the ego to administer and/or repress the Id’s purely instinctual drives. Critically synthesizing Freud and Marx, Marcuse introduces the performance principle as a kind of socio-historically specific version of the reality principle—a terminology that more specifically conforms Freud’s reality principle to the culture of post-war North American advanced capitalism.⁷⁶

We designate it as performance principle in order to emphasize that under its rule society is stratified according to the competitive economic performances of its members . . . For the vast majority of the population, the scope and mode of satisfaction are determined by their own labor; but their labor is work for an apparatus which they do not control, which operates as an independent power to which individuals must submit if they want to live. And it becomes the more alien the more specialized the division of labor becomes. Men do not live their lives but perform pre-established functions . . . Libido is diverted for socially useful performances in which the individual

works for himself only in so far as he works for the apparatus, engaged in activities that mostly do not coincide with his own faculties and desires.⁷⁷ [emphasis mine]

77. Ibid., 44-45.

Marcuse begins to establish here ontology of alienated corporate labor becoming synonymous with the term performance. In Freud, the repression inflicted by the ego on the id’s base instincts is necessary for the survival of the human being.⁷⁸ In Marcuse’s elaboration, a notion of “surplus-repression” is introduced: that repression which is in excess of the basic repression essential for survival, marshaled, rather, for competitive mobility within and to uphold the potentially arbitrary mores and cultural practices of a specific set of socio-historical and socioeconomic conditions.⁷⁹ It could be a measure of surplus repression therefore to diagram the cultural practices that the built conditions of a place such as LJ/UTC are configured to accommodate: predominantly the material trappings of an emerging upper middle class corporate workforce. Alluding back to performance’s theatrical implications, the term is all the more fitting in this context. Because the performance principal necessitates the reification of the subject to perform [and out-perform over and over again] a functional role within the corporate apparatus, and this task is something gratuitous to or in surplus of the reality of said subject’s instinctual desires, or at least has been dictated by something external to the subject, a functional distinction between theatrical performance [presuming a fictional / artificial role] and utilitarian performance [measurable in degrees, evaluated by its end product] becomes moot. Otherwise put, performance supplants experience, to the extent that experience could be defined as an authentic, non-repressed and non- instrumental, yet productive engagement with community, society and the environment.

Might one endeavor to at least representationally invert this logic? That is, by reflexively assuming and performing at least the external forms and behaviors of the culture in question (upwardly mobile corporate drone) as a kind of functionless proxy-performance, can one, perhaps paradoxically, begin to establish a degree of authentic experience? Not necessarily ‘authentic’ in a liberated sense, but ‘authentic’ to the extent that by engaging with the space in order to interface with and observe its spatial and social conditions independent of its presumed utility, one may be able to develop terms with the agency to contend with its structural determinants, and contest its veils of naturalism, pragmatism, progress and banality.

To this extent can this image database, and the performative methodology that produced it, emerge as a kind of critical anthropological gesture, and what might such an investigation inform us of? How do the physical conditions of the space itself necessitate and entrench a kind of performance principal as described above? From its outset, the project was deployed as a journalistic research methodology and a means for accumulating experience as a kind of intuitive data in order to resolve both a personal disdain for the space and better develop an understanding of its social, spatial and material determinants and conditions. If the multiplicity of reconciliation here points toward not only a performance and research but also toward a philosophically governed lifestyle / daily practice, then perhaps Baudelaire’s Flaneur could provide an helpful point of departure.

78. Ibid., 33.

79. Ibid., 35.

76. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), 35.

From Benjamin to the Situationists to Sontag, and across the gamut to new urbanists such as Jon Jerde, the flaneur has been applied with considerable breadth in the past century. Underlying a majority of these analyses, practical applications, elaborations and critiques there is an understanding of the city in the sense of Baudelaire’s newly modern Paris: dense and organic, fraught with chance encounters and unplanned socialization. Benjamin in particular links the emergence of the flaneur to the industrial modernization of urban space, which is to posit it as simultaneously a subjective consequence of and strategy for critically testing the substance of a new technological paradigm.⁸⁰ Indeed, when engaged reflexively, the practice takes a critical dimension: the act of walking a bowed lobster down the sidewalk might spur the passerby to reflect upon the frenetic and depersonalized conditions of the emerging urban environment among other things. Perhaps more importantly, the flaneur holds in dialectical tension detached voyeurism and popular immersion: the observer / participant, imparting due critical reflexivity. And there are, of course, gender and class based critiques: the flaneur’s gaze is both bourgeois and male, its detachment is more complacently privileged than critically reflexive, its presumptions of populism naively patronizing.⁸¹

I will distill this into two convenient, if reductive, axioms: the flaneur is a subjective agent in the context of 19th century industrial urbanism; he is contingent to the urban paradigms of this specific epoch. And two: Pejoratively, his gaze has the power to objectify-- to render the human subjects of the city into dutiful characters and curious others for distant bourgeois contemplation. Although one could make a strong argument for the ethics of the flaneur: holding in check his privileged voyeurism with authentic social engagement, I would like to temporarily suspend this consideration so that I may assert the re-instantiation of the flaneur within Joel Garreau’s ostensible edge city.

Throughout this text, I have employed Garreau’s term, and in this particular context, he could be regarded as the popular ‘flaneur’ par excellence—his “journalistic” celebration of this emerging urban typology would indeed position him as a prime “observer/participant,” Engaging not only the residents and proponents of “Edge City”, (he uses the term as if it were a proper noun in his text) but also forming a vague consultation business that serves as a kind of a priori cheerleader for edge city’s ostensibly exciting and organic emergence.⁸² But while his methodology for identifying this typology fits very neatly the “flaneur” mold, I would posit that his automotive, capital and credential-empowered circle jerks with the nouveau de-centered urban elite do not engage the flaneur’s critical thrust, especially as we consider the historical implications of the term juxtaposed against the implications concerning public life in Garreau’s awed edge city.

Some observations and inferences:

As a general rule, streets are rarely less than six lanes in width. Ostensibly, this would exist in order to accommodate a high volume of automobile traffic. In conjunction with the abundant parking space that effectively motes commercial buildings in the territory, one can infer that the majority of the territory’s work force arrive and depart there by private automobile and do so on a daily basis. Given this

scale, it is difficult for the pedestrian to cross the street. Often, certain corner-to-corner crossings are physically restricted. Near what is arguably the busiest intersection: Genesee Avenue and La Jolla Village Drive, there are three pedestrian bridges. Except for one, the bridges cannot be easily accessed from the sidewalk; they require that the pedestrian enter private commercial zones (such as a mall, or a conglomerate of office buildings) in order to use them. It is often unclear whether streets of a more human scale (2 lanes, and not requiring of signal-based crossing) are private, as they often correspond to and exist within specific entities and/or commercial conglomerates. They would appear as more manageably sized capillary vessels that connect to the larger arterial thoroughfares. Again, the distinction, in these cases, between public right-of-ways and private conglomerates or “parks” is generally ambiguous, as the infrastructural amenities would seem to blur together. As a general trend perceivable on a macro scale, each subsequent “block” is usually comprised of its own private entity, that services a majority of its own amenities such as parking, coffee kiosks, restaurants, meandering garden promenades, etc. and these quasi-independent cells are connected unspectacularly by the arterial thoroughfares. To this extent, what constitutes public space officially, i.e. space that a citizen cannot be excluded from on legal grounds, is relegated to the sidewalks along these thoroughfares, or is reserved for the passage of vehicular traffic. The same kind of cellular format is perceivable amongst the residential sections of the greater territory as well. Predominantly, they are either: condo complexes in which the buildings maximize their footprint on the lot, leaving open space only for access to parking, or duplex subdivisions with smaller unit/structure ratios, often flanked by small yards, and usually accommodating the equivalency of a small park and/or garden promenade. There are several high-rise developments. Although it is not the case throughout, there is a significant frequency of gated developments, the conditions of which are similar to any of the three aforementioned types. The gated instances are the epitome of the cellular compartmentalization identified in the description of the commercial spaces, as there is literally no permeability through these spaces for unsanctioned pedestrians and vehicles. There are a set of common terms and conditions that could be attributed to the territory regardless of whether one would identify specific entities as office parks, technology parks, biotech clusters, office high-rises, chain restaurants, commercial retail, mall retail, condo complexes, condo high-rises, gated communities, or duplex subdivision. Conditionally, any one of these specific programs could be characterized as sanitized (clean), manicured, designed, secured, pleasant, domestic, moreover conforming rigorously to mainstream standards of visual attractiveness and appeal for architectural space. Office parks are characteristically adorned with glossy stone and mirror-glass facades, and formally combine functional minimalism with Venturian postmodern accouterment.

Jamesonian Hyperspace

The combination of quotidian visual appeal and the particular scale of this urban matrix would begin to resemble a kind of hyper articulation of Frederic Jameson’s postmodern “hyperspace”, for which the Westin Bonaventure hotel [figure 22] in downtown Los Angeles



figure 22: The Westin Bonaventure: as ominous as it is invisible.

80. See Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, (London: Verso, 1997).

81. For further gender-based critiques and elaborations of the “Flaneur”, see: Susan Buck-Morss, “The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering,” *New German Critique* 39 (1986)., Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, “The Flâneur: The City and Its Discontents,” in *Paris as Revolution: Writing the Nineteenth-Century City* (1994)., Elizabeth Wilson, “The Invisible Flâneur,” in *New Left Review* 1/191 (1992)., and Janet Wolff, “The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 2 (1985).

82. Garreau’s text is frequently lauded by urban planners and entrepreneurs alike, as a totem to an emergent typology that, before his discussion, was largely not understood. What exactly does the Garreau group do? Visit <http://www.garreau.com/>, and let me know what you think.

83. Frederic Jameson, introduction to *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 1991), 38-45.

is his case study. In his discussion of the building, he elucidates the cultural implications and socio-political affects of the building’s formal properties. I am interested in two particular aspects of his discussion: concerning the channeled, indirect, and understated interface between it and the city proper, and the multilevel, symmetrical, labyrinthian, albeit disorienting configuration of its lobby and internal retail spaces.⁸³ LJ/UTC’s urban matrix, as discussed previously, could be considered a set of privatized compartments within a heavy framework of public infrastructure. While this is not dissimilar from the majority of urban spaces at least in the U.S., I would argue that in LJ/UTC, and other edge cities in Garreau’s model, this dynamic encounter develops to an entirely new scale of sprawl and dispersal: individual proprietary entities occupy the space of an entire city block, and the interconnecting streets, as mentioned previously, are at the scale of freeways. As these individual entities, arguably in response to this scaling, usually make provisions for their own amenities, they become quasi-autonomous replacements for the city proper in and of themselves. Jameson discusses the Bonaventure’s curiously understated entrances:

What I first want to suggest about these curiously unmarked ways in is that they seem to have been imposed by some new category of closure governing the inner space of the hotel itself . . . I believe that . . . the Bonaventure aspires to being a total space, a complete world, a kind of miniature city . . . In this sense, then ideally the minicity 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 replacement or substitute . . . But this disjunction from the surrounding city is different from that of the monuments of the International Style, in which the act of disjunction was violent, visible, and had a very real symbolic significance--as in Le Corbusier’s great Pilotis, whose gesture radically separates the new Utopian space of the modern from the degraded and fallen city fabric which it thereby explicitly repudiates . . . The Bonaventure, however, is content to ‘let the fallen city fabric continue to be in its being’ (to parody Heidegger); no further effects, no larger protopolitical Utopian transformation, is either expected or desired.⁸⁴

84. Ibid., 39-42.

In the case of the Garreauian edge city, and characteristic in LJ/UTC, the “city” to which Jameson alludes never existed. If high modernism aspired toward a kind of dialectical tension with the ostensible failure and degradation of older urbanities, then the edge city is in lockstep with the Bonaventure’s monumental nonchalance toward the “city” at large. If high modernism’s utopian imperative was toward a kind of socialist democracy, then LJ/UTC and edge cities in general subscribe to an arguably neoliberal utopian underpinning: cooperation and collaboration sacrificed at the alter of competition and the mythos of autonomy. Indeed, a traditional or historical urban fabric

was, figuratively and literally, never in place before the ‘proprietary entities’ to which I refer earlier established themselves in the precise guise of the Bonaventure: each marked by a presumed independence from each other, and any kind of transcendent civic adherence is merely relegated thanklessly to the gratuitous laneage of heavy infrastructure. And this space, to reassert, is almost entirely optimized for the passage of private automobiles. The presence of sidewalks in this environment might strike one as shameless asteism.

Given that public right-of-ways and pedestrian spaces are paradoxically marginalized by being pushed out-in-the-open, any body lacking vehicular prosthesis may become anxiously aware of h/er/is vulnerability and the relative difficulty of traversing spaces between amenities on foot. To this extent, returning to the flaneur, the space of chance encounter, and generally of pedestrian experience, becomes internalized, forced into the artificial urban microcosms of malls and gated communities, which are either aggressively exclusive, or at least reserve the right to deny access and “services” to anyone at anytime. Furthermore, once within these spaces, one could begin to outline yet another narrative of disorientation and dislocation.

If the flaneur influenced any decision making with regard to urban design and planning, it was that of *implementing* the conditions that *produce* chance encounter, distraction, and narrative sequence.⁸⁵ What was once the unplanned consequence of the urban melee that subsequently produced the potential for new forms of autonomous and liberated subjectivity has been reified as a programmatic inevitability, subjugating the citizen/consumer/client to the imperatives of architectural space. I return to Jameson. He would eventually conclude of the Bonaventure’s disorienting and fragmented lobby:

. . . postmodern hyperspace--has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world.⁸⁶

85. Jon Jerdes’ Horton Plaza in downtown San Diego is case and point.

Edward Soja, in a BBC TWO documentary, expands upon Jameson, suggesting that the combination of the fragmented disorientation experienced in the hotel’s lobby, and awe at the lures and attractions of the space (similar to Jerde’s intentions for Horton plaza), produces a kind of “carceral” space in which the subject is either entrapped as a body trying to cognitively navigate, or as a consumer, whom in h/er/is disorientation is more likely to appease the temptation to spend money.⁸⁷ Either way, this lost soul must submit to some higher authority: either by becoming a client or simply in order to find their way.⁸⁸ Such as the case, while the subject believes that sh/h/e is in fact the benefactor of the structure sh/h/e inhabits, sh/h/e is rather very much subjugated by systems of control.

A digression on mirror glass.

Here we have a perfectly loaded membrane. Jameson likens it to, “Those reflective sunglasses which make it impossible for your interlocutor to see your own eyes and achieve a certain aggressivity toward and power over the other.”⁸⁹ He sets up here a metaphor for glass’s particular effectiveness as a means of surveillance. Indeed,

86. Jameson, *Postmoderism*, 44.

87. Soja is, perhaps problematically, conflating Jameson’s notion of “hyperspace” with Baudrillard’s notion of “hyperreality” in this example. Frederic Jameson, “Open University,” BBC2, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhyQ0HES8mM>.

88. Ibid.

89. Jameson, *Postmoderism*, 42.

90. George Baker's discussion of the work of Knut Ås-dam: "The Space of the Stain," *Grey Room* No. 5 (Autumn, 2001), 5-37, provides explication of this Lacanian theory with respect to Roger Callois' earlier work concerning "psychestenia" and mimicry. Ås-dam's work in particular employs reflective glass as a sculptural element and significant formal component of his work.

Foucault's panopticon has been thinly veiled by an architectural rhetoric of formal accents that allow the building to humbly dissolve before the grandeur of sky and nature. But if the glass mediates a dynamic within the Lacanian "gaze", then it would so as to produce a defensive visual hierarchy, working to solidify additional disorienting effects. If the subject happens to recognize h/er/im/self amidst the liquid reflection of the space s/he inhabits, then the loss of one's coordinates as the center from whence emanates an empowered, autonomous visuality is fully enacted as one recognizes that they are but one object within a visual field.⁹⁰



To conclude my digression into Jameson, I posit that LJ/UTC, and the edge city in general enact 'postmodern hyperspace' on a protracted scale: not only do the spaces developed by individual proprietors resemble the conditions of the Bonaventure, but the larger matrix of these entities that we might call a 'city' fails, in turn, to produce any dialectical counterweight. If the space is inclusive, it subjugates by means of allure and disorientation, if it excludes, it subjugates by vastly exceeding a scale convenient to the unextended human body.

The flaneur begins to strike one as archaic. Or, the presupposition of urbanity in his formulation becomes apparent: it corresponds to a

degree of unpredictability that is contingent to the agonism of class and difference that permeates industrial and pre-industrial urban footprints. In this context, the mere act of being produces fidelity to a public sphere; the flaneur merely imparts a measure of self-awareness. But where does the flaneur find himself within a carceral landscape of total programming? My contention in defense of the flaneur is that if not nullified and/or reified, the flaneur in such a space must insist upon making the commitment to occupying whatever might be left of horizontal, inclusive space, and to move, however inconvenient, under his own bodily faculties. The mere act of his occupation and observation amounts to a breach of such a space's de facto contract: defiantly insisting upon engagement in a space optimized otherwise for subscription. I will flirt dangerously with irrelevance and assert that the self-consciously naive exploration of an overdetermined landscape, as if some measure of the mythos of authentic urban experience could be located therein, becomes a critical foil, a subversive act—due in part, paradoxically, to a general compulsion to dismiss such an act as innocuous.

Hidden in Plain Sight

I will return to my bracketing of the flaneur's ethical argument. David Harvey stated in his discussion of Baudelaire, "[he] would be torn for the rest of his life between the stances of flaneur and dandy: a disengaged and cynical voyeur on the one hand, and a man of the people who enters into the life of his subjects with passion on the other."⁹¹ Who are the 'people' to whom Harvey refers? If the edge city can be leveraged as a foil to the mythos of urbanity pace the 19th century industrial city, that is, by attempting to position the flaneur within the edge city, the presuppositions of the flaneur's progenitors become cognitively immanent, then what might this, by extension, suggest of the practices of daily life within the edge city? I have in this and previous sections developed a loose profile of the edge city's residents. Let us totalize such here by assuming that the relatively permanent residents of this place could be identified as its benefactors, and as such are in step with its programming. As passive proponents, and concerning a homogenized middle/upper-middle class profile, then the requisite agonism and difference from whence emerges as a palpable referent for the flaneur to passionately "enter into the life of his subjects," and to ostensibly become "of the people" is none to be found. The Baudelarian or Benjaminian flaneur is, if even acknowledged, readily dismissed in this space. He is marginal to "the people". Despite his bourgeois self awareness, he is essentially the weekend-warrior version of so many other vagrants. Mike Davis:

. . . a seamless continuum of middle-class work, consumption, and recreation, insulated from the city's "unsavory" streets. Ramparts and battlements, reflective glass and elevated pedways, are tropes in an architectural language warning off the underclass Other. Although architectural critics are usually blind to this militarized syntax, urban pariah groups [retail employees at the mall who ride the bus to work] - whether young black, poor Latino immigrants, or elderly homeless white females - read the signs immediately.⁹²

91. David Harvey, *Paris: Capital of Modernity*, (New York: Routledge, 2003).

92. Mike Davis, "Fortress Los Angeles: The militarization of public space," *Variations on a theme park: The new American city and the end of public space*, Ed. Michael Sorkin, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999), 159.

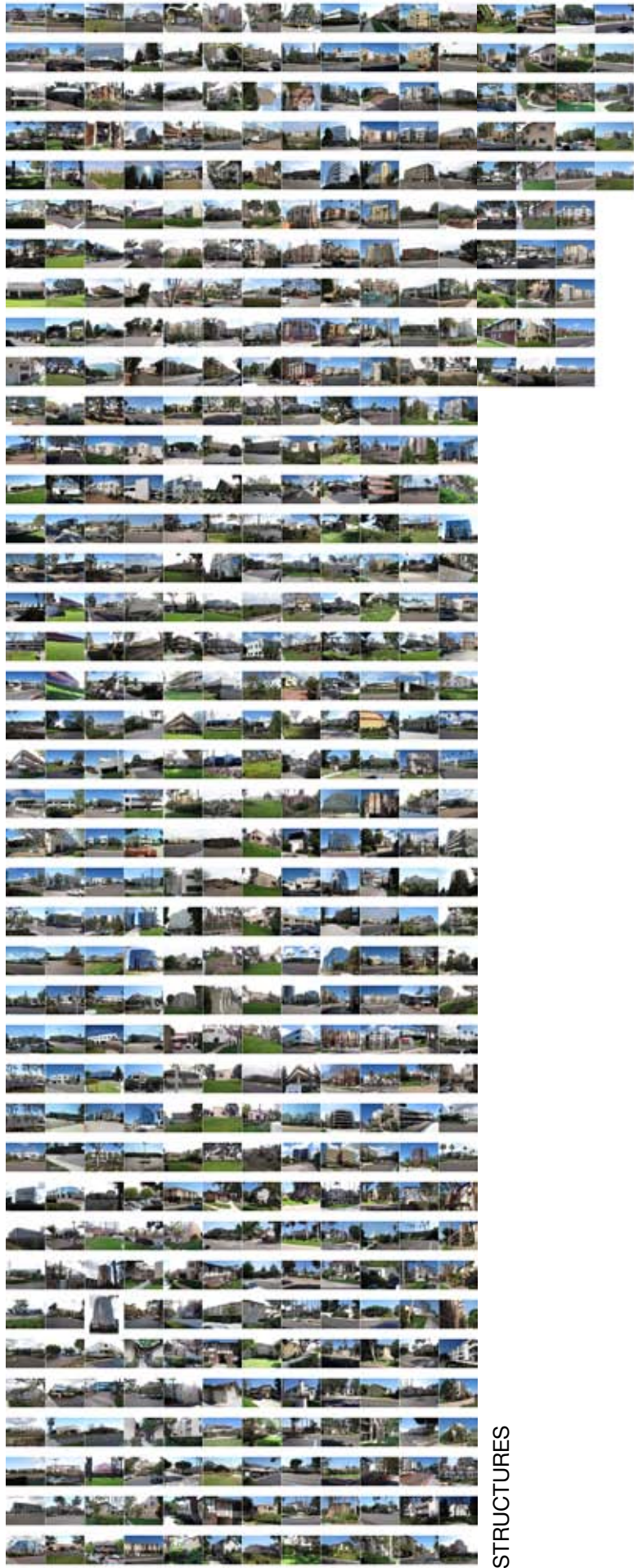
Clenching tight this position on the outside, yet oscillating between recognizable extension and unwelcome vagrant: a proxy banishment from the garden of progress as it were, and asserting Baudelaire's pejorative formulation of the flaneur (cynical voyeur): his observation and recording could be marshaled as agonistic friction against the cultural status quo in this landscape. His gaze renders privileged, included benefactors as curious, dumbfounded 'others'. And insofar as the architectural spaces developed here are part and parcel of the same cultural matrix, the same imagistic violence can be inflicted thereupon. And if this vindictive delusion of grandeur holds any water, then the obtuse tools of an archaic anthropological methodology can become a kind of weapon, and the hierarchy implicated by the lived space in this regard is, at least virtually and temporarily, inverted.

To reassert: Since February 2, 2010, I have walked all public streets and right-of-ways within the 'edge city' type development adjacent to the UCSD campus. Disguised as a corporate minion, I have turned my camera lens toward the territory and produced a geo-tagged image database of all structures, architectural signage, security implements, unplanned passages, and subjective vantages. This database awaits any number of permutations and contexts.

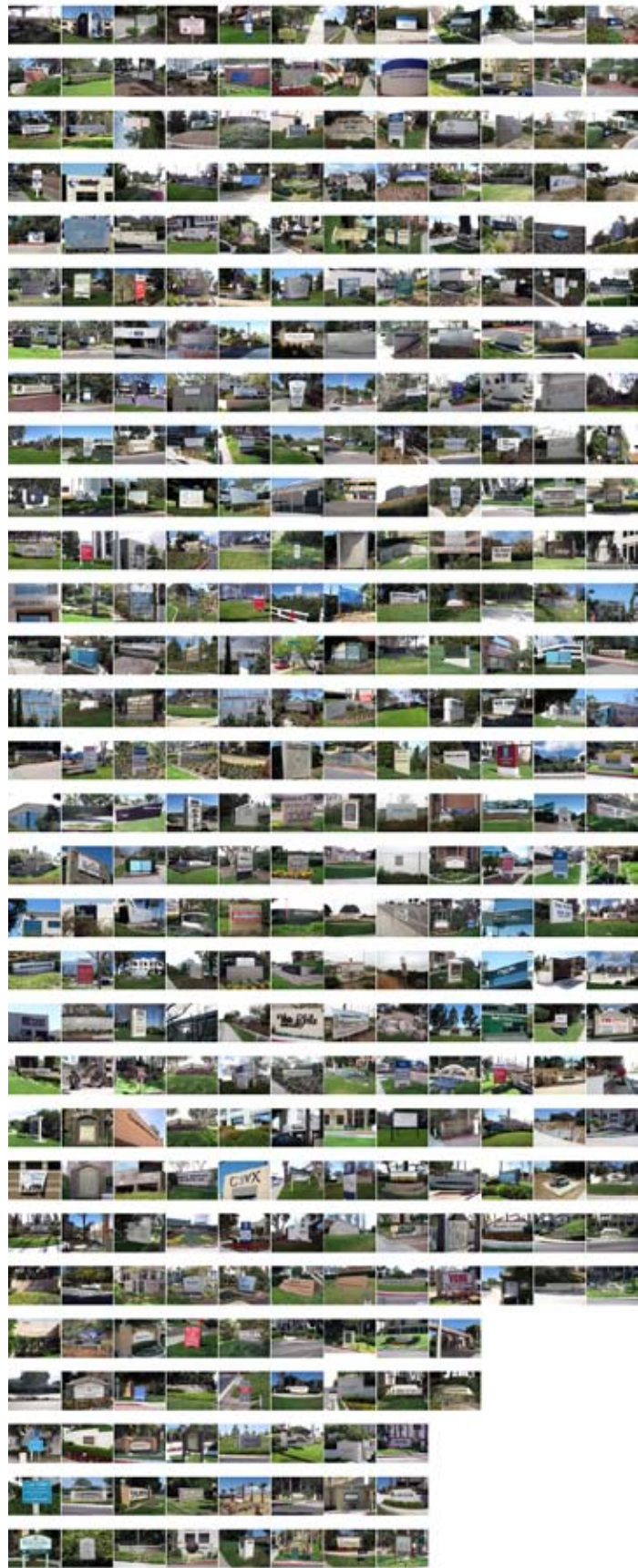




VANTAGES



STRUCTURES



ENTITIES



APERTURES

OBSTRUCTIONS



figure 23: A chronologic composite of the Golden Triangle. Each layer's opacity is based on how long before the next image was taken.

IV

Several Possible Scenarios

. . . UC's shift in priorities from state-funded instruction to privately funded construction is hidden in plain sight—in the text of the General Revenue Bond Indenture. The Indenture says (presumably the language is standard) that the Regents, in addition to avoiding default, “shall not permit to be done anything that might in any way weaken, diminish or impair the security intended to be given pursuant to the Indenture”. You would be foolish to regard this as meaningless lawyer-talk that leaves funding higher education intact as UC's highest budgetary priority. It, rather, makes UC's bond rating its highest budgetary priority.

-Robert Meister, from They Pledged Your Tuition (An Open Letter to UC Students), 2009.

With enough private money behind it, an interchange can be built not where it would best move traffic for the citizenry, but where it would best funnel potential customers into a development.

-Joel Garreau, Edge City.

How do we invent our lives out of a limited range of possibilities, and how are our lives invented for us by those in power?

-Allan Sekula, Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation).

I have in my possession five aerial photographs centering on LJ/UTC [figure 23]. They frame exactly the same area: from roughly where I5 and I805 meet to the north, from where what is now Gilman Drive breaks away from I5 in to the south, what is now La Jolla Farms to the west, and creeping into what is now Marine Corps Air Station Miramar to the east. Centered in this frame is the northern portion of the “Golden Triangle”, identified earlier in this discussion. It is clearly discernable as the territory framed by I5, I805, and Rose canyon to the south. The images are organized chronologically, starting with the earliest: 1953, 1964, 1980 and 1981(both of these images are missing sections, I have composited them into a single image), 1990, 2003, and 2005. Save for the northern portion of Torrey Pines mesa, before it slopes downward toward Sorrento Valley, and Los Peñasquitos lagoon, these images refer to the territory that I have comprehensively explored, as discussed in the previous section. In 1953, it can be regarded that none other than Camp Matthews, identified in the beginning of this discussion, occupies the territory in question. One can discern the canyons eventually occupied by La Jolla Village Drive, I805, and with guided attention, the canyon I will be discussing in the following text. At present, it is framed between a bicycle path along the periphery of a parking lot and the UCSD medical research complex on the opposing side. The 1953 image would indicate that it was even then tightly framed by surrounding development, existing between structures in the southeast portion of Camp Matthews. Perhaps it is befitting then, to now be framed in tandem with the development that defines and defies.

Before constructing a specific narrative of developmental progression in this territory as evidenced by the images, I will suggest that perhaps it is too facile to assert that these images are proof that very little of any degree of urbanization existed here until well into the post-war period, thus confirming that the military industrial complex in concert with public institutions had for themselves a geographic monopoly.⁹³ Indeed, to call it proof would place far too much confidence in the image's referents. Furthermore, such would presume the contextual knowledge of this text's readership. So from here on, in order to circumvent these pitfalls, I compose the following narrative as one amongst many parallel fictions.

Though geographically situated less than a mile a way from my apartment at the Mesa graduate student-housing complex (University of California, San Diego), the walk to my studio on campus comes close to 1.5 miles. There is an option to take the campus shuttle, however after the walk to the shuttle stop, waiting for the shuttle itself, the less-than-direct route it takes back to campus, the multiple stops, and finally the walk from the shuttle stop on campus to my studio, all told it is often more efficient to walk. The walk extends notably longer than its linear distance because of a series of impediments, chiefly among them the interstate 5 freeway, and secondarily, a small canyon that has been over-purposed as a drainage diversion for the acres of parking lot that moat nearby hospital and lab facilities. The most efficient route on foot therefore, requires that one circumnavigate the canyon on a bicycle path, take advantage of several unplanned footpaths that cut through traffic buffers and a neglected open space on the west side of the Moores Cancer Center, a defunct utility road that skirts the

93. Even at the University's inception, San Diego might have been lauded for its retention and redistribution of pueblo lands, in as much as this program was couched in a kind of New Deal rhetoric that actually valued and intended to support culture and public assets. The Pete Wilson era in the 70's would mark of an instrumentalist shift in these priorities that has continued to the present: public assets would take a back seat to for-profit development.

UCSD baseball field, and finally a trail through a buffer of shrubbery in order to arrive at the Voigt drive overpass which traverses the free-way and continues into campus. The entirety of this route exists on university property, situated within and against LJ/UTC. Proceeding along the initial bike-path portion of this route, the path curves sharply to the right in order to begin circumnavigating the canyon. Visible directly across the canyon at this point is the footpath that traverses the neglected territory on the west side of the cancer center.

The most efficient route, at least from a schematic perspective, would be to connect the bike path, from where it curves to the right, in a straight line through the canyon to the cancer-center-adjacent footpath. If one stops a moment at the point in the path where it curves, looking across the canyon, this conclusion is self-evident [figure 24].

Initially, I conceived of a well-maintained footpath through the canyon that would utilize plank/fill steps to mitigate the steep accent and decent into and out of the canyon, and a marsh footbridge to span the perennial stream at the canyon's base. This infrastructure could be put into place once the riparian vegetation along its trajectory was cleared, which would only need be replaced to the side. With an initial visual survey from the rim of the canyon, I inferred that the vegetation would be no more than chest to head height, and that the requisite clearing would take no more than a day to complete.

Circumnavigating the planted shrubbery that lines the bike path, an almost unmanageably steep slope overgrown with various weeds continues beyond a buffer patch of ice plant. Managing through this, it becomes immediately evident that the canyon is significantly deeper, and the vegetation significantly higher than initially anticipated. A machete and retractable hand saw purchased from home depot were my principle means of addressing the task of clearing the vegetation and brush. After a concerted attempt to begin hacking and sawing my way through dense thickets of a cane-like tall grass (similar to, however far more flimsy than bamboo) with only nominal advancement, I arrived at the trunk and branches of a fallen tree obstructing my path. At this point it became evident that in order to follow my initial trajectory as faithfully and efficiently as possible would require the facilities of a chainsaw, and that merely clearing through to the opposite side of the canyon would take more than a day's worth work, never mind clearing a utilitarian path. After surmounting the trunk and branches, it was possible to leap down into a small clearing that I would deduce was produced by the tree falling in the manner that it did: the branches likely crushed a thicket of the cane and prevented it from re-growing in this spot. These initial efforts had been video documented; most of the shooting was taking place on the canyon rim near the bike path, however I was transmitting my commentary to the video via a wireless lavalier microphone. The clearing provided not only the opportunity for a respite and a staging area, but also for a place to reposition the camera to better document the continuation of the path clearing as close as possible to the original trajectory. This involves beginning to hack and saw into a veritable wall established by a thicket of the cane-like grass. At this point, it wasn't so much a matter of clearing as it was a matter of tunneling. After making several feet of progress, I decided that I would need to regroup and return for a second attempt.

When I started to develop rashes and blisters on my legs and forearms several days later, I realized that I must have unknowingly encountered a patch of poison oak. Secondary inspection confirmed this. After several days, the conditions were worsening, and I decided that it would behoove of me to take advantage of my student health coverage and get professional treatment. Concurrently, my anxiety about the completing the task I had set was mounting, given that its continuation would entail further uncomfortable if not severe health risks. My new plan for a second attempt would involve clothing myself head-to-toe as a preliminary line of defense, and further shielding that with a full-body Tyvec suit. Additionally, I would use latex examination gloves beneath my work gloves, as well as a dust mask. The main points of vulnerability would be my face and wrists, to which I liberally applied "Ivy Block", a bentoquatam barrier cream, which would ostensibly prevent the "urushiol" from making direct contact with unprotected skin.



figure 24: Where the path curves, looking across the canyon to Moores Cancer Center.



First Attempt: High hopes and confidence.



Architectural rendering: canyon-path amenity.





Poison Oak and its affliction: A woeful encounter.

Urushiol's toxic effects are initially attributable to its stickiness and transferability. Within several minutes to several hours after direct contact, it permanently bonds to the skin. Thereafter, it chemically reacts with skin cell walls, changing their chemical composition. White blood cells, not recognizing this new chemical profile, will begin to attack the skin cells as if they were foreign, potentially pathological objects. The ensuing symptoms include inflamed, scaly rashes, weeping blisters, and acute itching. Secondary symptoms included open sores and painful scabbing. The most prominent rash was on the back of my left knee, where my calf would make contact with my thigh as I walked. This chronic abrasion caused the blisters there to develop into open sores that would ineffectively scab. As the rash worsened, I developed significant lymphatic swelling in my left leg that I mistook for infection and returned for secondary and eventually tertiary professional consultation. I was eventually prescribed a megadose of "Prednisone", a synthetic corticosteroid that would attenuate that autoimmune reaction. As a safeguard against infection, I was additionally prescribed an oral antibiotic, and to mitigate itching and address the insomnia that was a side effect of the prednisone, a concentrated antihistamine. Applied directly to the rashes themselves, I found a gel-form topical analgesic particularly effective in mitigating itching during waking hours.

In addition to the treatment measures, as a precaution, I would set up a station on my apartment's patio in order to clean tools and garments I intended to keep, namely a pair of sturdy rubber boots. Urushiol oil, I would learn, is soluble in alcohol, so I would clean all of my tools with isopropyl alcohol before re-storing them. Here, I would strip out of and discard the Tyvec suit, and I would strip out of the top layer of clothing, storing the garments in a plastic trash bag until they could be thoroughly laundered. Afterwards, I would liberally apply "Tecnu", a soap marketed to remove urushiol oil after topical exposure, to both the clothing and myself. Incidentally, Tecnu was originally developed in the 1960s, during the Cold War, as a soap that would remove radioactive fallout dust from the skin. Its effectiveness for removing urushiol was confirmed in the late 70s.

The second attempt at tunneling through the canyon involved the application of these cautionary measures, as well as having to wield and lug the production equipment in and out of the canyon myself. Positioning the camera in the aforementioned clearing, I then continued to tunnel through the otherwise impenetrable thicket of the cane-like grass.

The grass that had established itself here as both unnavigable and omnipresent is known as "Arundo Donax Cane" (ADC), an invasive non-native tall grass. It was introduced in California from the Mediterranean in the first half of the 19th century, for both its potential as a building material and for erosion control in Southern California's flood-prone washes. The plant has proven formidable and problematic, as it will quickly take root and expand rapidly in "disturbed" sites and riparian zones (the canyon at present is representative of both). ADC is a rhizome; a single plant can develop thick stands via a network of underground "streamer" stems, and out-compete other native riparian species. Its invasive edge is doubled by its inherent toxicity, and its flammability. By containing a significant amount of alkaloids and silica, it deters animals from feeding on it as well as making habitat in its stands. As it is both fire-prone and occupies riparian zones

(otherwise a "flood" as opposed to "fire" ecology), once it burns, it effectively decimates the native riparian ecology, pushing the system toward mono-specific stands of ADC. Otherwise, ADC's high concentration of tryptamine compounds and its rapid growth rate make it a prime candidate for biofuel production and carbon sequestration.

After several hours of hacking and sawing through the thicket, or stand of ADC before the clearing where the camera was situated, which included working through portions of the collapsed tree discussed earlier, I arrived at a clearing toward what I guessed was the center, or lowest point of the canyon. Upon inspection, it was evident that this clearing contained a significant amount of poison oak vine. Had I made contact with any additional poison oak when I began the second attempt, it would be by this time perhaps too late for the Tecnu soap to be effective, as the urushiol would be bonding with my skin. In addition, my rubber exam gloves beneath my work gloves were practically sweat-water balloons, and the integrity of my Tyvec suit at this point was significantly compromised. Considering as well that I was not sure as to how effective my precautionary measures would be, I decided to regroup and make a third and final attempt in lieu of a present final push. Were I to develop additional symptoms in the days following the second attempt, I would most likely abort the project, as the poison oak would have proven far too insidious.

I returned to the canyon again for a third attempt several days hence, having not developed new rashes. At this instance, I had the assistance of a camera person gracious and brave enough to suit up and risk poison oak contact dermatitis to follow as I progressed, hopefully anticipating that I had cleared through the most difficult impediments during the first and second attempts. After working through the tunnel I had cut previously, we proceeded into the clearing that was laced with poison oak vines mentioned in the above. In this relatively open portion of the canyon (however still significantly canopied), silt, sand, plant debris, and trash deposits were evident, indicative of the torrents that must have flowed through during the abnormally heavy rains from the previous winter months. Here, "route finding" became the mode of progression. Though not an impenetrable thicket, there were still numerous impeding trunks and branches to either duck under, surmount or hack through. The route at this point was indeed straying from the direct line across the canyon envisioned at the project's inception. Continuing involved arriving at clearings as such, followed by locating what appeared to be the least resistant stand of ADC to tunnel through. The final thicket before arriving at the opposing slope of the canyon proved almost as difficult as the first tunneling endeavor. It involved not only tunneling, but once again surmounting a fallen tree that the thicket of ADC had grown up around. Proceeding awkwardly through this, driven by the imminence of arrival, we managed to exit the dense riparian zone, and proceed through the considerably more manageable sage scrub of the south-facing slope. Once emerging from the thickets, it was evident that we had veered considerably east of our original path; in order to correct, we proceeded back to the original axis before continuing up the south slope through the scrub brush. On top, we tromped through the planted buffer shrubs onto the sidewalk along the south side of Medical Center Drive. Were we to cross the street, we would be walking toward the trail that continues along the east side of Moores Cancer Center, once again on a trajectory towards campus, along what is the most efficient route on foot



Efforts of second attempt: Arundo Donax tunnel.



A Third and Final Effort



between the Mesa graduate student housing complex and the UCSD campus. All told, what took in total about eight hours, three attempts, a severe allergic malady, and subsequent precautionary measures enabled the traversal of 350 linear feet of UCSD property, once again, situated in and against the greater LJ/UTC developmental conglomerate.

Notes on Foreground and Background

Were the path effectively put in place as an unsanctioned intervention, I anticipated its narrative alluding to three largely ignored conditions. First, to underscore a kind of carceral channeling that governs access to and occupation within a geography/landscape such as LJ/UTC. Hopefully, the implementation of an ad hoc infrastructure as such could address at least one facet of a seemingly predetermined inefficiency. Secondly, to conjure notions of an infrastructural hierarchy, and what potential exists for at least temporarily enacting its inversion. If infrastructure is a kind of prerequisite for the material conditions of everyday life in a given place, then to what degree is infrastructure a determinant of these conditions? As Joel Garreau asserts, “With enough private money behind it, an interchange can be built not where it would best move traffic for the citizenry, but where it would best funnel potential customers into a development.”⁹⁴ Presumably, any given resident would be subject to this kind of invisible determinant without having adequate empirical means to understand of the extent or what alternatives may be possible. If infrastructure would, by and large, function to privilege certain agent/participants at the expense of others, and would mobilize a myth of the autonomous consumer/citizen in order to absolve itself of responsibility for this, (which is to vaguely paraphrase what I have been developing in previous sections), perhaps the token implementation of an infrastructure from the other direction could evoke this dilemma. Lastly, concerning the ontological proximity of the pedestrian and the “social”: to enable the former is to encourage the latter, such that density becomes, to quote my esteemed advisor Teddy Cruz, a measure of social collision and interaction per unit of land as opposed to merely a measure of bodies per unit of land. Furthermore, by encouraging such encounters within a zone of topographical and ecological difference, such as the unwieldy canyon through which this path would cut, utilitarian and ulterior space would become blended: a rupture or break in the over-determined cattle shoot continuum of suburban hardscape.

But the inevitability of both the under-use of such a path and the fact that I encountered very little questioning of or resistance to the otherwise goofy spectacle of trying to machete through a canyon in a Tyvec hazard suit is indicative of the adaptability of a channeled public to visual interruptions in their quotidian space-time. It would be to subscribe to a questionable myth if one presumes that encounter alone engenders a more authentic and robust urban social space. Perhaps by negation, the implementation of this path might function to tease out such a myth, and point toward the improbability of a kind of Habermasian public sphere contingent to edge city suburbanization.

The path, however, never materialized. The complex myriad of unanticipated obstructions necessitating an infeasible set of logistics to actually produce the path as I foresaw lent itself to an entirely dif-

ferent imagistic narrative. What emerged was something more akin to David Lynch’s introductory montage for his film *Blue Velvet*, in which the scalar transition from a caricature of white-picket-fence suburbia to a hellish melee of primordial violence just below the surface of impeccably green and manicured lawns would set the thematic infrastructure for the subsequent filmic parable. In the case of an attempt to establish a path devolving into an attempt to simply traverse, one might highlight the hyperbolic otherness of the space defined by the canyon to the edge city space above. The canyon could be described as a dark and forbidding jungle repository for not only the waste-flows of the hardscape above, but also for a dense and unplanned thriving community of poisonous, rhizomatic invasives. Where again, despite the imagistic contrast to the sanitized technopole, one, perhaps ironically, encounters its metaphor: *Arundo Donax* Cain, a highly effective opportunistic non-native rhizomatic invasive thriving in *terrain vague*.⁹⁵

Any of these interpretations are ultimately contingent to the representational mediation of both gesture and spatial context. In this case, the gesture of attempting to build a path [foreground] would only be meaningful when established as a counter-program to the edge city development in which it is situated [background], hence the necessity of video taping the process i.e. the production of an eventual representation becomes a logistical addendum to the gesture itself. In practice, attempting to build a path became merely an attempt to traverse/tunnel through a space both antithetical and metaphoric [canyon, foreground] to the edge city environment in which it is situated [LJ/UTC, background]. By drawing a clear ontological distinction between fore and background elements in a visual sphere, and the eventual narrative and discursive elaboration on their juxtaposition, one can begin to develop a critical hermeneutics of the subjects in question. To be clear, I am not making a call for the representational and the hermeneutic over the potential for real, effective social counter-programming. The brevity of my investigation, not to mention the missing necessity of a dialogical foundation, precluded the potential for this project to develop any tangible social programming from its outset. What I aim for, rather, is an intervention into the mythos, iconography, and epistemology that enable the occlusion of ethical dimensions and hierarchical relations inherent to the manifestation of the edge city landscape and LJ/UTC in particular, and maintain it as ideologically excusable.

Epilogue

In the fall of 2008 I produced a work responding to the eardrum shattering fighter jet flybys experienced on the UCSD campus multiple times a day. These low altitude flybys are due to the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar, approximately five miles to the east of campus. The campus would happen to fall in line with a Pacific-bound flight path, and Miramar is frequently sending its jets to Pacific-based aircraft carriers as well as hosting frequent training flights. With consideration for the ghettoized condition of campus as an enclave 12 miles north of the city proper, and the undeniable, yet curiously excusable decibel-based violence inflicted there upon, I chained open the gallery at the Visual Arts Facility on the UCSD campus. As well, I boarded over all of the internal amenities (doors, outlets, thermostats,

94. Garreau, *Edge City*, 201.

95. With apologies to Deleuze and Guattari.



light switches, etc.). By effect, I rendered the gallery an annex, albeit uninviting, an extension of external “public” space. The only contents of the Gallery were two public address speakers, mounted high in its corners and cranked to full volume. With a microphone placed on the roof running through a digital sound gate, the flybys would raise the ambient decibel levels high enough to trigger the gate, and broadcast an amplified live feed of the flyby into the gallery. Any present occupants of the gallery either needed to leave or risk hearing damage. Subsequent iterations of the project involved custom software that would blast a loop of Kenny Loggins’ *Danger Zone*, Berlin’s *Take My Breath Away*, and Tom Cruise’s rendition of the Righteous Brothers’ *You’ve Lost that Loving Feeling*: the most recognizable additions to the *TOPGUN* soundtrack, otherwise filmed on location at the Navy elite tactical flight training school based at Miramar until 1996.

One of the major misgivings of the UC regents in spite of Roger Revelles’ insistence upon siting the campus where it is now was the proximity of this very airstrip. The Regents, chief among them Edwin Pauly, echoing the Navy’s concern, contended that the flight path was dangerously close to the would-be campus, additionally that the noise pollution would be insufferable.⁹⁶ Despite Pauley’s adamant position, a critical mass was in support of the new La Jolla campus.⁹⁷ Years later, Allan Sekula, discussed earlier, would note in an interview of the curious correlation between the occurrence of student demonstrations against the Vietnam War on the UCSD campus and the timing of the flybys.⁹⁸ About two weeks after the closing of my installation *Untitled (Sonic Boom / Inside Out / Who’s You’re Daddy?)* described above, on December 8, 2008, a pilot was conducting flight qualifications off of the USS Abraham Lincoln approximately 60 miles offshore of San Diego. When his jet began mechanically failing, he was ordered to make an emergency landing at MCAS Miramar. During his final approach, the jet lost all power, and the pilot was forced to eject. The abandoned aircraft crashed into two houses on the corner of Huggins Street and Cather Avenue in the University City neighborhood, killing a total of four residents in one house.

As a chapter in the filmic narrative that I am producing in conjunction with this text, I attempted to construct a foreground / background montage such as described earlier, framing what is arguably the territory’s most spectacular irony. Here, the fighter jet flybys provide a constant reminder of how the knife’s edge of the military industrial complex constitutes itself. Their iconic form and high-decibel presence connote of a perpetual mobilization, presumably in defense of the homeland, though in light of recent and ongoing global misadventures, it is unclear as to precisely how. In short, they are the pinnacle of militarized and material power, able to inflict all scale of destruction from well out of ear and eye shot. But they are becoming obsolete, due in part to a particular presence on Torrey Pines Mesa, a presence that established itself in conjunction with, if not slightly before UCSD, and would occupy the territory that comprises one side of this particular foreground/background equation. General Atomics is the sole developer of the “Predator Drone” unmanned aircraft, which would connote in itself the tension between a perfectly violent, globally deployed attack apparatus, and the ostensibly innocuous environment from whence it is developed, deployed, controlled and that it subsequently defends. Tom Cruise’s *Maverick* would need no longer risk his life beyond riding a wheelie back to his condo at the end of the day’s mission.

From a vantage on an undeveloped mesa just south of the soon-to-be-closed Biogen IDEC campus along the east end of Nobel Drive, just south itself of the La Jolla Crossroads condo development project that was torched in 2003 by the Earth Liberation Front, looking east, one can discern the control tower at MCAS Miramar. In full zoom with relatively clear conditions, the point from which the jets take off before continuing on a Pacific-bound trajectory can be fit into frame with the control tower. I stood there patiently for several hours, and made several attempts at a pan/zoom that tightly framed the jet’s takeoff, followed the jet in frame as closely as possible, and zoomed out to a wider shot as the jet became indiscernible in the distance, so that the pan may conclude with the entire skyline of LJ/UTC in frame. I made a second, more concerted effort at capturing a similar shot, taking into account the specific subjects proximate to my camera position. In order to exploit a loophole in the permit requirements to film with a tripod in public space (the insurance for which was beyond my means), I set up my shot position in the bed of my pickup truck, parked on the street as close as I could to the General Atomics campus. The Pacific-bound flight path takes the jets particularly close to this position, just northwest of UCSD. In order to secure a parking spot as such, one need arrive early on a weekday. My first attempt was on a considerably overcast morning. By the time the flights were passing my position, they were already well above the cloud cover.



96. Anderson, *An Improbable Venture*, 56–71.

97. Ibid., 71.

98. Allan Sekula, interviewed by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, *Performance Under Working Conditions*, 30.



Still from news helicopter footage: Foreground: smoke from crash. Background: MCAS Miramar.





