

Blurry-Urbanism

By **Thomas Mical**, University of South Australia



Oporto Vodafone Headquarters, Portugal (Photo Credit: Nelson Garrido)

The immanence of materialist surfaces surrounding industrialized spaces function as skin and a transmission medium. After relativity, probability, and contingency theories, claims for a universal law, industrial order, and their modernist spatial logic dissolve. The utopian impulse scaffolded an epic singular modernity, but when this impulse was coupled with the myth of omni-transparency in glass, totalization failed.

From 1968, Henri Lefebvre's insights in *The Production of Space* disentangled the spatial-transparency continuum. Spatial multiplicities, under differentiated codes, need a lens for discerning the subtle minimal differences of image-spaces, which were often suppressed within modernity's homogenizing optic. Significantly, Lefebvre's critique of spatial production utilized focused dialectics to expose these differences, (as in the compelling bifurcations of conceived, perceived, and lived spaces). It is in the surface emergence and immanence of a shifting minimal difference that the other-ness of rational spatial extension emerges.

Lefebvre's writings dissolve universal space, an apparently transparent plenum, into differences that function like pre-existing blurs in an optical field condition. Modernity's transparent optic, operating as an abstract-machine (Gilles Deleuze), is now increasingly blurred by mobility, disconnected sense, and fugitivity across media. Subtle differences, not hard dialectics, accelerate the blurred spaces of our urban hyper-modernity.

Blurring as image and process is now the proposed operative strategy of urbanism

(after Lefebvre and Deleuze), whereby transitive subject-positions can lead to encounters of invisible or suppressed differentiated urbanism, significant mobile spatial codes performing like the psychoanalytic processes of condensations and displacements (Christian Metz), shredding the static legacy of the fixed Enlightenment optic.

Like photographic blurs and after-images, the ephemeral is the new focus of attention in theories of urban landscape, anticipated in the rise of ambient environments of “Blurred Spaces” (as theorized by architect Toyo Ito), a better image code for the promiscuity of differentiated experience within this re-imaging and re-coding of the contemporary urban scene.

Thomas Mical is Associate Professor of Architectural Theory at the University of South Australia. His research topics include architectural theory and media-philosophy around Contemporary Continental Philosophy, invisibility studies, and stealth landscapes.