Residual urbanism

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Residual Urbanism

Paradoxically, the central preoccupation of recent urban discourse is the status of the residual. In *Junkspace,* for instance, Rem Koolhaas suggests a paradigm shift from the opposition of public and private, to a situation organized around conditions of the known/controlled and residual/abandoned. Urban theorists such as Albert Pope and John Findlay have also deployed the concept of the residual to account for the seemingly disorganized and formless character of the contemporary city, generally in negative or critical terms. Of course, from the point of view of the classic (or, for that matter, modern) city, the residual can only be understood as a decline from the ideal of urbanity (integrated, continuous, articulated). This dismissal has blinded urban critics from understanding the system of the residual (and its corollary, the autonomous) as a productive territory that provides new opportunities for urban innovation. Beyond the limitations of traditional urbanism and its discourse, the postmetropolitan residual may operate as a vast reservoir of potential.

If the residual has been understood as one of the primary by-products of the contemporary "city", Orange County (OC) has emerged as the poster child for this "postsuburban" spatial organisation, at once de-centred and multi-centred, organising itself through numerous specialised centres rather than one traditional centre. The specifics of this account have been persuasively advanced by Edward Soja, who presents OC through a catalogue of freakish and condensed urban parts, including the Irvine Ranch, Military Zones, Disney Land, Business Parks, and Shopping Malls. Yet even this more generous, or at least empirical, description has tended to generate a portrait of postsuburbia (or exopolis) that is more homogenous, or less specific, than the evidence would suggest. To understand "the" residual as one kind of phenomenon inappropriately recasts it in traditional (formal, urban) terms. This trait of "residualness" is much more promiscuous and flexible, and therefore potentially performative, than any fixed or uniform conceptualisation of posturbanism can delimit.

A drive through OC suggests that typical postsuburban categorisations only seem to apply to 40% of the landscape, and in particular are symptomatic of only northern Orange County, that is north of the Irvine Ranch. As the urban landscape transforms from north to south, from an emptied out (sub)urban grid to the village clusters of Irvine to the almost bucolic gated landscape to the south, it appears that OC has far greater specificity than previously theorised and can in fact be divided into three distinct zones. The northern third of Orange County operates as a Los Angeles grid extension hosting autonomous enclaves. The Irvine Ranch serves as the great Orange Divide with its village organisation and centralized land ownership. It functions as a "wall to sprawl", stopping the LA grid and allowing another form of urbanisation to unfold. Southern OC then emerges as the host for a concentration of gated communities — autonomously controlled enclaves — where one quarter of OC's population now lives. Strangely, the new gated areas have produced a highly organised and coherent urban residual, exactly at odds with the notions of exopolis and postsuburbia put forward by Soja, Kling and others. And while all three parts of OC evidence autonomous and residual conditions, it becomes clear that the residuals are differentiated through coherence, intensity, and magnitude. This reading suggests that the specificity of Orange County has no doubt evolved through different historical subsets, urban techniques, and ideologies. And it is through this specificity that the residual can be positioned both conceptually and more productively. For current purposes, the tripartite division of OC can be nominally categorized as: The Extended (northern OC); The Projected (Irvine Ranch); and The Idyllic (southern OC).
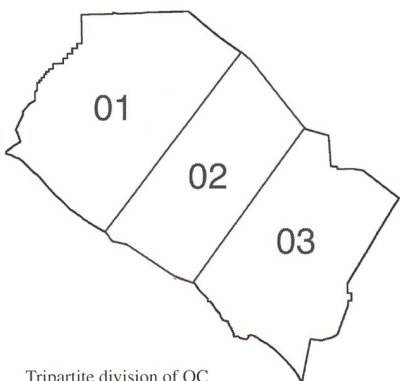
Tripartite division of OC

1. OC: The Extended

The maps in the 2001 Southern California Studies Centre document "Sprawl hits the wall: Confronting the realities of metropolitan Los Angeles" clearly show northern OC to be an urban extension of Los Angeles economically, socially and demographically. OC had historically always been peripheral to and dependent on neighbouring LA as its growth extended along two freeway routes to form bedroom suburbs. The urban extension into OC was essentially the extension of the urban *grid*. Yet what seemed to happen as the grid crossed the county border was an emptying out of its content into a banalised and lower density version: a non-descript, diluted and loose grid landscape.
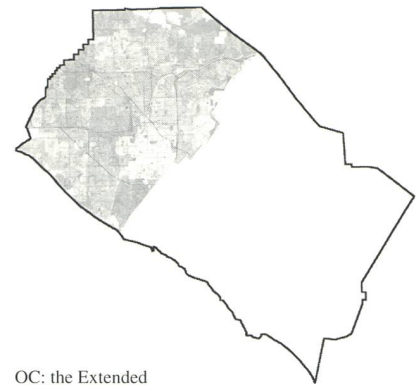
After 1950 OC exponentially grew from 200,000 inhabitants to 2.2 million inhabitants by 1987, and it was during this period that the grid extension began to *conceptually transform* into what can be termed residual tissue. This happened as OC started to insert and develop its own self-referential cultural attractions — Knotts Berry farm park, the Crystal Cathedral drive-in Church, Disneyland, and regionally-scaled shopping malls — as forms of urban acupuncture, *into* the grid. Disneyland epitomised the new trend and produced the most radical urban effect. John Findlay has written that Disneyland's remarkable impact as an urban transformer — a piece of controlled autonomous urbanism — was its ability to turn Anaheim for a historical moment into Orange County's centre and by doing so facilitated OC's autonomy and independence from LA.

Laid out by Walt Disney in 1953, Disneyland's construction began only a year later. The park was conceived and built as an autonomous enclave incorporating careful and high-quality design *within* the emerging OC metropolitan grid. Initially established to compete with other theme parks, Walt Disney later used the park as a piece of posturban propaganda, to conceptually construct an urban problem through which Disneyland provided the perfect solution. It became an influential landmark that acted as an exemplar of imposed enclave marketing, providing the antidote to the chaos of the surrounding urban milieu — namely the gridded LA extension.
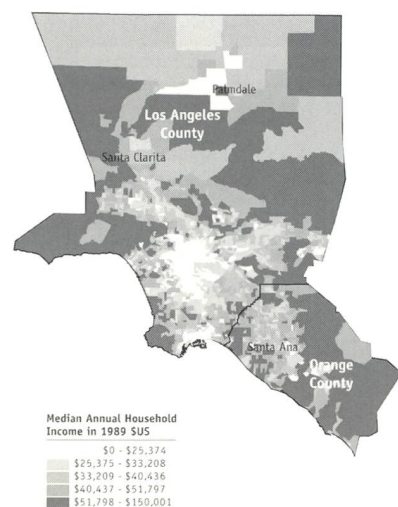
The effect of inserting controlled enclaves like Disneyland into the grid would begin the process of cul-de-sacing the grid. The ideology of the grid that historically was an expression of liberalism and individualist ideology became gutted by the addition of private enclaves. These enclaves introduced a counter form and a counter ideology that was totalizing in its control. In the early stages the enclaves were anomalies rather than dominant types suspended in the grid structure.

The northern part of OC suggests that the residual — that is, the gridded area left over after the eruption of the enclaves — is in fact a *process* of becoming residual. The gridded extension was not always residual but transformed *into* residual and continues to *evolve* into an even deeper residual, and it is this phenomenon that is generally understood in negative terms by contemporary urban critics. The residual is thus *produced* conceptually and materially through the act of enclaving. The residuum cannot therefore be seen as inert, but as a dependent dynamic. In this sense, its transformation would seem to legitimise Albert Pope's claim that extreme closure produces an increasingly disorganised residuum. It can also be argued that the enclaving produces coherence: coherence exactly held together by its disorganisation rather than organisation.

The *residual as process* can be further interpreted as an evolutionary urban *frontier* that rather than being expansive and extensive as the grid has always been, is transformative and intensive. It expands in rather than out. Albert Pope would probably classify this move as centripetal expansion. The lessons in this form of residual lie in its flexible ability to transform internally rather than externally; to withdraw from autonomy and emerge through the grid. And in this way the residual offers northern OC a self-referential expansion technique as an alternative to outward growth as the sprawl hits the wall of the Irvine Ranch.

OC: the Extended

Median Annual Household Income in 1989 $US

$0 - $25,374
$25,375 - $33,208
$33,209 - $40,436
$40,437 - $51,797
$51,798 - $150,001

Median Household Income by census tract for LA County and OC County 1990

OC: the Projected

University of California campus, Irvine

Canberra, Australia

Ebenezer Howard: Garden City

Jeremy Bentham: Panopticon

2. OC: The Projected

In the 1960s, Irvine was a rural stronghold occupying about 20% of OC's land area forming a physical impediment to further urbanisation. Based on the historic Irvine Ranch and developed by the Irvine Company, Irvine was designed as a satellite town rather than a packaged suburb. The urban structure was organised around "villages" that varied in size (2,000 – 26,000 people), with close proximity to schools and shopping and were clearly distinguished from each other. Encompassing an enormous area (originally 93000 acres) the ranch was divided and developed in three parts: a coastal section at low densities (Newport Beach); a central valley between UC Irvine and Santiago foothills; and the northern hills area where little development has occurred. More than half of the zone currently constitutes parks and open space.

In contrast to northern OC, the development of Irvine did not effect itself through an extended grid. While the spatial organisation fell inside a very loose arterial grid into which villages were inserted, it differed because it hosted a *projected* or *imposed* urbanism that was incrementally developed. The new model was inherited through another spatial and ideological system with another lineage and another history: it was a European import of utopian ideas. The ranch could very well accommodate such ideas because of its enormous size, its relative condition and the presence of its rich and enthusiastic developers.

The form and ideology of the Irvine development finds its clearest expression in the ambitions of the University of California campus (UCI) proposed in late 1950. The design of the campus, the nucleus for the planned community of Irvine, set precedent in OC by deploying the circle rather than the grid as its spatial organiser. The concentric tool was a formal device that enabled Irvine to project an ideal social and educational structure into form. As local history would have it, Clark Kerr, then President of UCI, drew a circle with the disciplines surrounding it, almost as easily and thoughtlessly as his alter-ego Walt Disney divined his magic kingdom.

The circle move fits into a lineage dating back to Bentham's Panopticon and the European Garden City movements where satellite cities and institutions almost always found their roots in concentric and circular plans. The European trend obviously found its way across the Atlantic and, ultimately, across the continent into OC, and this lineage is important to recognize because it significantly indexes the social mindset of the Irvine developers. It stands as a kind of proof that, as Hubert Damisch has written, in America ideology as an import and as a graft, took very easily. It also stands as proof that utopia was effectively realisable and proof that utopia can have (relative) permanence.

As directly represented through the circle of the University of California plan, the Irvine Company promoted a socialist ideology incorporating ideas of collectivity under the auspices of a singular corporate rule. This structure was established to serve both patron and beneficiary and reappeared formally in other parts of the Irvine Ranch including "Walnut Village" and "Fashion Island" shopping mall, both circular planned developments. Socialist ideology found the Irvine Ranch to be its perfect host for expression and representation of utopian beliefs.

But did the Irvine Ranch produce an urban residual? In such a designed system there never could be a residual precisely because the property ownership and overall projected plan left nothing abandoned and nothing to chance. Any "left over" was accounted for in advance and found allocated expression in designated parks and open spaces. The Ranch therefore combined two aspects in almost symmetrical terms: the unbuilt and the built. The totalitarian ownership and oversight by the Irvine patron produced *zero residual* on the inside. Yet as a totalitarian zone, the Irvine Ranch had a huge urban impact on OC in that it caused a residual *effect*.
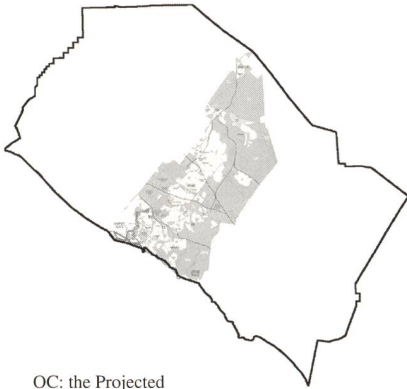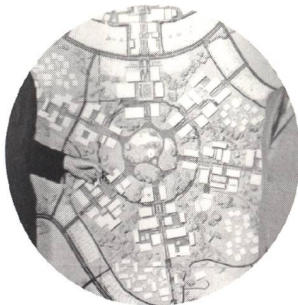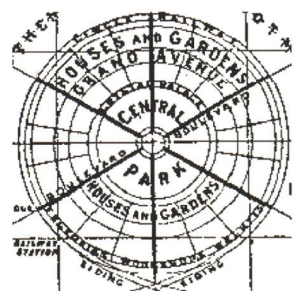
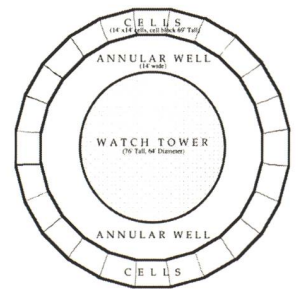The Irvine Ranch generated a large-scale spatial watershed. Its power as an urban instrument lay in the fact that it had a massive boundary and constituted a massive area. Facilitated through singular land ownership, the zone functioned as an urban megastructure producing, in revised Dana Cuff terms, a "convulsive act", a large scale urban operation whereby one land use was appropriated and replaced with another. As a wall collapsed into plane, the Ranch was able to block one type of urban development, that is the extended LA grid sprawl pervading northern OC, and provide the opportunity for another form of posturban development to its south.

3. OC: The Idyllic
On the south side of the Irvine Ranch, the proliferation and concentration of designed gated enclaves has now become *the new* urban frontier condition. In an exaggerated and exacerbated version of northern OC, the enclaves colonise rather than infiltrate. They function as centrifugal forces of expansion.

The Enclaves vary in size, shape and degree of amorphousness. Their design references derive from early 20th century company towns and garden city movements. Internally they are extremely coherent, a quality achieved through internal appearance management. Usually mono-programmatic in terms of housing and minor amenities the prevailing ideologies are to maintain property values, safety, prestige and lifestyle. As carefully constructed packages synthesising inhabitants, architecture, landscaping, rules and marketing strategies the gated enclave produce internal visual coherence and relational obedience.

Like the Irvine Ranch, the gated enclaves produce no residual within themselves since they are comprehensively designed. But because they are smaller units and occur with greater frequency, residual areas immediately arise *between* and adjacent to the parts. Rather than transforming an existing condition into a residual condition (as in northern OC), the southern residuums are designed in parallel as either landscapes or urban replications of what already occurs inside the enclaves.

The residual and the controlled share a dependent relationship, they mutually construct one another. The excessive organisation of autonomous form needs a counter state for marketing — a conceptual residual that is promoted as disorganised and negative (or a now marketable "wilderness") and in contrast to the inside of the enclave. And so what actually occurs in southern OC is a schizophrenic residual condition where the promoted residual is not that immediately adjacent to the enclave itself but a displaced one, removed and conceptually formulated from elsewhere (perhaps from the northern OC residual). The residual is thus a formal and a conceptual construction.

The enclave produces a new type of urban frontier that is a viable alternative to sprawl and grid extension in that it is contained development. The enclave figures therefore act as *organisers* of the urban frontier. They produce a coherent residual that revises Albert Pope's thesis that extreme degrees of closure increase the disorganisation of the residuum. Here, it makes it articulate.

Genealogy of the Residual
The landscape of Orange County reveals that its autonomous/controlled components produce diverse residuums: Disneyland as an example of transforming a site into residuum, the Irvine Ranch as a transformer for a future by providing a rupture, and the gated enclaves as producers of a coherent urban frontier. Each had private patrons. The patron, by default, produces a diversity of residuals, a genealogy of residuals: an evolving residual (north) that represents the withering of the grid; a zero residual (Irvine) that is so over-determined that it cannot effect transformation from within but only from without; and a postcard residual (south), where imitation and coherence have produced
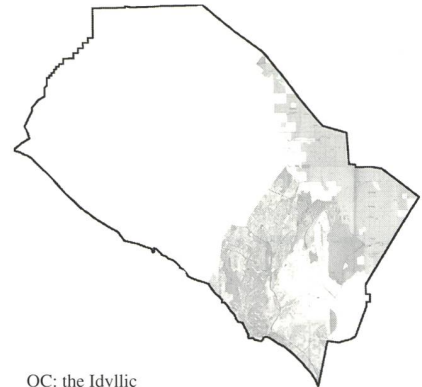
OC: the Idyllic
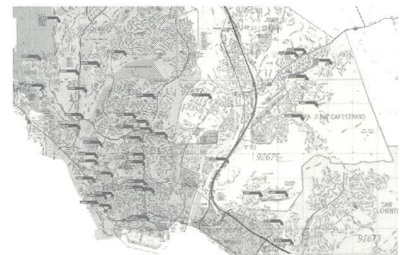
Gated enclaves: entrance gates

Gated enclaves: white areas

Gated enclaves: as islands

a synthetic and highly organised landscape. The appearance of the residual reveals that the enclosed and controlled zones hold extra-curricular powers that can only effectively transform in the absence of a patron within the residual. The genealogy suggests that the controlled and known zones can function as urban design tools because they produce two kinds of urban frontiers: the outward expanding (extensive) and the inward transforming (intensive).

R.E. Somol and Orange Studio

10 Points Toward a Perf City

Passaic seems full of holes compared to New York City, which seems tightly packed and solid, and those holes in a sense are the monumental vacancies that define, without trying, the memory traces of an abandoned set of futures.

Robert Smithson

… excavate the land instead of striating it, bore holes in space instead of keeping it smooth, turn the earth into swiss cheese.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari

Leisure World 1968

Group swimming: Leisure World

1. Archipelago of holes

The holey model operates simultaneously in a state of perpetual completion and emptiness. The appearance of a new enclave has a finished status in itself and neither contributes to nor detracts from any a priori conception of completion. The archipelago of holes is in a perpetual state of equilibrium; the addition or subtraction of a hole never affects the overall network. In OC, unlike the gridded city, development precedes planning; event instigates infrastructure. Build it and they will plan. The archipelago of holes revolves around four conditions which update the traditional urban concepts that are insufficient to explain OC. If traditional readings understand the city as a series of binary opposition (part/whole, figure/ground, public/private, planning/development), the four emerging concepts here are singular terms with an implied gradation. Filled with the most conventional architecture, the holey model finds in the concepts of *Scalelessness*, *Field*, *Accessibility*, and *Experience* a potential for relativity and variable relationships. Where architecture is boring, urbanism becomes sparkling. The holey model stands neither for nor against congestion or emptiness. It pursues instability based on the ease of accommodating change. Through gradation and the nesting of lifestyle islands, the holey model suggests a new metropolitanism. (research: Diego Arraigada and Ioanna Bouyioukou)

2. Islands of extreme difference

OC's territories and networks are marketed on familial principles. But this careful construction supports thriving zones of the inverse: territories that operate quite successfully without familial, or even generational, differentiation. OC is the swinger capital of the country, home to an enormous gay and lesbian population, maintains some of the largest military bases on the West Coast, and serves as the final destination of retirees looking for a life beyond grandchildren. Behind the guard station, fence or wall thrive ways of life seemingly anathema to the county's conservative and functional family reputation. These alternate institutions are supported by posturban spatial