

# The Epistemological Location of Karsten Harries' "Research Programme"

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## Abstract

Building upon Karsten Harries' 'research programme', I argue in favor of the inauguration of a new ethical 'paradigm' in the creation of contemporary spaces and places. The main obstacle to such a project is the aesthetic persistence in the concept of 'form' that permeates a large part of Postmodern, Deconstructivist and contemporary architecture. This persistence inaugurated the formalistic mannerism of the so-called 'star-architects'. Favored by the neo-liberal market forces, this trend leads to an architectural production based on technological innovation, spectacular imagery and formal acrobatics which sets aside fundamental questions of the social, political, humanistic and ethical relevance of space and place. Architecture thus becomes a profession "that can be treated as an instrument, or as a commodity [...] judged mostly by the criteria of technical disciplines", as Dalibor Vesely rightly observes. In order to effect a 'paradigm change' from aesthetics to ethics, I delve into a brief investigation of written theoretical discourses, trying to find out how the 'aesthetic' paradigm became the dominant trend in our times. My basic claim is that this dominance was established by the systematic Post-modern devaluation of any ethical claims made by architectural theorists from the 19th century until the Modern Movements of the 20th century.

## Keywords

Research Programme, Aesthetic Paradigm, Form, Ethos of Place, Sittlichkeit