
The Banality of Interdiction: Surveillance, Control and the Displacement of Diversity

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... when you make a thing, it is so complicated making it that it is bound to be ugly, but those that do it after you they don't have to worry about making it and they can make it pretty, and so everybody can like it when the others make it (Gertrude Stein).

Paranoia revisited

Surveillance and forcible control, and the social polarization they obey and reinforce, have become ubiquitous in Los Angeles. This has generated what some have called an 'urban panopticon', designed 'to command, protect, socialize and dominate the surrounding urban population' while sitting atop 'the largest concentration of cheap, culturally splintered/occupationally manipulable Third World immigrant labour to be found so tangibly available in any First World urban region' (Soja, 1989: 237, 240). Materially, this translates into a city that has, in many parts, become a veritable labyrinth of interdictory spaces: barricaded streets, privately administered plazas, police helicopter over-flights, and traffic lights festooned with panning, tilting and zooming video cameras. Such urban dis-amenities have in turn aggregated to form paranoid built typologies: gated residential 'luxury laagers', for instance, where clusters of expensive single-family homes are surrounded by guarded palisades; or 'strongpoints of sale', shopping malls equipped with video observation cameras, palisaded parking lots and police substations.

At first glance, this would seem to be old news, heavily addressed in the academic and popular press since the early 1990s. Davis commented upon the hardening of the cityscape as early as 1990 (Davis, 1990), and later remarked upon LA's reinvention as a 'carceral city' in which affluent 'forbidden cities' consign the less privileged to the 'mean streets' (Davis, 1992: 155). This work was followed by Blakely and Snyder's (1997) analysis of the spaces and psyches of gated communities, and my own classifications of interdictory spaces and their aggregation into paranoid building typologies (Flusty, 1994). Further, the trend towards surveillant control in LA would seem to have crested and declined since the mid-1990s, leaving little new to be concerned with. Retroactive street closures for the purpose of gating have been largely outlawed. Most new exurban housing developments are being constructed ungated, and little space remains for the construction of luxury laagers within the city itself. Barricading neighborhoods for the purpose of crime control has proven a costly, contentious and largely ineffective strategy. And crime as an issue has taken a back seat, with crime rates in the metropolitan area fluctuating around record lows (and even during the heyday of spatial interdiction they were never so high as public perception assumed — Flusty, 1994: 14–15).

Things are not so copascetic, however, as first glance implies. The interdictory infrastructure established throughout the city remains, for the most part, in place. There may have been no new community gatings, but, conversely, there have been no un-gatings either. Publicly subsidized corporate plazas have not been converted to public parks. And as I write this, I can step onto my balcony overlooking the Los Angeles basin and see two police helicopters, accompanied by twice as many television news choppers, circling overhead. How to account for this continued presence of an effect in the absence of its alleged cause?

Richard Sennett's observations on the nature of cities partially resolve this conundrum. According to Sennett, cities are exciting: they are places in which diverse populations both experience, and by their very presence constitute, unforeseen encounters and expanded opportunities. That's why so many of us are attracted to cities. But, conversely, excitement and unforeseeability necessarily entail risk and even menace — implicit to the notion of unpredictability is the possibility that encounters in the streets will not transpire as you might wish (Sennett, 1990).

And over the past decade and a half, the encounters in the streets of Los Angeles have become markedly less predictable. Crime rates may not be up, but diversity certainly is. Unprecedented waves of immigration from around the world, most notably from Latin America and Asia, have radically diversified the city's cultural complexion at both metropolitan and neighborhood levels. Simultaneously, economic restructuring has added to the ranks of the elite and even more so to the impoverished, all at the expense of the local middle and working classes. Thus, LA's streets are rife with the coexistence and collision of innumerable cultural and subcultural practices, and a fair measure of financial insecurity. It is in the shadow of these changes that interdictory space continues to proliferate across the region.

Interdictory space, then, is not just space that operates neutrally to intercept and filter would-be users. It does not cut all ways equally. It is commonly designed, built and administered by those affluent enough to do so, and with the wants and sensibilities of the similarly affluent consumer in mind. By corollary, interdictory space functions to systematically exclude those adjudged unsuitable and even threatening, people whose class and cultural positions diverge from the builders and their target markets. Thus, in maintaining itself through the exclusion of others, interdicted spaces and precincts redefine the remainder, indeed the majority, of LA's diverse community landscape as 'Other' and work to exclude that otherness. Interdictory space, then, is selectively exclusionary space. Which is not to say, however, that 'the Others' making up the bulk of the city are forever banned from interdicted precincts. They are, in fact, often welcomed in. But only so long as they behave appropriately. And what constitutes appropriate behavior in interdicted spaces is rigidly defined and strenuously enforced by management. In short, difference is fine, so long as it is surrendered at the gate.

Have a safe one...

Interdictory space, however, has done more than merely remain in place. It has undergone a process of continual evolution, becoming subtler and more systemically pervasive. Innumerable smaller interdictory spaces have been appearing throughout Los Angeles. When considered in the aggregate, such infill interdictions extend spatial exclusion into the fine-grain interstices of LA's everyday landscape. And they have done so silently. By way of example, roughly a half mile away from where the aforementioned helicopters are circling their prey is the studio complex of the local public television station. In 1999, the studio completed construction on a dramatic arched entranceway to their facility, fitted with massive swinging steel gates. This edifice comes complete with a preciously venerable name, emblazoned across it in antiqued bronze letters: 'Gateway to

Knowledge'. And between the arches of this gateway to knowledge is a new sentry booth with smoked glass windows, staffed by guards charged with the responsibility of preventing the public from passing through the gates. (Enhancing the irony, the walkway immediately behind the secured gate has been renamed the 'Pathway to the Future'.)

The unremarked appearance of this cutely monikered gate is starkly emblematic of a sea change in both the implementation of, and attitudes towards, interdictory space. Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, interdictory spaces were commonly seen as something of a regrettable necessity for countering crime, and a potential threat to the civic body politic (Flusty, 1994). Now interdictory space is tacitly regarded as a mainstay of the urban environment, a positive presence, and even a source of fun (at least for those who fit the profile of a population more profitably catered to than interdicted against). This is attributable to an ongoing dual process functioning to render ever higher levels of surveillance and physical control, and their recipients' corollary social peripheralization, publicly acceptable. The first component of this process is naturalization, in which surveillant control becomes so deeply embedded in our daily lives that we simply fail to notice it. The second component is 'quaintification', by which forms of surveillant control that are too harsh to fade into the background are symbolically rehabilitated as both unthreatening and even laudatory.

Naturalization is an unsurprising part and parcel of the urban 'forting up' process' protractedness, a tendency to grow accustomed to, complacent about, and even welcoming of the presence of surveillant control. This naturalization of interdictory spaces and practices has been accelerated by efforts to render the increasingly pervasive technologies of security relatively transparent. Thus, as the city has rushed headlong towards panopticity, it has simultaneously dissimulated that panopticity. It is in such dissimulation that quaintification comes into its own. With newly emergent control technologies, the dissimulation of panopticism is implicit to the design of interdictory technologies themselves, as evidenced by the stealthy telematics of consumer preference databases, leg-band transponders for criminals and peripatetic elderly alike, and carefully camouflaged micro-miniature closed circuit television cameras (Graham and Marvin, 1996). But many control technologies resist the impetus to transparency. A wall around an urban amenity remains, both materially and perceptually, a hard barrier. Security guards continue to be clearly identified, in dress and equipment, as security guards, lest they be deprived of the capacity to fulfill their primarily deterrent role. This problematic is underscored in spaces targeted towards the affluent: on the one hand, users demand the reassuringly visible presence of protection from unpredictable and potentially unpleasant encounters with otherness but, on the other, balk at living, socializing and spending their money in the hostile anti-aesthetics of something resembling an armed camp. In response to the conundrum of rendering security simultaneously apparent and palatable, quaintification becomes a means of rendering interdictory spaces and practices aesthetically pleasing, quaint policing for what Relph has called 'Quaintspace' (Relph, 1987: 252–8).

Such quaint policing dovetails with changing attitudes towards security itself, in which urbanites' persistent paranoia places 'safety' ever higher as a social priority. The extent to which this paranoia has penetrated into everyday consciousness must not be underestimated. By way of example, the long-standing greeting 'Happy Holidays' has been supplanted around LA, in both public signage and individual discourse, first with 'Happy and Safe Holidays', then with 'Safe and Happy Holidays', and now simply with 'Safe Holidays', dropping joy out of the equation entirely. Or, perhaps, collapsing joy into safety. Such changes in consciousness correspond with changes in practice. The shift from 'Happy Halloween' to 'Safe Halloween', for example, finds practice in injunctions against children's trick-or-treating in their own neighborhoods. Instead, those with access to disposable income have relocated such activities into such privatized spaces of consumption as shopping malls or, this past year, into one regional amusement park

advertising itself as 'The Safe Place to Trick-or-Treat' (and offering parents of the aforesaid trick-or-treaters a special 'reduced' admission fee just over \$20). Thus, inflated fears of the public sphere, even the most local, impel the naturalization of interdictory space and the complementary quantification of its material. In the process, spatial interdiction comes to entail more than just the exclusion of multiple populations and a wide range of associated social practices. The naturalization and quantification of interdiction entails taking such exclusions for granted. And as a further result, questions of interdictory space's sociospatial injustices and resultant social dysfunctions are pushed ever further into the realm of the inconceivable.

Los Angeles is rife with illustrations of this ongoing application of a cutely human face to the spaces and technologies of selective exclusion. This is not to imply, however, that LA is alone in this. I have chosen examples from Los Angeles in no small part because LA bears the dubious distinction of being the major US city at the forefront of the innovation and installation of interdictory spaces since the mid-1980s. This is not to imply, however, that LA is either exceptional or an exemplar of the gleefully interdicted city. Rather, it is one of many, a fact that will be all too familiar to anybody acquainted with San Francisco's (and/or Sony's) Metreon entertainment complex and its surrounding displacements, the quasi-privatization of Las Vegas' Fremont Street or, perhaps most notoriously, Disney Incorporated's contested reformation of Times Square in Manhattan.

No parking

In previous work on the topic of paranoid urbanism, I have made reference to the Los Angeles County Museum complex at Hancock Park (Flusty, 1994: 17). When I was a child, this complex was an open green park the size of a city block, with the buildings and courtyard of the art museum clustered at one end and the La Brea Tarpits' George C. Page Museum atop a hill at the other. I recall the hilltop museum particularly, as I spent many hours rolling myself down that hillside. Throughout the late 1980s, however, the park changed considerably. First, a fence was installed to encompass the Page Museum's grounds, ensuring no children would be rolling down the embankment thereafter. Next, the art museum was considerably expanded, and multiple gates were installed to seal off the courtyard after hours. By 1990, the park's open spaces had been dismembered, albeit still remaining open to the street. But in the past year, even this concession to the public has been revoked. It could be claimed that, during 1999, the park's accessibility had markedly improved as the fences around the museums were removed. This was, however, due largely to the fact that by mid-1999 a new fence of 8.5-foot high vertical steel columns was installed to completely encircle the park's perimeter.

What strikes me as most remarkable about the newly-fenced park, however, is how little comment it has garnered. I recently pointed out the fence to a small group of urban designers who, despite having driven past it innumerable times previously, expressed surprise over the construction having 'finally' been completed. And when I expressed concern over the fence's role in the loss of accessible neighborhood open space, one colleague responded that she 'didn't have a problem' with the fence, especially as it was painted a pleasant emerald green to blend with its surroundings. Another added that as far as the closure of public spaces is concerned, 'We're used to it'.

Nor is Hancock Park an isolated instance. At the far western edge of Los Angeles is the city of Calabasas, a cluster of affluent gated communities strung along a cozy commercial strip. At the eastern edge of this strip is Calabasas Creek Park, once a freely accessible duckpond and ramble of riparian vegetation at a headwater of the LA River. Over the course of Calabasas' urban beautification program, concurrent with new construction on the adjacent Ventura Freeway, this park was heavily revamped. Since it reopened in the mid-1990s, much of the park has been replanted with topiary and rose

bushes, arranged around a gazebo-studded formal axis. The most striking change, however, has been to the park's accessibility: it is now restricted by a high Victorian-style white picket fence, with an alarm system and sinuously curvaceous wooden gates closed daily by 4pm. Adjacent to this gate is a code of conduct for park visitors, prohibiting photography or painting without prior written approval.

Nicer than the real thing

Codes of conduct, backed up by monitoring and the presence of security personnel, have become the preeminent form of naturalized interdiction in LA's spaces of public agglomeration. A few blocks from Calabasas Creek Park, for instance, is a high-end open-air shopping mall, picturesquely modeled after an Italian hilltown. Opened in 1998, this mall is named The Commons. There is no apparent consciousness of how this name is contradicted by a code of conduct threatening expulsion and/or prosecution for such infractions as boisterous play or the free exercise of political expression.

CityWalk, located in LA's hilltop Universal City, provides the most extreme instance of this phenomenon. CityWalk is essentially an open-air mall like many others, with a critical difference: its frontage is encrusted with more-or-less thin quotations, simulations and simulacra of famous facades to be found around the LA area. CityWalk thus strives to be an improved version of LA itself, an intent backed up by the rhetoric surrounding the facility. It is in the visible manifestation of such improvement, however, that CityWalk is most revealing. Being situated atop a hill, charging a parking fee of \$7 per automobile, and proffering merchandise available less expensively in the city proper, CityWalk discourages the presence of LA's poorer social segments. This strategy of exclusion is reinforced by the mall's code of conduct, monitored remotely and by private security in conjunction with a Los Angeles County Sheriff's substation. The CityWalk code of conduct is an extensive document, proscribing thirteen broadly-defined behaviors including the wearing of potentially disturbance-provoking clothing, sitting on surfaces not designated as seating (or on the ground in excess of five minutes), and 'in any way creating a disturbance which is disruptive or dangerous to the complex's patrons or commercial function'.

CityWalk's improvement upon Los Angeles, then, is the wholesale deployment of surveillance and control to extirpate the spontaneous, the unpredictable, free expression, dissidents, alien cultural practices and the insufficiently affluent from the built environment. In short, the 'better' LA is one that has been filtered and clamped down upon until it becomes something bearing a strong resemblance to an anti-LA. Tom Gilmore, CityWalk's leasing director, confirmed this agenda in his comments on Melrose Avenue, an immensely popular public commercial strip in LA: 'I don't need the excitement of dodging bullets to go there, I don't need to go to a Third World country'. Never before has the division of the city into first and third worlds been so explicitly and vehemently acknowledged, especially by somebody so actively engaged in erecting that division. Lawrence Spungin, then President of MCA, reinforced this position with his perspective on the public boardwalk of LA's Venice Beach: 'There's somebody on every streetcorner with a 'Work for Food' sign, it's not fun anymore' (Wallace, 1992).

Enter 'Commander CityWalk'. Commander CityWalk, as introduced in CityWalk's comic-book format 'Guest Assistance Guide' (Universal City Studios, Inc, 1997) is a superhero who fell through a timewarp from 2197 while discharging his duties as the CityWalk 'Metropolis of Entertainment' Security Commander. Upon arrival in the present-day CityWalk strongpoint of sale, he assumed the duty 'to protect CityWalk forever' and, with no apparent sense of self-irony, took the title 'Guardian of Fun'. Not surprisingly, Commander CityWalk's primary duty is the 'vigorous' enforcement of the code of conduct, a task he executes with his hyper-technological capacity to 'monitor all areas and citizens

of this capital of fun'. In the guise of Commander CityWalk, panoptic control thus becomes something not only reassuring, but flamboyantly heroic, keeping a lid on comic-book style villains who would impinge upon the pleasures of commodity consumption.

Being one who does periodically need to go to 'Third World' countries, and who apparently resides within LA's own third-world periphery to boot, I recently put Mr Gilmore's claims about the perils of LA and the necessity of Commander CityWalk to the test. Accompanied by two dozen students, I traveled to Melrose and spent three hours walking the avenue. Melrose Avenue is a commercial strip just south of Hollywood. Centrally located within the LA basin and with ample street parking, Melrose is famous for its youth-oriented subcultural specialty shops and attracts an eclectic mix of Angelenos to promenade on its absurdly narrow public sidewalks. During our visit, we encountered innumerable people with prominent piercings and tattoos, a fair number of goths, gangstas and neo-punks, a handful of skate-kids asking after spare change, a dreadlocked vendor pushing an immense cart stacked with incense and perfume oils, a family of Oaxacaños selling bags full of mango slices mixed with lime and chili, and herds of tourists out on the hunt for bohemia. In short, a condensate of the sort of people one would find scattered across the LA basin. And, as with my innumerable past visits to Melrose, none of us was obliged to dodge a single bullet. To be fair, we then traveled to CityWalk where, similarly, gunfire was not in evidence. But neither were the vendors of chili-coated mangos and incense, the panhandling skaters (or any skaters, for that matter), nor the pierced and tattooed kids so much in evidence on Melrose. There were plenty of gawking tourists, of course, but not a goth in sight.

Such experiences further the implication that CityWalk's code of conduct is less about precluding violence (which indeed it has not, as two separate mass melees on the mall have demonstrated) (Curtiss, 1994) than about proscribing non-normative social practices. Equally apparent, however, was that many of my students were largely untroubled by this, and some actively applauded it. A number of these students commented upon how much 'nicer' CityWalk was than Melrose Avenue, and how the relative absence of people sporting green hair and extensive tattoos produced a more comfortable shopping experience. In the sentiments of one student, if spatial privatization, omnipresent monitoring and an all-encompassing code of conduct can produce such nice places, then these control strategies should be promulgated more widely.

The banality of interdiction

Increasingly, I find myself unnerved by the concept of 'nice'. Some time ago, while describing how the 'beautification' of neighborhoods in LA has often entailed the eviction of the established residential population, one bystander enthusiastically interjected how similar efforts were underway in her home city, rendering decaying neighborhoods 'nice, so nice people can move in'. Faced with such conversations, I find myself uneasily recollecting filmed interviews with elderly members of the Spanish bourgeoisie. Invariably, these interviewees wistfully comment upon how Francisco Franco made Spain nice again by keeping the radicals under control, and shrug indifferently when reminded that the radicals in question were controlled through some markedly unsavory practices.

It seems that in the present urban context, places invariably become nicer for some because others who might (or did) share those places are subordinated or worse. In Los Angeles, this has come to mean tactically engineering spaces from whence the bulk of the city's populations can be kept out of mind or, at the very least, well in line. The proliferation of interdictory space in LA is thus demonstrably a matter of those with the resources to control space excluding not crime, but the insecurity attendant upon

unpredictable and potentially unsettling social encounters with difference. Cities within the city where excitement is unmarred by uncertainty and risks are ultimately riskless. Which, by extension, necessitates the exclusion of otherness, of persons and practices that are 'different'. The exclusion, in practice, of diversity in practice. Seen in this light, the naturalization of interdictory spaces is tantamount to blithely ignoring the enforced disappearance of other ways of being within the city, other ways that in LA's case have come to comprise much of the city itself. And to quantify interdictory space is both to trivialize this loss and to celebrate the subordination of those who practice other ways of being.

Throughout her later career, Hannah Arendt investigated the psychology underlying mass public complicity in the Third Reich. Her intent was to ascertain how large social collectives could permit, and even support, the emergence of gross systemic injustice. Ultimately, Arendt concluded that such an emergence is nothing inexplicable or even aberrant. Rather, it is the simple outcome of a population docilely accepting en masse that some of their number must be sacrificed to attain peace and order (Arendt, 1963).

The Commons, of course, is no concentration camp, and a CityWalk is certainly no death march. But the difference in degree in no way negates the similarities in motivating spirit. In Los Angeles, the sacrifice of some of our number continues apace. The myth of a rapacious crime wave that legitimized the construction of so many interdictory spaces throughout the 1980s and 1990s has long been dispelled. Yet the thick layers of interdictory space that emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s not only remain largely undisturbed but continue to penetrate ever deeper, ever more intimately, and ever more prettily into our daily lives. And, not surprisingly, the further interdiction so penetrates, the more thoroughly LA's more privileged factions section themselves off from their far more populous Other. A state of affairs that would seem to have become entirely acceptable and even desirable, so long as it is cozily familiar and candy-coated.

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