

Inhabiting Space (on Earth)

Prefiguration and the Dynamics of Inhabitation. Inhabiting space (on Earth) involves the ways individuals and communities both produce and are shaped by their physical, social, and cultural environments - space. This dynamic and relational process not only influences societal values and power structures but also underscores the inherently political nature of inhabitation - particularly through the act of building houses and shaping the built environment. At the core of this process is prefiguration - the practice of embodying future-oriented actions in the present. Through spatial, social, and political initiatives, communities model and explore the societal transformations they seek to bring about, making inhabitation not just a reflection of existing conditions but a means of imagining possible futures.

Inhabitation as a Relationship with the Natural Environment: Inhabiting spaces begins with human interaction with natural environments, where spaces are produced through cultivation, construction, and adaptation. The act of building can prefigure ecological priorities and address environmental crises through regenerative practices such as localized production and low-carbon designs offering tangible pathways for societal transformation.

The Built Environment as a Political and Transformative Space. Cities and urban spaces can serve as platforms for experimentation, where communities actively shape their environments to reflect their visions for just societies and for new forms of democratic engagement to emerge. Initiatives such as participatory budgeting, community-driven housing, and cooperative ownership models present concrete alternatives to speculative real estate markets, prioritizing social needs, affordability, and sustainability over profit. Public Spaces provide generative arenas for new forms of democratic engagement and social interaction. Transformative urban interventions show how inclusive public spaces can model openness, accessibility, and collective agency. Socially produced and public spaces that reflect the values and identities of local communities fosters a sense of belonging and collective empowerment.

Social Inequality and mental wellbeing. The built environment often reinforces systemic inequalities and hinders mental wellbeing. Inclusive spaces challenge these inequities by centering on affordable and simple building methods that are inclusive to marginalized voices in the creation of spaces, fostering justice and accessibility. Building hybrid and adaptive buildings also reflect how urban spaces can be a more inclusive urban fabric that embraces diversity and fluidity. Prefigurative inhabitation involves inspiring embodied daily lived experiences and social practices to reflect desired future where collaboration, shared resource models in housing, co-living etc. Inclusive and nurturing environments prioritize mental and emotional well-being, allowing individuals and communities to thrive. These spaces empower individuals by enhancing collective feelings of autonomy and agency.

Conclusion. The act of building houses and shaping the built environment is both political and prefigurative, reflecting and enacting visions of the future in the present. By engaging in transformative and inclusive practices, communities can create spaces that not only meet immediate needs but also serve as examples of equitable and sustainable futures. This approach transforms the act of inhabitation into a process of co-creation and empowerment, where spaces are not only lived in but functions as a platform for new forms of how we live together can emerge.