

Poetics and Existential Meaning in Housing Architecture: Toward a Phenomenological Framework for Poetic Dwelling

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ABSTRACT: Contemporary housing architecture faces a growing crisis of meaning, as designs increasingly prioritize functional efficiency, visual spectacle, and market value over deeper human needs for belonging and poetic dwelling—a mode of inhabitation that transcends mere utility to foster existential connection through sensory richness, cultural memory, and emotional resonance. This study addresses this critical gap by developing the Poetic Dwelling Experience Framework (PDEF), a comprehensive model that identifies four essential dimensions of meaningful dwelling: spatial phenomenology (the lived experience of space), sensory interaction (multisensory engagement), cultural contextuality (connection to memory and tradition), and emotional topography (affective atmospheres). Through an interpretive, phenomenological methodology, the research analyzes seminal works by architects, including Zumthor, Ando, and Murcutt, demonstrating how their designs embody these poetic dimensions. The findings reveal that truly meaningful domestic spaces emerge not from formal innovation alone, but from careful attention to sensory richness, temporal rhythms, cultural narratives, and emotional resonance. The PDEF offers both a theoretical lens for understanding dwelling and a practical tool for designers seeking to create housing that nurtures human flourishing. In an era of mass-produced, alienating urban environments, this framework provides a vital pathway for recentering architecture around the profound, often overlooked needs for rootedness, intimacy, and poetic imagination in our everyday spaces.

Keywords: Social Poetic Dwelling, Housing Architecture, Spatial Experience, Existential Space, Design Theory.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary domestic architecture, driven by efficiency, visual novelty, and market forces, often prioritizes function over existential depth and poetic resonance, reducing the house to a utilitarian product divorced from meaning, memory, and belonging. Poetic dwelling, drawing on Heidegger's ontological rootedness and Bachelard's spatial imagination, defines home as an interplay of embodied experience, sensory engagement, cultural narratives, and emotional atmosphere. Unlike mere comfort or aesthetics, it prioritizes existential meaning, allowing spaces to resonate with identity, memory, and transcendence (Heidegger, 1971; Bachelard, 1958; Norberg-Schulz, 1980).

Contemporary housing often overlooks these dimensions, resulting in technically functional but experientially

impoverished spaces—a phenomenon described as existential homelessness (Seamon, 2018; Pallasmaa, 2005). Recent scholarship re-theorizes housing as a poetic experience, integrating sensory perception, emotion, cultural memory, and symbolic depth (Bchir, 2015; Hıçsonmezler, 2023). Emerging architectural practices increasingly foreground affective, atmospheric, and sensory dimensions to foster reflection and cultural meaning (Van Schaik, 2015; Pallasmaa, 2005).

This study contributes by proposing the Poetic Dwelling Experience Framework (PDEF), comprising four dimensions: spatial phenomenology, sensory interaction, cultural contextuality, and emotional topography. By positioning the house as a dynamic medium of existential engagement, the framework aims to enrich architectural discourse and guide designs attuned to the symbolic, cultural, and emotional needs of dwelling.

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Research Problem

Modern housing often prioritizes efficiency, aesthetics, and market value, sometimes at the expense of emotional, symbolic, and existential depth. This utilitarian approach fosters placelessness, alienation, and psychological disconnection, turning homes into commodified spaces estranged from meaning. While foundational works by Heidegger, Bachelard, and Norberg-Schulz highlight poetic and phenomenological dimensions, contemporary architecture underutilizes these insights. There is a need to reconceptualize dwelling as a poetic and ontological condition addressing human desires for belonging, identity, and meaningful emplacement. (Fig.1-2)

Research Objectives

This study seeks to:

- Theorize dwelling as a poetic and existential act within the context of contemporary housing, positioning it as a profound mode of spatial engagement and human self-understanding.
- Identify key dimensions of the poetic dwelling experience—including intimacy, atmosphere, memory, rootedness, and multisensory interaction—that contribute to a deeper experience of home.
- Develop the Poetic Dwelling Experience Framework (PDEF) as a conceptual and reflective tool to assist architects,

designers, and theorists in reimagining the home beyond functional and formal criteria, engaging with its emotional, symbolic, and cultural layers.

- Bridge philosophical theory and design praxis, offering integrative methodologies and design principles that support the creation of emotionally resonant, culturally situated, and spiritually enriching housing environments.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology (Van Manen, 1990), which aligns with Heideggerian and Bachelardian traditions of uncovering lived experience. The analysis proceeded in three phases:

1. Textual Interpretation: Close reading of philosophical texts (Heidegger, Bachelard, Norberg-Schulz) to identify recurring themes (e.g., "memory," "thresholds," "atmosphere").
2. Comparative Analysis: These themes were then contextualized within architectural theory (e.g., Pallasmaa's sensory frameworks, Rapoport's cultural studies) using inductive reasoning to derive the four PDEF dimensions.
3. Case Study Validation: The framework was tested against selected architectural works to assess its interpretive utility.

This method prioritizes depth over generalizability, aiming

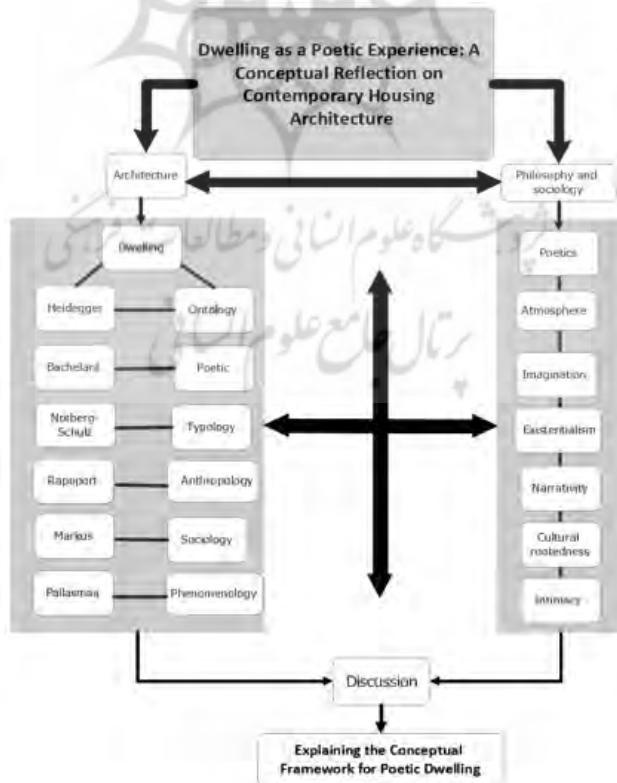


Fig. 1: Conceptual research model

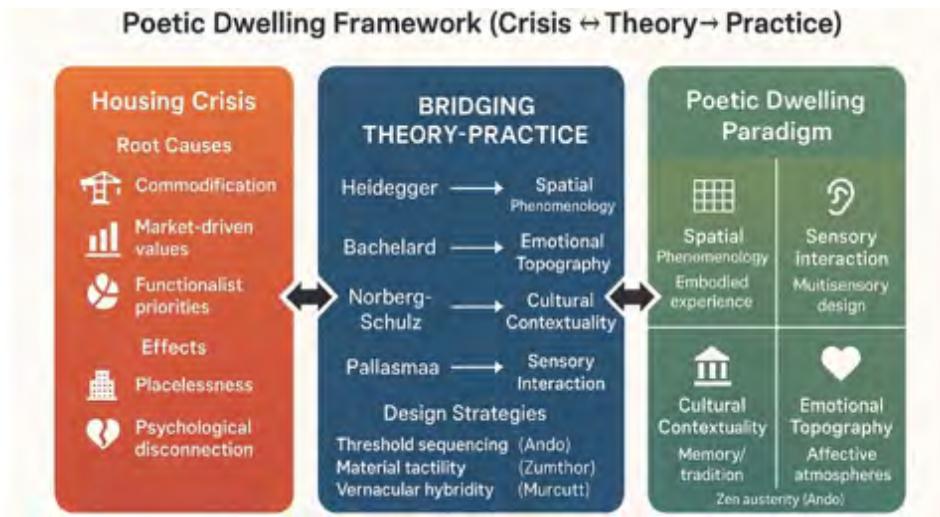


Fig. 2: Integrated framework linking housing crises, poetic dwelling theory (PDEF), and design applications

to reveal how poetic dwelling emerges in specific spatial conditions rather than to prescribe universal solutions.

The research method consists of three interrelated components:

Philosophical Grounding and Conceptual Framework Development

The first phase involves a close hermeneutic engagement with key philosophical texts—particularly those by [Heidegger \(1971\)](#), [Bachelard \(1958\)](#), [Norberg-Schulz \(1980\)](#), and [Pallasmaa \(2005\)](#)—to excavate foundational ideas about dwelling, space, and lived experience. These texts are interpreted not merely as abstract theory but as generative sources for rethinking contemporary architectural practices.

This philosophical foundation informs the development of the Poetic Dwelling Experience Framework (PDEF), which synthesizes insights from phenomenology, environmental psychology, and architectural theory. The framework articulates four interrelated dimensions of poetic dwelling:

- Spatial Phenomenology (experiencing space through lived embodiment),
- Sensory Interaction (multisensory engagement and perceptual depth),
- Cultural Contextuality (embeddedness in memory, tradition, and identity),
- Emotional Topography (atmospheric and affective qualities of space). ([Table 1](#))

This framework serves as both an analytical lens and a generative tool for evaluating and imagining housing architecture as a poetic and existential medium. The PDEF's

dimensions were designed to interact systemically rather than operate in isolation, as demonstrated in the Discussion through case study applications. ([Fig. 3](#))

Thematic Literature Review and Interpretive Synthesis

The second phase involves a targeted review of interdisciplinary scholarship across architecture, philosophy, environmental psychology, and cultural studies. Key contributions include:

- Studies that apply phenomenology to spatial design (e.g., [Seamon, 2018](#); [Van Schaik, 2015](#)),
- Works that explore architectural atmospheres and sensory affect (e.g., [Zumthor, 2006](#); [Pallasmaa, 2005](#)),
- Contextual case studies addressing memory, tradition, and identity in housing (e.g., [Bchir, 2015](#); [Hiçsonmezler, 2023](#)).

Rather than compiling a comprehensive review, the literature is interpreted thematically and conceptually to refine the PDEF model and situate it within existing debates. This approach allows for the articulation of conceptual continuities and ruptures between theoretical ideas and built forms.

Critical Case Reflection

To evaluate the Poetic Dwelling Experience Framework (PDEF), the study conducts reflective case analyses of architectural works selected for their heuristic richness rather than statistical generalizability. Cases include: (1) traditional and vernacular houses emphasizing spatial intimacy and cultural continuity, (2) contemporary designs recognized for phenomenological sensitivity (e.g., Peter Zumthor, Tadao Ando, Ryue Nishizawa), and (3) hybrid projects integrating

Table 1: Key Dimensions of Architectural Experience and Their Philosophical Foundations

Dimension	Key Ideas	Linked Philosophers/Theorists
Spatial Phenomenology	Embodied experience of space; lived perception; ontological being	Heidegger, Pallasmaa
Sensory Interaction	Multisensory engagement (touch, sound, smell, etc.); depth of perception	Pallasmaa
Cultural Contextuality	Memory, tradition, symbolic identity in spatial form	Rapoport, Bachelard, Norberg-Schulz
Emotional Topography	Atmosphere, mood, affective qualities of space	Bachelard, Pallasmaa, Zumthor

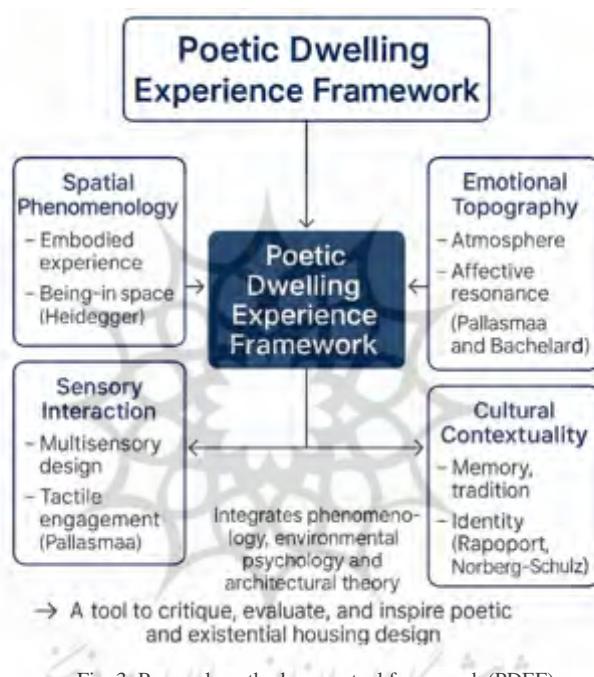


Fig. 3: Research method conceptual framework (PDEF)

metaphor, memory, or multisensory affect in domestic space. Analysis is carried out through interpretive narrative, guided by the four dimensions of the PDEF, with focus on architectural gestures, spatial sequences, light, sound, and atmospheric presence as key contributors to poetic dwelling.

Case Study Selection Criteria

Four case studies were chosen through stratified purposive sampling to ensure: (1) Geographic/Cultural Diversity—projects from Germany (Zumthor), Japan (Ando, Nishizawa), and Australia (Murcutt) to reduce Western-centric bias, while recognizing limits in representing informal or non-globalized contexts; (2) Typological Range—from chapels to urban houses, with inclusion restricted to projects with accessible

archival data (plans, photos, interviews); (3) Theoretical Saturation—architects whose writings or interviews explicitly reference phenomenological influences (e.g., Ando's essays on critical regionalism, Zumthor's Atmospheres); and (4) User Experience Data—drawing on post-occupancy evaluations or resident testimonials (e.g., Murcutt's Marie Short House) where available, though mostly via secondary sources. Potential biases were mitigated by cross-referencing architects' intentions with independent critical analyses (e.g., Wainwright on Moriyama House), while acknowledging gaps in user perspectives and prioritizing spatial analysis over social reception.

Method Constraints

- The reliance on published critiques and archival materials (as opposed to primary user data) may privilege architects'

perspectives over residents' lived realities. Future studies could employ ethnographic methods (e.g., resident interviews) to ground the PDEF in everyday inhabitation.

• While the cases demonstrate poetic principles, their status as 'iconic' works may limit generalizability to vernacular or mass housing. The framework's utility in such contexts remains an open question for further research.

Method Rationale

This interpretive and transdisciplinary research method is aligned with the study's aim to reconceptualize housing architecture not as a mere problem of form or function, but as a poetic, affective, and cultural act of world-making. By bridging philosophical insight with design reflection, the research method offers both conceptual depth and practical orientation, providing architects and theorists with tools to enrich the experiential and existential dimensions of home.

Method Transparency: Data Collection and Analysis

The study ensured rigor in its hermeneutic phenomenology approach through a three-phase process (Fig. 4).

1. Textual Interpretation—Primary philosophical texts (Heidegger, Bachelard, Norberg-Schulz) and architectural theory (Pallasmaa, Rapoport) were selected for their foundational relevance to poetic dwelling.
 2. Comparative Analysis—Inductive reasoning contextualized themes within architectural theory. For instance, Bachelard's poetic imagination was aligned with Pallasmaa's multisensory design through pattern matching, while a synthesis matrix cross-referenced philosophical concepts with architectural strategies (e.g., Heidegger's fourfold, Zumthor's material

tactility).

3. Case Study Validation—Projects were chosen based on geographic/cultural diversity, theoretical saturation (e.g., Ando's critical regionalism), and typological range (chapels to urban houses). Justifications included Zumthor's Bruder Klaus Chapel for its sensory embodiment of PDEF dimensions and Nishizawa's Moriyama House for testing boundary dissolution.

Literature Review

Three interwoven lineages structure the theoretical foundations of poetic dwelling:

1. The ontological lineage (Heidegger → Norberg-Schulz → Pallasmaa) examines dwelling as an existential orientation
2. The poetic lineage (Bachelard → Hernández → Antoniades) explores space as lived narrative
3. The cultural lineage (Rapoport → Murcutt → Bchir) connects place-making to vernacular wisdom

This tripartite structure informs the PDEF's four dimensions, while acknowledging critiques of phenomenological idealism (Spurr, 2008) through its adaptive framework.

Ontological Foundations of Poetic Dwelling

The concept of poetic dwelling originates from Martin Heidegger's essay "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" (1971), where dwelling is not merely providing shelter, but a fundamental mode of being-in-the-world. Central to this idea is Heidegger's notion of the fourfold—earth, sky, mortals, and divinities—through which authentic dwelling occurs when one lives in harmony with these fundamental elements of existence. Building on this philosophical foundation, Marius Cucu and Oana Lenta (2023) interpret poetic dwelling as

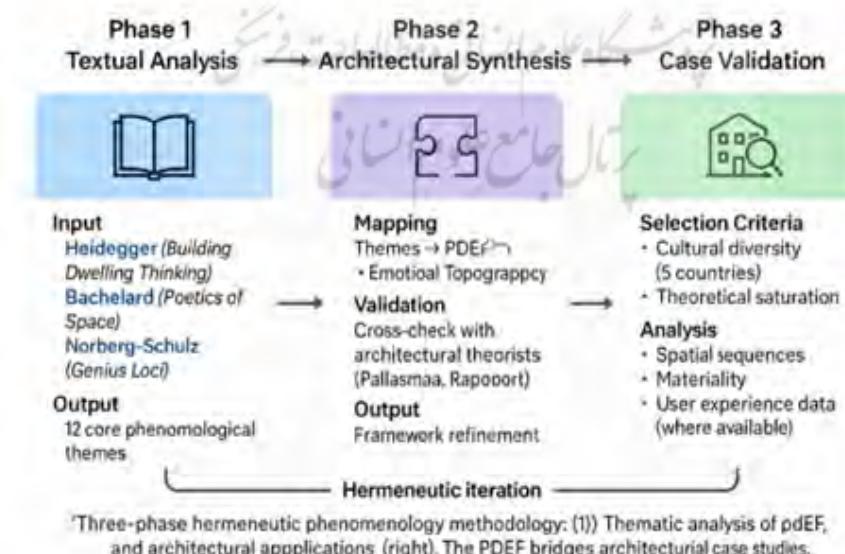


Fig. 4: Hermeneutic phenomenology research method: From philosophical texts to architectural validation

a mode of unveiling Being itself, emphasizing its spiritual and metaphysical significance. Similarly, [Jeff Malpas \(2020\)](#) describes language as the "house of Being," articulating a triadic connection between place, poetry, and presence within the framework of Heideggerian thought. Heidegger emphasizes that "what allows us to dwell truly is the poetic spirit," a spirit that does not transcend or detach from the earth, but rather is the same force that first brought humanity to the earth's surface, enabling deep belonging and guiding the essence of dwelling ([Panahi, 2021, 696](#)).

Poetic Imagination and Intimacy in Space

Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1994) complements Heidegger's ontological emphasis by focusing on the lived, intimate dimensions of space. Bachelard argues that domestic spaces such as attics, corners, and cellars are reservoirs of memory, reverie, and daydream, contributing to a poetic experience of dwelling. This imaginative approach is supported by [Nair and Zakir \(2023\)](#), who analyze "emotiveness" in architecture by decoding spatial experiences rooted in phenomenology and memory. Additionally, the article on *The Narrative of Home* ([Tabatabaei Ebrahimi & Tafazzoli, 2022](#)) reinforces that poetic quality is not purely architectural, but is created in the mind of the dweller through narrative and lived experience.

Phenomenology of Place and Spirit

Christian Norberg-Schulz builds on Heidegger's philosophy, arguing that *genius loci*—the spirit of place—forms the foundation of meaningful dwelling. However, phenomenological approaches face critiques for their subjectivity (e.g., reliance on individual perception) and cultural specificity (Nylander, 1998). Scholars such as [Markus \(1993\)](#) caution that spatial meaning is often shaped by power structures—like class or institutional control—rather than universal poetic principles. While the Poetic Dwelling Experience Framework (PDEF) acknowledges these limitations, it seeks balance by integrating Rapoport's anthropological perspective (cultural coding) and Markus's semiotic analysis (e.g., 'house vs. non-house' in globalized design) to contextualize poetic experience within socio-political realities. Architecture, in this view, must render place intelligible by articulating material and symbolic qualities that align with human orientation. This perspective is echoed by [David Seamon \(2024\)](#), who extends Christopher Alexander's theory of "wholeness" and lived topology, arguing that poetic dwelling emerges through processes of interaction, identity, and spatial realization. Similarly, [Lazarin \(2008\)](#) draws on Japanese spatial concepts, such as Ma, En, and Ku, to demonstrate how traditional architecture creates an interstitial and poetic experience of space and time.

Sensory Experience and Atmosphere

Juhani Pallasmaa critiques the visual bias in architecture and emphasizes the importance of multisensory engagement for poetic dwelling. In *The Eyes of the Skin* (2005), he asserts that atmosphere, tactility, silence, and shadow all contribute to the existential power of space. This sensory focus is exemplified in the article by [Mirmiran et al. \(2022\)](#), which interprets intermediary spaces as carriers of phenomenological experience through light, sound, texture, and boundary. The comparative study of light in traditional versus contemporary homes by [Sami et al. \(2020\)](#) also affirms how material phenomena, such as daylight, profoundly affect the sense of dwelling.

Cultural Constructs and Appropriation

Amos Rapoport frames architecture as a culturally coded practice in which meaning is constructed through tradition, ritual, and collective identity. His work highlights how vernacular architecture expresses the values of its users. This cultural lens is developed further by [Nona Novakovic \(2022\)](#), who explores the concept of "creative appropriation" in collective housing, suggesting that poetic dwelling is enacted through spatial negotiation and symbolic ownership. Similarly, [Cheraghi \(2020\)](#) argues for a metaphorical, rather than purely functional, interpretation of housing that responds to emotional and cultural memory.

Politics of Space and Semiotics

Thomas Markus challenges poetic interpretations by foregrounding the power dynamics embedded in spatial organization. In *Buildings and Power* (1993), he asserts that architectural forms communicate authority, restrict behavior, and embody institutional logic. This critical perspective aligns with [David Spurr's \(2008\)](#) analysis, which examines how modern architecture and literature share a loss of dwelling through abstraction, rationalization, and the disruption of human-scale experience. The semiotic approach of [Niknam Asl et al. \(2014\)](#) also provides insights into how architectural language in the age of globalization creates tensions between "house" and "non-house," impacting the poetic meaning of space. ([Fig. 5](#))

To further contextualize the theoretical foundation of poetic dwelling, [Table 2](#) presents a curated selection of scholarly works that examine the concept through diverse philosophical, cultural, phenomenological, and architectural lenses. These studies provide critical insights into how dwelling can be reinterpreted beyond its functional role to encompass metaphorical, emotional, and existential dimensions in contemporary architectural discourse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To demonstrate the analytical and interpretive potential of the Poetic Dwelling Experience Framework (PDEF), this section reflects on selected architectural examples that embody key

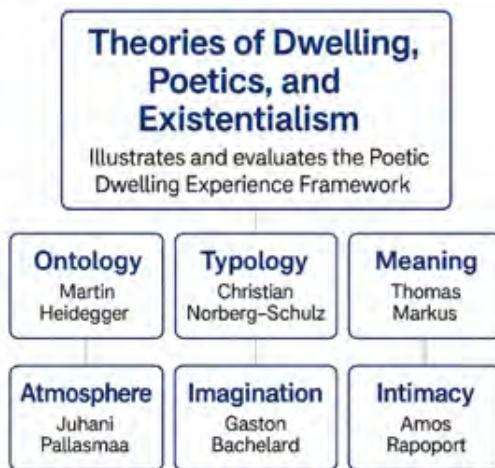


Fig. 5: Theorists' model

Table 2: Research background

Study	Research Question	Research Method	Results
Antoniades (2024) . Poetics of architecture (M. R. Ai, Trans.)	How can one create architecture that is meaningful both functionally and poetically from the perspectives of aesthetics, history, culture, and sense of place?	Mixed approach combining analytical, comparative, historical, and theoretical methods	Architecture transcends function by linking form, meaning, context, integrating metaphor, history, culture, emotion, reason, and creativity to enable poetic dwelling.
Bakhtiarymanesh et al., (2024) . Being a Home: An Exploratory Study of Residents' Narratives of the Meaning of Home in the Middle Context of Kermanshah City	How can apartment architectural patterns and key spaces be enhanced to reflect residents' meanings of home, addressing their needs and desires, and be generalized across different housing types?	Qualitative, exploratory	Uniform repetition cannot create a true dwelling; instead, guiding patterns—such as layering, broken access, and intermediate spaces—shape meaningful, home-like architectural environments.
Varmaghani (2022) . Searching for the concept of the Iranian house based on the adaptation of historical descriptions and physical structure	Which physical elements in historical Iranian houses convey a sense of home, and how can adapting them in contemporary designs emphasize essential housing components?	Analytical-descriptive, historical-interpretive, and logical reasoning	Isfahan houses feature shallow depth, high visibility, and blended spaces; Yazd houses, on the other hand, emphasize centrality, ritual spaces, and layered interior meanings.
Hoseini et al., (2022) . Recognition of the Houses in Tehran Based on Contemporary Fictions Written in the Period 1951-1978	What physical and semantic components can be identified in Tehran houses from 1951 to 1978, based on descriptions in contemporary fiction?	A qualitative approach	Semantic components, evident in the traditional house's body, reveal meanings often forgotten in contemporary dwellings but traceable in past architectural forms.
Nouri, et al., (2021) . The Poetics of Architecture in Selected Contemporary Religious Works: A Comparative Study of Poetic Capabilities in Poetry and Architecture	What similarities exist between literary techniques in poetry and architectural strategies that make space poetic in both fields?	Qualitative, comparative	Poetic architecture employs allusion, metaphor, synesthesia, and defamiliarization to transcend its functional purpose, conveying emotion and spirituality, particularly in contemporary religious spaces.

Continuine of Table 2: Research background

Study	Research Question	Research Method	Results
Heydari (2021). Evaluate and analyze the different meanings of home in two patterns of apartment and independent courtyard house.	What are the different meanings of home, and which of these meanings are more prominent in apartment and independent courtyard house patterns in Shiraz?	Descriptive-analytical	Security is emphasized more in apartment living, while other meanings appear with similar frequency in both apartments and independent courtyard houses.
Eslampour, S., MirRiahi, S., and Habib (2022). In Search of the Meaning of Home: Explaining the Physical Components Reflecting Its Meaning Through the Theoretical Lens of Phenomenology	Which physical elements in Hamedan courtyard houses embody meaning for residents and designers, and how can phenomenological concepts enhance the quality of contemporary homes?	A qualitative approach and the Grounded Theory method	Hamedan courtyard houses convey meaning through space, the courtyard, decoration, light, and furniture; a home embodies existence by holding personal, multi-layered meanings beyond the physical.
Bianco (2020). Pedagogy of Poetics of Architecture in Contemporary Georgia	How did the concept of the poetics of architecture develop in contemporary Georgian architectural education?	Qualitative, analytical-historical; examining the evolution of theories and workshops since the 1980s	In Georgia, Bostanashvili and his son developed an architectural poetics that merged imagination, semiotics, and phenomenology through the image-name-home triad, differing from Western methods.
Hanif (2018). The Concept of Residence and Its Impact on the Courtyard of Iranian Houses: A Case Study of Kashan's Houses in the Qajar Era	How can studying the courtyards of Iranian houses in Qajar-era Kashan lead to a definition of the concept of dwelling as desirable living conditions and provide solutions for creating these conditions at all times?	Analytical-descriptive	Viewing the courtyard as a historical pattern and embodying its dwelling concept can guide contemporary homes toward more authentic and desirable living conditions.
Aghalatifi (2019). Impression of the meaning of home from physical transformation in the Contemporary Era of Tehran	How have physical developments in contemporary houses in Tehran affected the meaning of home from the perspective of residents?	Qualitative; Content analysis of in-depth semi-structured interviews with residents	Home transcends physical form, encompassing lived experience, time, and space; recent trends focus on physical aspects, diminishing its semantic and cultural significance.
Kabirisamani et al., (2017). Recognizing the Meaning of Home in the Quran: An Approach to Explaining the Theoretical Foundations of Home	What is the concept of "home" in the Quran, and how can this concept be used to explain the theoretical foundations of home design	Qualitative, interpretive	The Quran presents home as a place of tranquility, where dhikr, divine order, and geometry guide design, fostering contemplation, remembrance of God, and inner peace.
Behzadfar & Shakibamanesh, (2014). An inquiry into the philosophy of phenomenology of place: Exploring David Seamon's ideas on the concept of home as a place	How is home experienced as a place from a phenomenological perspective, based on David Seamon's views, and what dimensions of meaning lie within this experience?	Theoretical analysis with a phenomenological approach, examining key concepts in the works of David Seamon	Home is a multidimensional experience—physical, psychological, social, and spiritual. Concepts like "homeness" and "lifeworld" shape both individual and collective identity.
Auret (2010). Toward the Poetic in Architecture	How can physical construction and mental perception be integrated in the architectural design process to create spaces with "poetic density"?	Analytical-interpretive; using philosophical concepts such as poiesis and examining the views of architectural and philosophical theorists	Architecture merges physical form and perception, embodying poiesis by integrating art and science, acting as a poetic medium shaping human experience.
Bachelard (1958). The Poetics of Space	How can architectural and everyday spaces, such as the house, room, closet, or shelter, be analyzed from the perspective of poetic imagination and lived experience?	Phenomenological-imaginative analysis based on literary texts, memories, mental images, and poetry (especially French poetry)	Lived spaces acquire a poetic quality through imagination, memory, and experience; Bachelard views houses as psychological realms where true dwelling occurs.

dimensions of poetic dwelling. Rather than providing empirical results in a traditional sense, the findings are articulated through qualitative, phenomenologically informed readings of housing designs that foreground intimacy, atmosphere, sensory depth, and cultural embeddedness.

Each case is examined through the lens of the four dimensions proposed in the PDEF: spatial phenomenology, sensory interaction, cultural contextuality, and emotional topography.

1. Peter Zumthor – Bruder Klaus Field Chapel (Germany, 2007)

Spatial Phenomenology: The meditation chapel embodies dwelling as ontologically rootedness, where spatial compression, verticality, and tactile surfaces heighten bodily awareness of enclosure and stillness.

Sensory Interaction: Burnt timber, earthen floor, and a single shaft of light create multisensory immersion—vision, touch, smell, and sound merging into a unified atmosphere.

Cultural Contextuality: The chapel evokes monastic simplicity and Christian agrarian vernaculars, thereby embedding spiritual memory within the place and its history.

Emotional Topography: Transitioning from an opaque exterior to a luminous interior, the sequence evokes

introspection, sacredness, solitude, and a poetic existential encounter. (Fig. 6)

2. Tadao Ando – Row House in Sumiyoshi (Azuma House, Japan, 1976)

Spatial Phenomenology: Minimal volumes surrounding an open courtyard reconfigure domesticity, making movement across uncovered space an embodied, temporal experience of dwelling.

Sensory Interaction: Concrete, light, shadow, and climatic forces—such as rain, wind, and seasonal change—create haptic and visual contrasts, intensifying environmental immediacy.

Cultural Contextuality: Traditional Japanese courtyard typologies are reinterpreted through modernist austerity, sustaining cultural continuity.

Emotional Topography: A stark material palette and introspective layout evoke a sense of solitude, resilience, and contemplative spatial resonance. (Fig. 7)

3. Ryue Nishizawa – Moriyama House (Tokyo, 2005)

Spatial Phenomenology: Freestanding volumes scattered on an urban plot dissolve inside/outside and private/public, making dwelling fluid and fragmentary.



Fig. 6: Bruder Klaus Chapel's sectional compression creates embodied spatial phenomenology (Zumthor, 2007)



Fig. 7: Concrete courtyard house redefines domestic spatial sequences (Ando, 1976)

Sensory Interaction: Garden pockets and glazed enclosures invite visual openness and tactile interaction with nature.

Cultural Contextuality: The design critiques both Japanese and Western notions of domesticity while reflecting Tokyo's dense urban environment.

Emotional Topography: Informal relations and ambiguous thresholds create openness, unpredictability, and a poetic relational being-in-the-world. (Fig.8)

4. Glenn Murcutt – Marie Short House (New South Wales, Australia, 1975)

Spatial Phenomenology: The linear, elevated plan situates the house lightly on the land, allowing the dwelling to be attuned to the earth, sky, and temporal rhythms.

Sensory & Environmental Intimacy: Operable louvers, verandas, timber, and corrugated iron invite wind, birdsong, and filtered light, engaging body and senses before intellect.

Cultural & Vernacular Intelligence: Drawing from Australian vernacular and Aboriginal land sensitivity, the design embodies environmental and cultural adaptation—architecture of the place, not just in it.

Emotional Resonance: A contemplative sequence of arrival, unadorned interiors, and natural materials fosters intimacy, memory, and poetic reflection.

Relevance: The house demonstrates that poetic dwelling arises from care, climate attunement, and genius loci, rather than monumentality. (Fig. 9)

Thematic Synthesis

Across these cases, several patterns emerge:



Fig. 8: Fragmented volumes challenge housing typologies (Nishizawa, 2005)



Fig. 9: Vernacular modernism attuned to climate and land (Murcutt, 1975)

Atmosphere precedes form: Spaces that evoke mood and presence often rely less on visual composition and more on multisensory orchestration.

Cultural memory matters: Poetic dwelling is intensified when architectural language resonates with place-based traditions and collective imaginaries.

Dwelling is dynamic: The act of dwelling unfolds over time, shaped by movement, change, ritual, and seasonality—not just static spatial arrangements.

Meaning is layered: Architectural spaces that support daydreaming, memory, solitude, and spiritual reflection tend to foster a richer, more profound existential engagement.

These findings affirm that poetic dwelling is not a style, but a way of thinking—a design ethos that values being, feeling, and remembering as central to the spatial experience of home.

This comparison illustrates that although all cases manifest poetic qualities, their emphasis varies. Zumthor's work excels in emotional and spatial resonance, while Nishizawa challenges traditional boundaries, offering spatial openness but less rootedness. Murcutt, in contrast, achieves a harmonious integration of all four dimensions.

Discussion

While the Results demonstrated how individual projects embody poetic dwelling (Figs. 7-10), three cross-cutting principles emerge when analyzing them through the PDEF lens:

1. Atmospheric primacy - Zumthor's chapel reveals how sensory interaction (through charred timber textures and variable light shafts) generates meaning before formal

appreciation, affirming [Pallasmaa's \(2005\)](#) argument that 'architecture is experienced as embodied and emotive rather than intellectual.'

2. Cultural hybridity - Murcutt's work blends vernacular wisdom (Aboriginal land ethics, Portuguese domestic rituals) with modernist abstraction, exemplifying [Rapoport's \(1980\)](#) theory of 'critical regionalism' where tradition and innovation coexist dialogically.

3. Temporal layering - Ando's and Nishizawa's designs spatialize duration through weather exposure and programmatic fluidity, materializing [Bergson's \(1911\)](#) *durée* as architectural experience.

These principles collectively challenge housing's reduction to aesthetic or utilitarian terms by recentering design on:

- Phenomenological immediacy (over visual representation)
- Cultural metabolism (over nostalgic preservation)
- Lived temporality (over static formalism)

This reorientation resonates with Heidegger's fourfold (Geviert)—earth, sky, mortals, and divinities—which the PDEF operationalizes for architectural practice. Yet Heidegger's romanticized view of dwelling has been challenged for neglecting urban precarity (e.g., favelas, refugee housing) and technological mediation ([Spurr, 2008](#)). The PDEF addresses this by:

1. Grounding 'earth' in material labor (e.g., Murcutt's vernacular tectonics) rather than idealized nature.

2. Reinterpreting 'divinities' as collective memory to avoid metaphysical abstraction.

This pragmatic adaptation ensures the framework remains relevant to contested, contemporary living conditions.

These elemental correspondences reveal how poetic dwelling mediates between cosmic order and daily life—a mediation urgently needed in the global housing crisis. In mass estates where alienation prevails (e.g., Chinese *xiaoqu* or Brazilian favela towers), the PDEF suggests reparative strategies:

1. Earth: Local materiality over imported cladding
2. Sky: Climate-responsive voids replacing sealed facades
3. Mortals: Customizable thresholds for cultural appropriation
4. Divinities: Collective memory spaces countering anonymity

Where Heidegger's philosophy stops at abstraction, the PDEF provides architectural tools to build the fourfold literally, transforming housing from an economic product to an existential anchor.

In contrast, the architectural examples explored in this study demonstrate how poetic dwelling is not bound by style or typology, but by intentional spatial attitudes that privilege memory, atmosphere, sensory intimacy, and cultural resonance. The PDEF operates as an interconnected system where dimensions dynamically interact:

- Spatial Phenomenology (lived embodiment) and Cultural Contextuality (historical narratives) merge through
- Emotional Topography (affective atmospheres), while
- Sensory Interaction (multisensory stimuli) binds these

elements together.

These feedback loops explain why poetic dwelling emerges most powerfully in architectures like Zumthor's chapel (where charred timber textures amplify sacred stillness) or Murcutt's house (where vernacular materials echo Aboriginal land ethics).

Reclaiming the Poetic: Spatial Experience as Ontological Grounding

One of the most compelling insights from the case analyses is that the poetic emerges from the relational—from the nuanced interplay between body, space, time, and culture. It is not an aesthetic surplus, but a fundamental mode of engaging with the world. The poetic unfolds in moments where space resonates with memory, emotion, and ritual—where architecture becomes more than form, and transforms into lived meaning. In this view, the poetic is not decorative but ontological; it grounds human experience by allowing individuals to dwell meaningfully within the world.

Reclaiming the poetic in architecture means shifting focus from the measurable to the experiential, from efficiency to presence. It challenges reductive paradigms and invites a rethinking of space as an event—something temporal, embodied, and emotionally textured. Architecture becomes a medium of existential anchoring, shaping how we relate to ourselves, others, and the world around us. In this way, the poetic is not a luxury, but a necessity—essential for cultivating spaces that nourish identity, belonging, and depth of being.

Cultural Memory and Emotional Resonance in Design

The incorporation of cultural memory into domestic space is another vital aspect of poetic dwelling. As seen in the work of Bchir and in the traditional architectures of Japan and North Africa, housing can serve as an expressive medium through which collective identity, spiritual narratives, and local traditions are preserved. These examples challenge the homogenizing tendencies of global modernism and advocate for place-specific, historically conscious design.

At the same time, the emotional dimension—what the PDEF terms emotional topography—offers a way of thinking about architecture as a lived narrative. Spaces like Ando's Row House or Nishizawa's Moriyama House craft emotional trajectories through openness, introspection, or spatial fragmentation. They embody the poetic potential of ordinary acts—walking, pausing, looking, remembering.

Towards an Embodied and Reflective Design Practice

The Poetic Dwelling Experience Framework (PDEF) thus serves not only as a theoretical lens but as a design ethos. It calls for architects and theorists to reflect on how homes feel, not just how they look or function. This approach resonates with a growing movement in architecture that seeks to restore ethical, emotional, and symbolic depth to design, particularly within domestic contexts where the stakes of belonging and

PDEF Framework

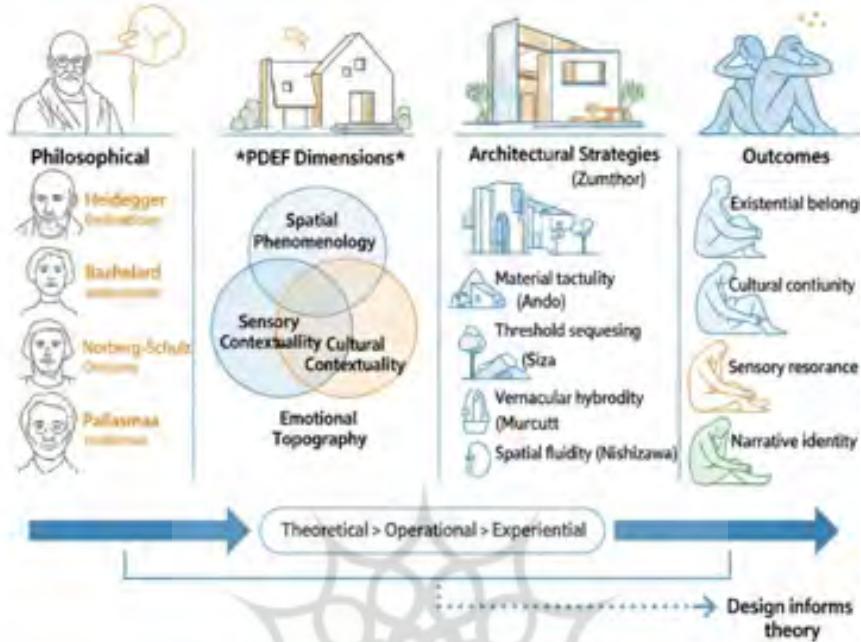


Fig. 11: Evolution of the Poetic Dwelling Experience Framework (PDEF) from Philosophical Foundations to Design Applications

identity are profound.

Furthermore, the PDEF fosters a bridge between theory and practice. It enables architects to draw from phenomenology, literature, and cultural studies without abandoning the practical imperatives of design. In doing so, it opens space for housing that is emotionally sustainable, culturally grounded, and spiritually nourishing—a poetic counterpoint to the alienation of technocratic urbanism.

Implications for Design Education and Practice

The Poetic Dwelling Experience Framework (PDEF) can serve not only as a conceptual lens but also as a pedagogical and practical guide. In design studios, students can use the four dimensions of PDEF to evaluate and enrich their spatial proposals. Practicing architects can employ the framework in early design stages as a reflective checklist to ensure sensory depth, cultural resonance, and emotional relevance in housing projects.

Example Application in Design Development:

1. Initiation: Define design goals in alignment with emotional, cultural, and existential dimensions.
2. Site & Context Analysis: Map sensory qualities, cultural patterns, and spatial rhythms.
3. Concept Generation: Use PDEF dimensions as ideation filters.
4. Spatial Testing: Apply phenomenological walkthroughs and

atmosphere mapping.

5. Refinement: Evaluate emerging designs using a PDEF-based flowchart (Fig.11).

CONCLUSION

This study introduces and develops the Poetic Dwelling Experience Framework (PDEF) as a novel conceptual model for reconceptualizing housing architecture through the lens of poetic dwelling, positioning the home not merely as a utilitarian structure but as a site of existential meaning, emotional resonance, and cultural continuity. Drawing upon the theoretical foundations laid by Heidegger, Bachelard, Norberg-Schulz, and subsequent thinkers, the research highlighted how domestic space can serve as a lived, embodied experience—rooted in memory, imagination, sensory engagement, and symbolic significance.

Through the development and application of the Poetic Dwelling Experience Framework (PDEF), the research identified four interrelated dimensions—spatial phenomenology, sensory interaction, cultural contextuality, and emotional topography—as critical to the formation of a poetic dwelling experience. The selected architectural examples demonstrated that these elements can be consciously integrated into contemporary housing design, offering a powerful alternative to the prevailing logic of functionalism, commodification, and visual spectacle.

The framework's interdependent dimensions provide architects

with a holistic toolkit that transcends conventional binaries, such as form/function or aesthetics/utility. The originality of this study lies in positioning the PDEF not only as a theoretical reflection but also as a practical design and educational tool. By foregrounding the poetic, this research challenges architects and theorists to rethink the notion of 'home' as a deeply human condition—one that reflects not only spatial needs but also existential desires for belonging, intimacy, rootedness, and transcendence.

Beyond its theoretical significance, the PDEF provides concrete applications. In architectural education, it can guide students to design with attention to atmosphere, memory, and cultural resonance. In urban design practice, the PDEF can serve as a diagnostic and generative tool to counteract placelessness and homogenization, supporting the creation of spaces that foster a sense of belonging and collective identity.

The Poetic Dwelling Experience Framework (PDEF) provides a theoretical prototype for recentering housing design around existential meaning; however, its broader validity requires empirical validation. Future research should:

1. Test the PDEF through user studies in diverse housing typologies (e.g., social housing, informal settlements) to assess how cultural, economic, and spatial constraints influence poetic experience.

2. Develop metrics for qualitative evaluation, such as sensory mapping or narrative interviews, to complement the framework's phenomenological foundations.

3. Explore digital tools (e.g., VR simulations of PDEF principles) to bridge theoretical ideals with practical design workflows.

While the PDEF's interdisciplinary rigor provides a scaffold for reimagining dwelling, its success hinges on iterative dialogue between theory and lived realities—ensuring architecture nurtures belonging without romanticizing exclusionary ideals of 'home'.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

"The authors conceptualized the study, conducted the literature review, performed the analysis, and wrote the manuscript."

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

"The authors declare no potential conflict of interest regarding the publication of this work."

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