Speed Camera Ahead
Signage

Different countries

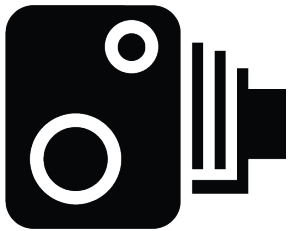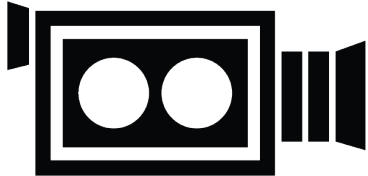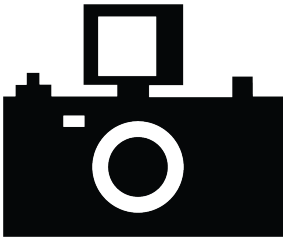| UK | Korea | Australia | France | Singapore |

UK   Korea   Australia   France   Singapore

Introducing Malfunction
through Smoothing

Smoothing is the process of reducing noise, irregularity, or contradiction to produce something consistent and readable

In graphic design, smoothing operates at several levels:

Level	What gets Smoothed	Why?
Aesthetic	Roughness, inconsistency, texture	To achieve harmony, "good taste"
Systemic	Complexity, local variation	To enable standardization and scalability
Behavioural	Confusion, hesitation	To make user experience "frictionless"
Cultural	Diversity, uncertainty, conflict	To maintain universal accessibility or neutrality

→ *Smoothing* keeps systems legible and efficient, but it also erases the politics and decisions that make them
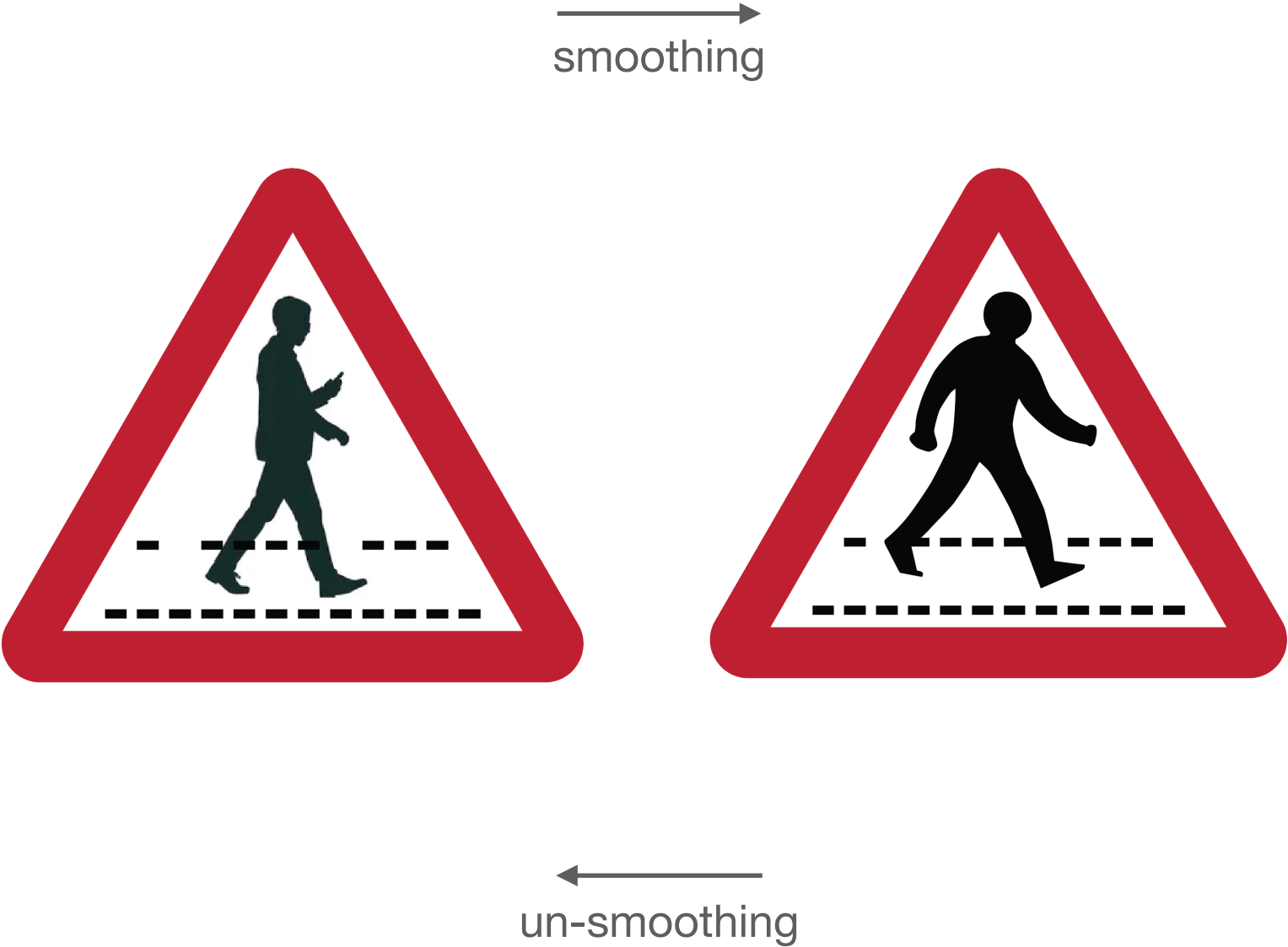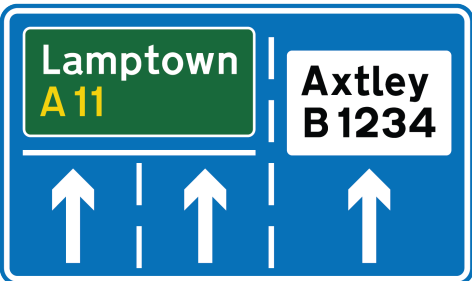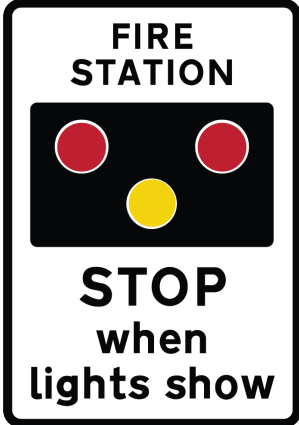
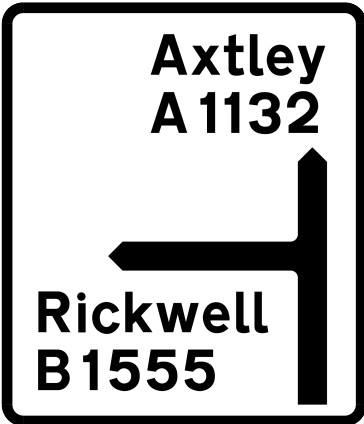# Smoothing happens
in daily life as well:

Situation	How "smoothing" appears	What gets lost
Social behaviour	We hide awkwardness or emotions	Authenticity, spontaneity
Home & objects	We tidy, align, remove friction	Texture, imperfection, individuality
Digital life	Algorithms filter feeds, autocorrect typos, and optimise experience	Random discovery, contradiction, surprise
Communication	We summarize, simplify, standardize language	Nuance, ambiguity, local meaning

⟶ *Smoothing* is how systems maintain comfort and predictability but also how they erase the irregularities that make experience human.

(Atelier Hoko's A Daily Act: Workbook critiques this
⟶ it reintroduces friction and discomfort into the
polished flow of daily routines)

Un-Smoothing

smoothing

un-smoothing

254 yds
←

250 yds
←

23.05%

20%

Axtley
A 1132

Rickwell
B 1555

Axtley
A 1132

Rickwell
B 1555

Lamptown
A 11
Axtley
B 1234

Lamptown
A 11
Axtley
B 1234

Low gear
for 1½ miles

Low gear
for 1½ miles

!

소방서

정지
when
lights show

!

FIRE
STATION

STOP
when
lights show
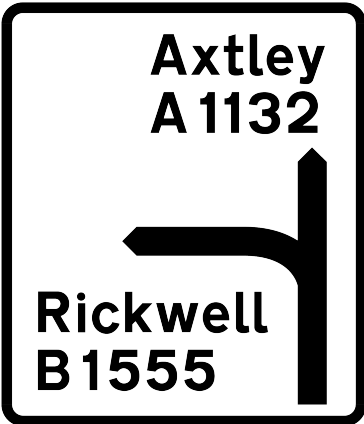
"Unsmoothing"

Unsmoothing intentionally reintroduces friction, irregularity, and tension to make hidden structures visible.

- Bring back **noise** → variation, context, chance.

- Bring back **friction** → discomfort, awareness.

- Bring back **texture** → materiality, evidence of process.

- Bring back **ambiguity** → multiple interpretations, uncertainty.

↓

Unsmoothing as a way to make design think about itself?

What can be learned through
Unsmoothing?

- Error can be a tool for understanding control.

- Friction creates awareness and it slows down automatic perception.

- Noise can be more truthful than clarity

- Systems are most visible at the moment of their breakdown.

Can "unsmoothing" be a design method to reveal what's underneath/hidden in the system?

Micro graphics?

Micro graphics are also known as the aesthetics of technical information. Grids, barcodes, and monospaced fonts are all designed for clarity and efficiency, not for aesthetics, yet we're drawn to them and have shaped the way designers structure text and information.

Micro graphics as a method to "Unsmooth"

Friction and Slowness: The uniform width and spacing of monospaced fonts and the dense structure of barcodes intentionally impede fast, easy scanning. Layering, overlapping, or enlarging these elements immediately create visual friction that demands decoding time, directly opposing the instantaneous clarity of smooth design.

The Arbitrary: Barcodes and production labels contain information that is hyper-specific but meaningless to the average user (batch numbers, date codes). This can show that systematic detail can create confusion, not clarity.

Residue and Process: Micro graphics represent the trace of the technical process (printing limits, digital encoding, production history). By displaying them prominently, they become the"residue" that proves the effort and complexity that clean, smooth design attempts to erase.