

Hypermodern spaces: cinematic dystopia and the visualization of hypermodernity in Blade Runner 2049

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Received: September 20, 2025

Accepted for publication: October 6, 2025

Abstract

This paper examines hypermodern spaces through Gilles Lipovetsky's framework, analyzing Blade Runner 2049 as a dystopian hypermodernity representation. Hypermodernity—characterized by excess, hyperconsumption, and temporal paradoxes—creates fluid, accelerated, individualized environments that paradoxically undermine collaborative design processes and community trust-building while promising enhanced connectivity. Using Lipovetsky's paradoxical individualism, the study shows hypermodern spaces satisfy contradictory desires for community/isolation and authenticity/spectacle. Comparative analysis of the 1982 and 2017 Blade Runner films demonstrates the acceleration of hypermodern spatial conditions. Key characteristics include experiential design, functional flexibility, technological integration, and aesthetic eclecticism. The film's fragmented cityscapes demonstrate dystopian cinema's warning against emerging hypermodern spatial conditions while systematically fragmenting the social cohesion necessary for collaborative architecture and community trust.

Keywords: hypermodernity, space, architecture, dystopia, cinema, urbanism, digital environments, temporality, collaboration, trust

Introduction

Modern urban landscapes layered with overlapping histories, where cutting-edge architecture exists alongside industrial remnants, exemplify what Gilles Lipovetsky calls hypermodernity (Lipovetsky, 2005, pp. 32-45). This condition, driven by modernism's acceleration rather than rejection, appears in both physical and virtual environments—from smart cities to dystopian films—while fundamentally challenging collaborative design processes and the spatial conditions necessary for community trust-building. Hypermodern spatial transformation fundamentally alters human-environment interaction. Unlike modernism's unified visions that facilitated collective identity and collaborative work, hypermodern spaces operate through paradoxes—offering personal freedom while maintaining control, celebrating diversity while standardizing, and authentic experiences alongside commodification. Denis Villeneuve's *Blade Runner 2049* (2017) illustrates these shifts with layered urban visuals, holograms, and tension between real and artificial, serving as a critique of hypermodern spatial logic and its impact on community formation. This paper argues that hypermodern spaces mark fundamental change, undermining collaborative design principles and trust-building mechanisms. Rather than facilitating unified social visions, hypermodern environments simultaneously satisfy conflicting desires—connectivity and solitude, efficiency and authenticity, global reach and personal intimacy—while systematically undermining the spatial relationships necessary for genuine collaborative design and community trust. As James Stevens Curl notes in *Making Dystopia*, modern spatial design often masks dystopian tendencies as progress, promising freedom but establishing new controls (Curl, 2019, pp. 87-92), using seductive governance rather than overt coercion to fragment collaborative potential.

Literature Review

Hypermodernity and Collaboration. Lipovetsky's hypermodernity concept emerges from observing modern society's intensification rather than postmodern transition (Lipovetsky, 2005, pp. 25-31). Three principal axes define this condition: market logic extension into non-commercial areas, efficiency-focused social reorganization centered on performance metrics, and individual elevation as both value source and organizational target. These generate paradoxical individualism—emphasizing personal choice within increasingly standardized, market-driven environments (Lipovetsky & Charles, 2005, pp. 78-84) that systematically undermine collaborative design principles and community trust-building. Aesthetic capitalism, developed with Jean Serroy, combines artistic sensibilities with market logic, creating spaces functioning as both practical environments and aesthetic experiences (Lipovetsky & Serroy, 2013, pp. 45-67). In *L'écran Global*, they examine screen-based environmental dominance, fostering global screen culture where physical and digital spaces blend (Lipovetsky & Serroy, 2020, pp. 34-56) while fragmenting the shared spatial experiences necessary for collaborative community formation.

Spatial Theory and Trust. Zygmunt Bauman's liquid modernity offers a crucial perspective for understanding the temporal aspects of hypermodern spatiality and their impact on collaborative processes (Bauman, 2000, pp. 1-15). Architectural liquidity—spaces' ability to shift between functions, aesthetics, and meanings—explains hypermodern environmental adaptability while revealing how constant change prevents the stable spatial relationships necessary for trust development. Marc Augé's non-places analysis highlights spatial fragmentation typical of hypermodern urban settings (Augé, 2008, pp. 77-103), creating homogenization that eliminates local collaborative traditions. David Harvey's time-space compression theory—economic

and social process acceleration altering spatial and temporal experience—proves essential for understanding hypermodern spaces' impact on collaborative relationships often at collaboration's expense (Harvey, 1990, pp. 147-197). Paul Virilio's dromology—speed-focused analysis—becomes crucial for understanding hypermodern spatial arrangements driven by acceleration rather than reflection (Virilio, 1994, pp. 12-28; Virilio, 2015, pp. 187-202), which fundamentally opposes collaborative design's deliberative requirements.

Cinematic Dystopia as Architectural Theory. Studying cinematic dystopias provides vital insights into architectural theory when examining hypermodernism and its impact on collaborative breakdown. Unlike traditional critique examining built environments post-completion, dystopian cinema offers speculative visualization of future spaces, highlighting current issues while providing predictive insights into collaborative fragmentation patterns (Bruno, 2007, pp. 156-178). These dystopias serve key functions: providing visual language for abstract concepts (Koeck, 2013, pp. 234-267), exposing ideological assumptions through exaggeration (Jameson, 2007, pp. 88-112), and acting as resistance spaces presenting alternative viewpoints (Fisher, 2014, pp. 67-89). Peter R. Sedgwick's hypervision—technologically enhanced yet limited seeing—proves crucial for understanding hypermodern spatial function through altered visual and perceptual experiences that fragment shared spatial understanding essential for collaborative design (Sedgwick, 2016, pp. 89-112).

Methodology

This research employs mixed-method approach combining theoretical analysis, case study investigation, and cinematic examination while focusing specifically on collaboration and trust

implications. Theoretical analysis builds foundation based on Lipovetsky's work, emphasizing paradoxical individualism, excess logic, presentism, aesthetic capitalism, and global screen culture as they relate to collaborative breakdown. Comparative cinematic analysis examines *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Blade Runner 2049* (2017) as theoretical architecture forms, visualizing spatial concepts through narrative while tracking hypermodern condition acceleration. Case studies analyze Apple Stores, Google's Mountain View campus, Singapore's smart city initiatives, and coworking spaces using established architectural methods.

Results

Comparative Analysis: 1982 vs. 2017 Hypermodern Acceleration.

Comparing Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) with Villeneuve's sequel reveals hypermodern spatial condition acceleration and collaborative breakdown intensification. The original's chaotic, vertically stratified Los Angeles emphasized social fragmentation through architectural segregation, while the 2017 version presents systematic hypermodern integration where isolation becomes normalized rather than dystopian. The 1982 Tyrell Corporation pyramid represented traditional power hierarchy through monumental architecture, maintaining recognizable spatial relationships despite social breakdown. Wallace Corporation's 2017 headquarters exemplifies hypermodern architecture as ambient authority—minimalist, authoritarian design suggesting power embedded in environmental systems rather than monumental display. This evolution demonstrates hypermodern spatiality's shift from visible hierarchy to ambient control, making collaborative resistance increasingly difficult.

Four Key Characteristics of Hypermodern Spaces. Analysis identifies four interconnected characteristics defining hypermodern spaces

while examining their collaborative impact and trust-building mechanisms.

Experiential Design and Commodified Interaction: Hypermodern spaces emphasize emotional and sensory engagement over functional practicality, marking a departure from efficiency-focused modernist approaches that previously facilitated collaborative work environments. Apple Stores exemplify this through museum-like aesthetics emphasizing cultural interaction, seamlessly combining shopping, learning, and entertainment while transforming traditionally collaborative knowledge-sharing into consumption activities. However, experiential design creates paradoxical outcomes—providing engaging environments while commodifying traditionally non-commercial aspects of community life and undermining authentic community formation.

Functional Flexibility and Controlled Adaptability: Google's Mountain View campus demonstrates workplace flexibility through modular designs, movable partitions, and adaptable infrastructure that promise collaborative enhancement while maintaining corporate control that limits genuine community formation. Coworking spaces showcase explicit functional flexibility, functioning as workplaces, social hubs, lifestyle brands, and community centers while commodifying collaboration itself, transforming community interaction into lifestyle consumption. These environments feel highly personalized yet broadly generic, reflecting hypermodern choices within standardized frameworks that limit genuine collaborative autonomy.

Technological Integration and Ambient Surveillance: Singapore's smart city initiatives exemplify large-scale digital integration—surveillance, environmental management, and social control—creating ambient governance that continuously monitors collaborative

activities and fragments direct human spatial relationships necessary for authentic community formation. While facilitating spatial customization through embedded interfaces, technological integration introduces dependencies and vulnerabilities that compromise collaborative autonomy.

Aesthetic Eclecticism and Cultural Commodification: Hypermodern spaces blend elements from various historical periods and cultural backgrounds, treating culture as a resource for aesthetic sampling rather than tradition preservation, which undermines authentic community identity formation essential for collaborative design. Blade Runner 2049 demonstrates this through architectural environments that sample various cultural references without a coherent cultural context. Holographic Interfaces and Mediated Collaboration: Blade Runner 2049's holographic technology, particularly through Joi's character, visualizes hypermodern spatial logic while highlighting collaborative breakdown. K's relationship with Joi exemplifies the hypermodern intimacy paradox—emotional connection paired with fundamental alienation, where bonds exist entirely through technological mediation rather than collaborative spatial engagement. This aligns with Virilio's concept of the vision machine—a device promising enhanced perception but fundamentally altering visual and spatial experience (Virilio, 1994, pp. 59-73).

Discussion

Results highlight hypermodernity as a powerful tool for understanding contemporary spatial conditions and their impact on collaboration and trust-building. Paradoxical individualism proves especially valuable for analyzing how spaces claim to offer personal freedom while operating within standardized structures that systematically undermine authentic community formation. Aesthetic capitalism explains how

artistic sensibility merges with market logic to create environments that simulate collaborative spaces while channeling interaction toward consumption. The mixed-method approach proves effective, with cinematic analysis standing out as particularly valuable. Comparing both Blade Runner films illustrates how dystopian cinema serves as a legitimate architectural theory methodology, offering insights that traditional methods may miss while providing predictive insights into collaborative breakdown patterns. Cinematic analysis enables speculative future visualization, spatial logic examination in concentrated form, ideological assumption revelation, and predictive insights for proactive collaborative design critique. The film's architectural imagination demonstrates how cinematic dystopias function as experimental laboratories for testing spatial concepts before materialization. Unlike authentic architecture constrained by practical limitations, cinematic architecture explores extreme collaborative breakdown scenarios, revealing hidden assumptions about community formation and spatial relationships necessary for collaboration. Comparing the 1982 original and 2017 sequel illustrates how quickly hypermodern spatial conditions become normalized, emphasizing the ongoing value of cinematic analysis for understanding evolving spatial conditions affecting collaborative design practice. This analysis carries essential implications for architectural and urban design practices focused on collaboration and trust-building. Experiential design focus reveals new engagement possibilities while risking the commodification of non-commercial collaborative experiences. Functional flexibility offers adaptive insights but often serves control rather than genuine community empowerment. Technological integration highlights innovative system benefits while exposing surveillance and control dangers that compromise collaborative autonomy.

Conclusion

This analysis reveals fundamental spatial transformations affecting collaborative design practice and community trust-building, examined through hypermodernity theory and dystopian cinematic visualization. Comparative study of the 1982 original and 2017 sequel reveals the acceleration of hypermodern spatial conditions. Hypermodern spatiality follows consistent yet paradoxical logic across domains, characterized by four main traits: experiential design, functional flexibility, technological integration, and aesthetic eclecticism that systematically undermine collaborative design processes and community trust-building while promising enhanced connectivity. Blade Runner 2049 analysis in comparison with its 1982 predecessor demonstrates dystopian cinema's importance for understanding spatial challenges affecting collaboration, providing visual language and predictive insights into community breakdown patterns while demonstrating cinema's capacity to serve as a predictive tool for architectural theory. The study supports Lipovetsky's hypermodernity theory as a robust framework for understanding spatial dynamics affecting collaboration and trust. Paradoxical individualism helps explore gaps between environmental promises and realities, particularly regarding collaborative potential. Aesthetic capitalism explains how the integration of environment-market logic commodifies community interaction. Understanding hypermodern spatiality requires recognizing complexity and ambiguity, particularly its impact on collaborative design. Environments represent complex systems that are influenced by and influence human behavior, including collaborative capacity. Developing effective spatial design strategies requires acknowledging both the hypermodern environmental potential and the dangers of collaboration. This necessitates care-based approaches, following Bernard Stiegler's proposals—methods focusing on community well-being and

collaborative capacity over efficiency or profit maximization while prioritizing collaborative empowerment and community trust-building. Hypermodernity represents a dynamic process transforming relationships among humans, space, and time while fundamentally affecting collaborative potential. Analyzing contemporary examples and dystopian portrayals enables more intentional participation in shaping collaborative future environments that support rather than fragment collaborative design and community formation. Blade Runner 2049's dystopian vision serves as a warning and inspiration for spatial design, prioritizing community well-being and collaborative empowerment over consumption and control, while fostering the spatial conditions necessary for collaborative architecture and community trust.

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Spații hipermoderne: distopia cinematografică și vizualizarea hipermodernității în Blade Runner 2049

(rezumat)

Acest articol examinează spațiile hipermoderne prin cadrul teoretic al lui Gilles Lipovetsky, analizând Blade Runner 2049 ca o reprezentare a hipermodernității

distopice. Hipermodernitatea – caracterizată prin exces, hiperconsum și paradoxuri temporale – creează medii fluide, accelerate și individualizate, care, în mod paradoxal, subminează procesele de design colaborativ și construirea încrederii în comunitate, promițând o conectivitate îmbunătățită. Folosind conceptul de individualism paradoxal al lui Lipovetsky, studiul arată că spațiile hipermoderne satisfac dorințe contradictorii pentru comunitate/izolare și autenticitate/spectacol. Analiza comparativă a filmelor *Blade Runner* din 1982 și 2017 demonstrează accelerarea condițiilor spațiale hipermoderne. Caracteristicile cheie includ designul experiențial, flexibilitatea funcțională, integrarea tehnologică și eclectismul estetic. Peisajele urbane fragmentate ale filmului ilustrează avertismentul cinematografiei distopice împotriva condițiilor spațiale hipermoderne emergente, fragmentând sistematic coeziunea socială necesară pentru arhitectura colaborativă și încrederea comunitară.