

Space, body and culture

The rapport with space influences, and is certainly influenced by, the culture in which people live.

The need to divide up the space available, for example, in many cases entails the need to limit. In various cultures one may note, therefore, how the geographical areas exhibit different thresholds of tolerance as regards personal space.

If the Japanese, who must divide a somewhat narrow island into so many pieces, can sleep in the "cells" of certain hotels in Tokyo and squeeze themselves into their overcrowded metros, in the United States, with its boundless spaces, the majority of people have their own car and house, each house has its own garden and, inside the house, each son or daughter has his or her own room.

If an Italian tourist goes to America or Japan it is probable that, reacting to the differences in their respective collective space, his breathing, his perception of his body and his general state of awareness will also change, almost automatically. After all, if out of the automatic human tendency to synchronise we quite frequently find ourselves imitating the breathing of another individual, and consequently also his state of awareness, how much more will we do so when surrounded by an entire population?

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From the book *Bodythinking*