

# Heterogeneous space in architecture



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In Space Reader: Heterogeneous Space in Architecture, Michael Hensel, Christopher Hight and Achim Menges discusses the possible approach of heterogeneous space in contemporary architecture through examining the role of space in Modern and Post-Modern architecture,

To understand what constitutes heterogeneous space, let us examine each term. Most simply, 'heterogeneous' means something (an object or system) that consists of a diverse range of items or qualities, which can include differences in kind as well as differences in degree. These could be multiplicities of things, abrupt changes or smooth gradients. However, the dominant approach to such diversities draws from a Platonic lineage that sees all the variations in reference to a model or perhaps a norm; all apparent differences are here really only deviations from the model, their identity given by degrees of resemblance to a single uniformity. All diversity is seen as phenomena measured against this unity, which is seen as more real, even if it only exists as an ideal or statistical mean. This is true for dualism as well. Examples might be the traditional opposition of masculine and feminine, in which the latter is treated as a version of the first, or any number of racisms. Luce Irigaray has shown that the logic of dualisms involves not two terms but only the semblance of two terms. Phallogentrism is the use of a natural or universal term to define both sexes: within this structure, there is not one term, man, and another independent term that is denigrated, woman. Rather, there is only one term, the other being defined as what it is not, its other or opposite. Irigaray's claim is that woman is erased as such within this logic: there is no space for women because taking their place is the specter or simulacrum of woman, man's fanciful

counterpart, that which he has expelled and other from himself. Gilles Deleuze has called this the 'Logic of the Same', and while it may appear either benign or despotic, it nevertheless always forecloses the possibility of real difference.

Implicit in the pervasiveness of structures of binarization is the refusal to acknowledge the invisibility or negligibility of the subordinated term, its fundamental erasure as an autonomous or contained term. The binary structure not only defines the privileged term as the only term of the pair, but it infinitizes the negative term, rendering it definitionally amorphous, the receptacle of all that is excessive or expelled from the circuit of the privileged term. Yet while attempting to definitively and definitionally anchor terms, while struggling for settled, stabilized power relation, while presenting themselves as immutable and given dualisms are always in the process of subtle renegotiation and redefinition. They are considerably more flexible in their scope and history than their logic would indicate, for each term shifts and their values realign, while the binarized structure remains intact. It would be a mistake to assume that these oppositional categories are somehow fixed or immune to reordering and subtle shifts.

Therefore, something significant is at stake once one thinks of differences as a positivity rather than simply a variance from uniformity. Here we should distinguish between difference and diversity in the way Deleuze described for philosophical traditions of ontology and epistemology in *Difference and Repetition* (1968).

Difference is not diversity. Diversity is given, but the difference is that by which the given is given. Difference is not a phenomenon but the noumenon closest to phenomenon. .. Every diversity and every change refers to a difference which is its sufficient reason. Everything which happens and everything which appears is correlate with orders of difference: difference of level, temperature, pressure, tension, potential, difference of intensity.

Deleuze argues that rather than naturalise the Logic of the Same's presumption of an underlying uniformity, we should accept the diversity of the universe as such and not attempt to reduce it. Once one accepts that diversity is irreducible rather than simply variations on or resemblances to an ideal model of Sameness, the problem becomes not how to account for divergences but how to think through multiplicities and how they 'happen' and are 'correlated' through other differences. Deleuze argues that such differences are Real, not effects of our perception or cultural constructions. Indeed, these differences produce the events, objects, and qualities that produce affective phenomena (such as temperature changes). Everything is produced via events of differentiation, even coherences and order. That is, while heterogeneity was once understood as a divergence from an underlying uniformity of Being that needed explanation, now we need to explain any apparent uniformity and ordering via processes of differentiation. Difference is active production of apparently coherent Beings-as-events. Thus, heterogeneity is a condition where phenomena of coherences across diversities are produced by processes of differentiation and can be understood and apprehended as such.

This runs immediately into common ideas of 'space' as homogeneous and passive, ordered only by the imposition of form, movement, activities or boundaries understood as distinct from space itself. In other words, space is seen as the product of formal operations or as a neutral and uniform space for such relations. Such commonplace are incompatible with the immanent heterogeneity of things since space becomes an underlying or overlaying uniformity against which to read diversity. Obviously, the differentials sketched above occur in time but also in space. This field of relations transforms through time and space, indeed is spatially configured through temporal transformations (for example, heated air produced a different spacing of molecules). Heterogeneous space therefore neither pre-exists diversity, nor is it simply the effect of processes of differentiation; rather, it is the immanent field of relations between differentials. It is not static but always flux, and therefore might be more precisely understood as the spacing through which difference manifests and is constituted via other differentials.

The nature of heterogeneous space and homogeneous space can be studied by looking at Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of smooth and striated space using chess and game of Go for comparison in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

In chess, the pieces are hierarchically differentiated while the board consists of a simple grid that is almost neutral but polarized between two sides (analogous to battle fronts). The pieces move across the grid, but always with a bias to the two fronts. In occupying the spaces, the pieces change the strategic conditions of the game. However, the strategic space of the game is constructed by moving distinct objects in relation to one another across

what remains an essentially homogeneous and static field. In the game of Go, on the other hand, the pieces are minimally differentiated (they are only black or white discs).

While chess pieces occupy the spaces of the grid as if they were enclosed territories, in Go the discs are located at cross-points of a much larger grid field. Instead of moving, pieces are placed and remain, only being altered when surrounded by pieces of the opposite color. Players do not advance in fronts, but can place discs anywhere to control the board from all sides, attempting to create conditions where the addition of one single piece might create a closed territory around many opposite colors and potentially instantly switch control of the board. Here, the pieces are not so much objects occupying territories within an otherwise homogeneous space as ‘charges’ within a fluctuating field-space out of which territorial boundaries emerge or are held open across distances. What one manipulates in Go is thus the space of the game itself. While the typological pieces are dominant in chess, using translational dynamics to produce strategic effects, in Go space dominates the notational pieces, whose importance is determined purely by their relation to the space around them and is dynamic, holding the potential for a multiplicity of outcomes at any stage. Chess poses active objects moving through a static space that is basically homogeneous. In Go, space itself is in flux and cannot be reduced to a static frame of reference or ordering measure.

For Deleuze and Guattari these two games suggest different ways of understanding the relationship between identity, agency and space:

chess pieces entertain biunivocal relations with one another, and with the adversary's pieces: their functioning is structural. On the other hand, a Go piece has only a milieu of exteriority, or extrinsic relations with nebulas or constellations as bordering, encircling, shattering. All by itself, a Go piece can destroy an entire constellation synchronically; a chess piece cannot (or can do so diachronically only)

Chess pieces are actors whose roles are defined a priori of the temporal spatial relationships, while those of Go are produced through the playing of a game. To extend this analogy, in the heterogeneous space like that of Go, identity and agency is produced via contingent spatial relationship with many similarly informed but also thereby differentiated actors. In chess, on the other hand, identity is given and occupies a given role and space as a sovereign subject in relation to others. The queen is always the most powerful piece; a pebble in Go is critical or not only in relation to the space of the board it participates in constructing. The body politics of chess requires a static space through which to organize itself; the multitude of Go is at once constructed through space and a spatial construct. One plays Go by managing spatial differentials; one plays chess by deploying already defined differences in space.

Heterogeneous space can thus be contrasted to an isotonic space through which one moves. Rather than defining difference against a constant measure, or metric, of space as a ground, differentiation is produced via the immanent unfolding of spatial processes. These differentiations could be sudden or gradual, or both at different locations. Moreover, there can exist within the same dimensions a manifold set of such relationships; these sets,

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or systems, might be intricately entwined or barely connected – though they must be calibrated to each other in some way and not simply overlapped.

In terms of design, this understanding of heterogeneous space would hold that differentiation of use and complexity of form arise from spatial qualities, and that these qualities are inseparable from its material conditions. This space could produce controlled but varied atmospheric effects as well as different performative capacities that are not determined by ‘ programmatic’ function. Such a space would necessarily be affective in relation to the actors and agencies that traverse it, enfolding subjective perception with its material conditions. Moreover, these spatial affects would not be distance or the result of formal organizations of matter but would be means through which material and programmatic organizations would be configured and manifested. Heterogeneous space in architecture is therefore neither difference produced by form within an overall uniformity (modern space) nor a collage of distinct formal elements (Post-Modern space). Instead, the proposition of a heterogeneous space would produce and permit differentiation and discontinuity of both quality and organization across multiple conditions within an overall coherency.

In a certain sense, all of Deleuze’s works, as Deleuze makes clear in his reading of Foucault, are about the outside, the unthought, the exterior, the surface, the simulacrum, the fold, lines of flight, what resists assimilation, what remains foreign even within a presumed identity, whether this is the intrusion of a minor language into a majoritarian one or the pack submerged within an individual.



It is significant that Deleuze, like Derrida, does not attempt to abandon binarized thought or to replace it with an alternative; rather, binarized categories are played off each other, are rendered molecular, global, and are analysed in their molar particularities, so that the possibilities of their reconnections, their realignment in different “ system”, are established.  
(desire)

Can architecture inhabit us as much as we see ourselves inhabiting it? Does architecture have to be seen in terms of subjectivization and semiotization, in terms of use and meaning? Can architecture be thought, no longer as a whole, a complex unity, but as a set of and site for becomings of all kinds? What would such an understanding entail?

In short, can architecture be thought, in connection with other series, as assemblage? What would this entail? What are the implications of opening up architectural discourses to Deleuzian desire-as-production?

Can it become something -many things - other than what it is and how it presently functions? If its present function is an effect of the crystallization of its history within, inside, its present, can its future be something else?

How can each be used by the other, not just to affirm itself and receive external approval but also to question and thus to expand itself, to become otherwise, without assuming any privilege or primacy of the one over the other and without assuming that the relation between them must be one of direct utility or translation?

Architecture has tended to conceive of itself as an art, a science, or a mechanics for the manipulation of space, indeed probably the largest, most systematic and most powerful mode for spatial organization and modification.

Deleuze claims that Bergson is one of the great thinkers of becoming, of duration, multiplicity, and virtuality. Bergson developed his notion of duration in opposition to his understanding of space and spatiality. This understanding of duration and the unhinging of temporality that it performs are of at least indirect relevance to the arts or sciences of space, which may, through a logic of invention, derail and transforms space and spatiality in analogous ways.

Space is understood, according to Deleuze, as a multiplicity that brings together the key characteristics of externality, simultaneity, contiguity or juxtaposition, difference of degree, and quantitative differentiations.

Space is mired in misconceptions and assumptions, habits and unreflective gestures that convert and transform it. Architecture, the art or science of spatial manipulation, must be as implicated in this as any other discipline or practice. According to Bergson, a certain habit of thought inverts the relations between space and objects, space and extension, to make it seem as if space precedes objects, when in fact space itself is produced through matter, extension, and movement:

Concrete extensity, that is to say, the diversity of sensible qualities, is not within space; rather it is space that we thrust into extensity. Space is not a ground on which real motion is posited; rather it is real motion that deposits

space beneath itself. But our imagination, which is preoccupied above all by the convenience of expression and the exigencies of material life, prefers to invert the natural order of the terms... Therefore, it comes to see movement as only a variation of distance, space being thus supposed to precede motion. Then, in a space which is homogeneous and infinitely divisible, we draw, in imagination, a trajectory and fix positions: afterwards, applying the movement to the trajectory, we see it divisible like the line we have drawn, and equally denuded of quality.

Space in itself, space outside these ruses of the imagination, is not static, fixed, infinitely expandable, infinitely divisible, concrete, extended, continuous, and homogeneous, though perhaps we must think it in these terms in order to continue our everyday lives. Space, like time, is emergence and eruption, oriented not to the ordered, the controlled, the static, but to the event, to movement or action. If we "shut up motion in space", as Bergson suggests, then we shut space up in quantification, without ever being able to think space in terms of quality, of difference and discontinuity.

Space, in effect, is matter or extension, but the "schema" of matter, that is, the representation of the limit where the movement of expansion would come to an end as the external envelope of all possible extensions. In this sense, it is not matter, it is not extensity, that is in space, but the very opposite. And if we think that matter has a thousand ways of becoming expanded or extended, we must also say that there are all kinds of distinct extensities, all related, but still qualified, and which will finish by intermingling only in our own schema of space.

It is not an existing, God-given space, the Cartesian space of numerical division, but an unfolding space, defined, as time is, by the arc of movement and thus a space open to becoming, by which I mean becoming other than itself, other than what it has been.

It is to refuse to conceptualise space as a medium, as a container, a passive receptacle whose form is given by its content, and instead to see it as a moment of becoming, of opening up and proliferation, a passage from one space to another, a space of change, which changes with time.