

## A place we call home – Deepti Dutt

In Architecture, topologies have a different connotation, but in this article, we will be exploring the topologies of our spatial experience. These topologies constitute the phenomenological experience of space—an exploration of the layered sense of home, comfort, and ease that extends beyond the physical realm. This approach allows us to deconstruct our associations with home and the spaces we inhabit and delves into the emotional and psychological experiences intertwined with these associations.

Drawing inspiration from the renowned work of Eames in "The Power of Ten" video documentation, While Eames beautifully captures the physicality of scale and space, we uniquely focus on exploring the scales of psychological association with space. This exploration spans from the individual body to places of dwelling, community, planetary connections and even extends to non-physical planes such as mental, emotional, and spiritual associations.

Let us consider the body, The first space of dwelling often bestowed on us by lack of a conscious choice, one we cannot remember making anyway. We find ourselves in this versatile instrument capable of masterful skill that enhances through careful nurturing or degenerates when abandoned. At this very moment, your body is performing multiple tasks simultaneously. If you could slowly draw your attention to each unit of this dwelling, starting with your eyes which are reading this article. It skilfully absorbs scrambled typography in a contrasting colour while your peripheral vision blurs the background allowing you to focus. Without getting into the details of perception, let's say the scrambled forms we call letters and words have reached an active and alert part of your brain waiting in its station to synthesise the information for you. While your masterful brain continues to perform its artistry, we shift your focus to your breath and watch as it continues; maybe breathe a little, a little deeper, or you want to let out a sigh perhaps? Bring your focus to its neighbour, you may want to clear your throat maybe, withholding all those unsaid words that may or may not fall upon a listening ear. And now to your heart, this wonderful instrument, beating tirelessly. It reminds me of a quote - "Is the courageous heart which writes this text the same mechanical heart whose courage is a matter of increase in pulsific power?" – William Harvey, an English Physician. The heart you just observed, was it your courageous heart that got you through all your moments in life or was it a pumping machine?

Incidentally, your stomach is running its load of washing your food, ensuring all its fellow soldiers in your body are nourished. The fireplace inside your body transforms that morsel of food, you had without a thought to the magical process your body performs on that food in order to make it a part of you. Did you find that fire burning within, sustaining you, urging you, pushing you through life as you brought your focus to it? or was it a machine you found, that generates energy for your sustenance from whatever you mindlessly put into it today? Each of the brethren within your body, functioning harmoniously, continuously, simultaneously in marvellous ways so you could be here, now, reading this text at this very moment. Take a moment, to wonder not only about this miracle but also how you want to contribute to aid and ease this miracle of a being that you are, dwelling in your superhuman body home. This is not about a fitness or beauty contest, this is your home, your earth suit, your miracle.



*Figure 1 Man and Machine - Art by Deepti Dutt*

Now we come to the place you travel to and rest your body home; you call it a house sometimes. When you share the place, you rest often with the length of time, or other humans, animal or plant you begin to call this place a nest. Nestling the warm affection in the comfort of idyllic situations that are sometimes pleasant and other times not quite. And within that nest, whether the nest is a place just for you or for more, you have a corner, all to yourself. It is not so much the size or scale of that corner, it is not so much the spatial orientation of factual correctness of it being an actual corner, but it is your corner nevertheless. You built an association with that place, you can feel how it smells, how the light falls in that place that has now become your corner, and the secrets it knows about you having been a witness of your activities over time. What would it say if it could speak? Did you make a conscious effort to give it the harmony and comfort it gave you when you would rather not be anywhere else but at your corner? Or was it only a degree point on the latitude and longitude of our planet where you happen to pass by every day? A simple Google search will give you the statistics of your privilege, of having a place, a nest you call your house, the housing crisis and the economic disparity are not top secrets. To add to that, the news can also give you information about the refugees, the homeless, and many more who have lost their shelter to untoward incidents along our

human story. We haven't yet started speaking about our fellow comrades on this planet, the plants and animals who are equally contributing, if not more, to the sustenance of the ecosystem on this planet. How many have already gone extinct and how many lost their 'corner', a place of rest, a nest they called their home? In what light would you see your nest, your 'corner' now? Is it the same light you refused to be aware of while you were busy scrolling on a device that has been programmed to derive its entire economy to keep you locked into it, or is it the light that gently warms your heart sometimes, that finds a small window to crack in and is determined to fall upon you as you soak in the comfort of your privilege? You not only have a home you were born with but also a home you can grow with. Again, this is not a competition for an architecture magazine, this is your place of nourishment, no matter the external circumstances of this nourishment, you still hold the key to open the window so the determined ray of light can fall upon you to warm your heart.

By now, our navigation through the phenomenological spatial experience could be unravelling its meaning to you. This meaning is your own meaning, it does not belong to anyone else, not even the writer. It is your own special meaning, that you have composed as your eyes sent out the information by reflecting the light through the nerves that connect to a part of your brain where it finally reached a place that was capable of constituting a certain logic and a meaning that is curated just for you based on an array of contextual factors that has created your personality. Through this meaning, you create a mental sphere of your existence. This sphere of existence, although it could be a cube of existence or an organic unnamed shape of existence or any other for that matter, because it is only a sphere metaphorically, but its existence – is not so much metaphorical. This mental existence is another one of your 'cribs' of your lavish story unwrapping on this planet. This is a space where you create your thoughts, hold your memories, save your fears, engrave your anxieties, and nurture your emotions of love, hate, and the rest of its family that come along with it. The lack of physicality in its characterisation does not make it any less demanding or futile. In fact, sometimes it can combat the strength of physical spaces to overpower its own weight over you. A phantom of space, yet generating endless ideas that orchestrate a story to an otherwise clockwork cycle of life.

The weightage given to different stories orchestrated by this mental space pulls you on the seesaw of a turbulent and temporal emotional space of experience. Although this is quite similar to the phenomenology of the mental space, however, is more evasive and temporal than the frivolous mental space. It is ambiguously tied up with the cleanliness of your mental sphere. If the orchestrated story weighs in pulling a drama of excitement, the see-saw has you up with emotions that tingle your feelings for joy, pleasantness, maybe a smile, or just a relieved feeling if you aren't one to emote. On the other hand, if the weight of the story piles up on a tragic timeline, emphasising only parts of the story required to create the tempest, the emotional sphere of existence drags you down to balance the see-saw of the accumulated stories. Happiness and struggle are both overrated. But the last I checked, there were none lining up at the stand which sold a levelled emotional plane of experience.



*Figure 2 Emergence - Art by Deepti Dutt*

But there is one last phenomenological space I want to touch upon. It has many names, many faces and many have tried to describe it and many among them are the 'greats'. I tremble to write the word 'Spiritual' plane. Because now we understand the filters through which it has to pass, the print of this text, your body home, your home where you have currently parked your body home, your mental sphere of existence, your emotional plane that plays seesaw in and out of the mental sphere, and finally tumbles across to peak at what might lay beyond it once it tires itself of exploring all the facets of the fractal planes of spatial experience. Perhaps, every word I write here is a filter, any description I might attempt is only a prompt, like for that of an A.I that generates content. Any attempt to foray into a journey of composed words onto this plane is only another virtual metaverse space created to entertain our other spatial existences. Perhaps, this one plane is our very own journey, A journey we make to get past the filters, the prompts and the virtual existences to lead without cheating ourselves by giving a new label to an old film we have already seen, but with the honesty we can only give to our own self, in a hope that it could let us take a peek beyond this essay on phenomenology of spatial experiences.



*Figure 3 Emergence - Art by Deepti Dutt*