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# Rediscovering the 'Space of Place' in the Era of the 'Space of Flows'

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Karsten Harries' Timely Philosophy of Architecture

## Abstract

A significant part of Karsten Harries's philosophical work, which spans several decades, has been devoted to the philosophy of architecture, and the present paper argues that his phenomenologically oriented emphasis on the characteristics of a heterogeneity of spaces has contributed significantly to the awareness that architecture is much more than an aesthetic object, or alternatively, something embodying technological imperatives. This is implied by the title of one of his most important books, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, which encapsulates what Harries regards as architecture's core 'function.' Generally speaking, the book comprises Harries' response to the advent of postmodernity, and sets out to recuperate the role of architecture in a world that is rapidly 'forgetting' Giedion's claim (shared by Harries) that the task of architecture is "the interpretation of a way of life valid for our period." To this end, Harries elaborates on a variety of themes, all of which contribute to architecture's fundamentally ethical role in society. Importantly, this elaboration resonates with what Manuel Castells, in *The Rise of the Network Society*, perceives as being the threat of the architecture of "the space of flows"—of which postmodernist architecture is paradigmatic—to the "space of place(s)", which are indispensable for human experience of spaces where social interaction occurs in a direct, embodied manner. Just as Harries has demonstrated the indispensable role of an architecture that transforms space into place, Castells has shown that the "space of flows" in all its manifestations, including postmodernist architecture, is inimical to place-spaces, in addition to which it conflicts with the spatiotemporality underpinning the ecological movement.

## Keywords

Place, Space of Flows, Manuel Castells, Community, Ecology