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Consuming *Hygge* at Home: Perception, Representation, Practice

by

Jonathan Yorke Bean

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Architecture

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Galen Cranz, Chair

Professor Margaret Crawford

Professor Nancy Van House

Professor Russell Belk

Fall 2011

Consuming *Hygge* at Home: Perception, Representation, Practice
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Abstract

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Comparative research on the relationship between everyday spaces of consumption and cultural metaconcepts offers insight into how consumers experience and construct meaning through the use of space. In practice theory, metaconcepts, the “structuring structures” of consumer meaning and emotion, are understood to operate at the individual, group, and cultural level. Consumers engage cultural metaconcepts – in this case, the Danish concept of *hygge* and coziness, its typical American translation – through banal acts, such as making morning coffee, and exceptional consumption, such as remodeling one’s home. Likewise, metaconcepts act across social scale. The emotional experience of *hygge* can be experienced alone or in a group, but the concept is also strongly linked to Danish identity and to the home. Therefore, the ideal of *hygge* influences the everyday purchases that constitute the majority of middle-class consumption. Through everyday consumption, *hygge* has a strong relationship to the material arrangement and use of the home. *Hygge* influences everything from the size and shape of the dining table to the relationship of the living room to the front door. These material arrangements shape both social relationships and consumption, reinforcing cultural ideals and norms. Previous research on *hygge*, homeyness, and atmosphere, however, has lacked a comparative perspective, making it difficult to identify cultural differences in the metaconcepts that drive much normal, routine, and habitual consumption. From a review of literature from fields including cultural geography, anthropology, sociology, and architecture, I identify seven concepts that typify scholarly approaches to the home. I then conduct a two-part analysis for understanding the intangible, multivalent, and fleeting concepts of *hygge* and coziness in a sample of seventeen everyday domestic settings near Copenhagen, Denmark and Portland, Oregon. First is a comparative research video ethnographic method designed to invoke wide-ranging discussion and involve participants in the creation of research representations. Second is a historical survey of representations of *hygge* and coziness in

popular media, including the Danish magazine *Bo Bedre*, the American magazine *Sunset*, and the book *The Not So Big House* by American author and architect Sarah Susanka. This research offers a contribution to interdisciplinary theory in marketing research and studies of domestic space along with concrete findings applicable to the marketing of domestic goods, homes, restaurants, bars, and other products and services. It also offers a rapid ethnographic method of use to scholars and market research professionals alike.

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Dedication

Many, many people have helped me along the way. Karen Møller, my Danish teacher, suggested *hygge* might be worthy of study. She was right. I would also like to thank: Hanne Pico Larsen for her insight and direction; the Domestic Design and Technology Research group at Intel, including Genvieve Bell, Francoise Bourdonnec, Jay Hasbrouck, Daria Loi, Jay Melican, Sue Faulkner, and Alex Zafiroglu; Jennifer Aaker for helping to make the connection to Intel; Michele Chang, Christian Madsbjerg, and everyone at ReD Associates in Denmark who helped me enter the scene; Sarah Wilner, who introduced me to Consumer Culture Theory; and Zeynep Arsel, whose leadership on a parallel project was a source of education and inspiration.

My qualifying exam committee and the committee for this dissertation helped shape my direction and sharpen my contributions. Paul Groth, Hanne Pico Larsen, Nancy Van House, Andy Shanken, Margaret Crawford, Russ Belk, and Galen Crazz, you have my deepest gratitude.

The unkindest thing one respondent could say about interior furnishings was to call them “Scandinavian.” Respondents complained that modern design made the home cold and unforgiving. (45)

–Grant McCracken, “Homeyness: A Cultural Account of One Constellation of Consumer Goods and Meanings.” 1986 (1992).

Introduction

Coziness may seem too banal a concept for a dissertation, but it offers a unique view into the world of consumer meaning. For one thing, it is often taken for granted as an ideal part of the normal home. In Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton’s classic study of the home, the quality expressed as “comfortable,” “cozy,” or “relaxing” was most often mentioned by participants in the research; 41 percent described their own house this way (1981, p. 127). But what is coziness exactly? How do different people experience the feeling of coziness? What is the role of domestic space in coziness? Why have these mundane but important questions so often been overlooked in academic fields from market research to design studies?

Feminist design historian Penny Sparke attributes the lack to a gendered split intrinsic to Modernism wherein anything associated with domesticity and comfort is coded as feminine – and necessarily inferior (1995). Others, most recently geographer Richard Harris, have noted the dismissive, stereotyped attitude academics tend to display toward the suburban home. Harris attributes this attitude – which he notes has also been mentioned by J.B. Jackson and Dell Upton, among others – to the crushing legacy of Cheeveresque stereotypes summed up in the folk song “Little Boxes.” In song and in the academy, the suburban homes of the upwardly mobile masses have long been represented as cheap, fake, or tacky (2008). Likewise, Daniel Miller argues that UK suburbs have been stereotyped and understudied, yet are full of coherent meaning:

Who was the Le Corbusier of suburbia? Who rallied the population and told them to build barricades of bay windows, pebbledash and porches against the predation of this modernist beat? Well, no one. And yet if we interrogate these

streets we can once again find they tell of an ideology just as consistent in its logic as that of modernism. After all, can it be coincidence that we are looking at the *half-timbered, semi-detached, sub-urban dwellings* of the *middle* classes? These terms are redolent of ambiguity and a refusal to choose between alternative categories. (Miller 2010, 83)

This lack of serious interest in the homes of middle-class people goes against global demographic trends and has led to a void in academic knowledge. This is particularly problematic because of the significance of home as a nexus of meaning and because homes, and the activities that people do within them, exert enormous impact on the consumption of material goods and energy. Sociologist Elizabeth Shove insightfully points out that this invisibility is the result of a conceptual separation between *housing* as a social and political issue and *the home* as a concept, rather than a material artifact. In the split, “the house itself has disappeared from view” (1999, p. 131). In a comprehensive review of the literature, sociologist Shelley Mallet claims that many architects and historians have in fact conflated the two categories of house and home. Going further, she claims that “they assert that the spatial organization of domestic dwellings both influences and reflects forms of sociality associated with and/or peculiar to any given cultural and historical context. In other words, household designs, furnishings and technologies constrain or facilitate cultural and historical modes of relating between the people who share these spaces” (2004, p. 66). The problem with conflating the categories of house and home is that it becomes difficult to sort out the ways that the stuff within the house, as well as the stuff of the house itself – what Mallet refers to as “designs, furnishings, and technologies” – connect up with individuals embedded in a culture. The house is seen to either “constrain or facilitate” patterns of interaction between individuals, a point of view which overlooks the potential role of stuff – the house itself, the objects it contains – to be an active participant with agency. Understanding how metaconcepts such as coziness and *hygge* are bound together is a way to connect individually experienced feelings, collective ideals, and tangible objects and spaces. McCracken has done just that, looking at Canadian households to understand the spatial aspects of “homeyness.” His ethnography revealed physical, symbolic, and pragmatic qualities associated with the concept. Echoing the archetypal imagery of Bachelard, McCracken claims that homeyness is associated with settings that are diminutive, variable, embracing, engaging, mnemonic, authentic, informal, and situating (1989). But despite his astute articulation, no illustrations or other visual representations from the research illustrate McCracken’s analysis.

Similar work by Dutch social scientist Paul Pennartz looks at public housing in Amsterdam to see how *gezelligheid*, an untranslatable word for which Pennartz offers

the term “atmosphere,” takes place. In his research, phenomenological in method, Pennartz describes in writing the architectural forms he studied and their use (1999). But again, perhaps due to the constraints of academic publishing, no printed space is given to floorplans, photographs, or other visual representations that would help the reader understand, for example, the kind of windows occupants would have preferred (smaller conventional units rather than walls of glass) or the preferred shape of hall spaces (square rather than rectangular) or rooms (with nooks rather than completely regular) that were perceived as enhancing *gezelligheid*. Conversely, the artist Steven Willats (2002) represented the ways individuals living in modernist housing in the UK changed their dwellings, observing common patterns among those who participated in his work, but his work does not engage with any cultural metaconcept in particular or with scholars doing similar work, such as Clare Cooper Marcus.

Still, the work of Pennartz and McCracken, discussed in greater detail in the following sections, stand out from the literature reviewed below in that they aim to describe the ongoing creation and reinforcement of associations between emotion, interaction between individuals, and interaction with the domestic environment, whereas most other approaches describe or analyze symbolic meaning, which is only one part of the meaning people find in things (Douglas 1979) and can lead the researcher to overlook other, more salient properties, such as the experience of touch or smell (Pink 2009). The symbolic approach has its merits, but, following the influence of Science and Technology Studies, the compelling force of objects and concepts lacking in symbolic meaning can all too easily be overlooked with an analytical focus on symbolism (Cochoy 2004). Coziness, then, is a useful foil for research because, like taste, it slides back and forth between the material and immaterial world (Cranz 2004). A dining room perceived as “cozy” when it is filled with close friends and family can feel cold when emptied of others, but it is perfectly possible to experience coziness in the absence of others. The design and use of domestic space, as both Pennartz and McCracken show, is key to the understanding of everyday consumption.

Coziness, of course, also plays a part in exceptional consumption in the home, such as remodeling projects, and everyday consumption outside the home, as is clear in the design of cafes, restaurants, and hotels. Prior research has established that coziness is a state so highly valued that even people of limited means will go to lengths to reconfigure the structure and appearance of their homes (Miller, 1988). So while coziness at first may seem banal, it is a key metaconcept for understanding how people relate to space, and how these relationships drive consumption patterns. From an analytical point of view, coziness keeps the focus on the practices associated with creating and preserving meaning in the home because it requires the researcher to focus on the *interaction* between people and buildings. Thus, this and future cross-cultural analyses of coziness contribute to a stream of research that investigates the material and social construction and consequences of normalized behavior in everyday places, a research stream that has to date largely focused on the consequences for normalized

consumption on energy use (Quitau & Røpke, 2009; Shove, Watson, Hand, & Ingram, 2007; Shove, 2003; Wilhite, Nakagami, Masuda, Yamaga, & Haneda, 1996).

The research method I lay out in detail in a later section is intended to help sort out how coziness is used to relate practices, meanings, and material objects. My approach is comparative; the dissertation will compare perceptions of the Danish concept of *hygge* to its typical American translation through a comparative analysis of households in and around Copenhagen, Denmark, and Portland, Oregon. There exists a word in the Danish language, *hygge*, which is usually translated as “coziness.” It means much more than that, however: elements of ritual, spirituality, domesticity, contentment, pleasure, indulgence, and restorative nostalgia all merge in *hygge* (Hansen 1970, 1976, 1980), making it a useful concept for the development of comparative research on coziness. Comparative research is key to highlighting differences in what is considered normal. Copenhagen and Portland make ideal comparative sites for reasons discussed later in this dissertation.

As discussed later in detail, the research in each site has two components. The first is a multimedia method of in-home ethnography that engages video recording with still photography. My experience developing and using this method (Bean 2008) is summarized in the section on method that follows. The second component of the method is an investigation and analysis of coziness in popular media: *Bo Bedre*, popular Danish home and lifestyle magazine,¹ the website of the most similar American magazine, *Sunset*; and the popular book *The Not So Big House*, authored by Sarah Susanka, which emerged from my US fieldwork as a key medium for the transmission of ideas about coziness and domestic space. This element of the research aims to trace the connections between individual households and meanings that are established through collective practice.

¹ The Danish data collection was completed in summer 2009 with the aid of the Fernström Fellowship.

Literature Review

Most work on the home comes from the fields of consumer research, sociology, anthropology, phenomenology, and geography. In *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*, Setha Low and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga employ an eclectic scheme to group the literature foundational to anthropologists interested in space (2003). Their categories reflect broader intellectual trends and approaches, such as the application of literary theory, gender studies, postcolonial studies, and so on, but these categorizations are not terribly helpful as a framework because most work on the home both spans and challenges these categories of analysis. Sociologist Mallet, quoted above, divides the literature into these concepts: house and home; ideal house/home; between the real and ideal, the actual and remembered home; home as haven; home and family; home and gender; home/journeying; being at home (in the world); home, self, identity and being (2004). Below I present a taxonomy of operational concepts in the home/house literature in an attempt to illuminate the concepts that structure most of the work. The key concepts are: 1) the self; 2) status and signification; 3) appropriation; 4) choice; 5) material culture studies; 6) practice; and 7) integrative approaches. Works particularly representative of this categorization scheme are presented below. The seventh section explores integrative approaches that hold promise for a better accounting of the relationship between humans and the material world. Following this discussion is an overview of the existing literature on *hygge* and related studies of Dutch *gezellig* and North American homeyness. Because this is a broad cross section of disciplines and approaches, the following section focuses on identifying key ideas and themes, with further literature introduced in the findings and analysis sections when it is relevant to an argument or supports (or contradicts) a finding.

Seven Ways of Thinking About the Home

1. The Self

As mentioned above, analyses of the home tend to focus on the symbolic functions of objects within the home. The underlying metaphysical position that underlies this approach was thoroughly investigated by consumer researcher Russell Belk in his article *Possessions and the Extended Self*, which posits that the objects people surround themselves with function as material extensions of the self (1988). Many researchers with interest in the home have taken up this idea. Perhaps most representative of this category is Clare Cooper Marcus's book *House as Symbol of Self*, which (quite literally) addresses the entire house, not just the things in it, using a technique drawn from Jungian analysis (1995). Csikszentmihalyi and Rocherg-Halton's seminal *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* systematically cataloged the items and symbolic meanings of domestic objects in homes in Chicago and Evanston, Illinois (1981). Sociologist David Halle's book *Inside Culture: Art and Class in the American Home* explained the symbolic meaning of the pictures people hang on the walls (1993). The

object-as-symbol approach is well exemplified in the approach of Annemarie Money, who synthesized these and other approaches and developed a method based on the revelatory potential of totemic objects in the living room (2007).

Gaston Bachelard laid the foundations for this type of study in his book *The Poetics of Space* (1969). The invocation of Freudian and Jungian theories as well as more recent ways of conceptualizing the human psyche, such as the psychological profiling test known as “the Big Five,” are common in this category of research. For example, Sam Gosling, a professor of psychology, has developed a program of research on the home that is outlined in academic articles and his mass-market book *Snoop: What Your Stuff Says About You* (2008).

The value of this approach is that it allows the researcher to establish a 1:1 correspondence between material objects and the self. It is difficult, however, to apply this method when it is not the atomistic individual that is the unit of analysis, but rather the family, household, neighborhood, or culture (Epp and Price, 2008). Furthermore, mass consumption and social mobility complicates analyses that aim to establish a 1:1 relationship between individual self and home. As Harris points out, “most families do not wish to own a highly personal dwelling: it will be hard to sell” (2008, p. 4). In some cultures, consumers most value a home that appears equal – no more and no less – than the neighbors’ (Henning, 2005).

2. Status and Signification

Other work focuses on the interplay between inward- and outward-directed meaning, interpreting the home itself as a primary symbolic system, an approach made famous by Bourdieu (1970). Joan Kron’s journalistic book *Home Psych* takes this same approach, explaining how homes function as other-directed symbols of status (1983). Other work extends this point of view to the scale of the landscape or city. For example, pioneering cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan explains how individuals relate to particular places as a type of signifying system (1974), and in *Behind the Gates: Life, Security, and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America*, Setha Low theorizes that gated communities offer largely symbolic safety to inhabitants riddled with fear (2003b). Other authors outside of consumption research are concerned with decoding the messages loaded into the built environment by people. Sharon Zukin, Mark Gottdiener, and John Findlay relate ideas about gentrification (1989), theming (1997), and ideal order (1993) to show how symbolic systems are worked out in the built environment. When applied to the house, this approach, however, easily leads many to a negative view, as though the external appearance of the house is phony and tacky. But this interpretation is not necessarily correct, and even if it is, meaning can still lie within contradiction. As Harris reminds us, “dissembling is meaningful...today it tells us that just as in the nineteenth century, buyers want comfort, modern technology, *and* the reassuring appearance of tradition. And perhaps that is not even a contradiction” (2008, p. 5).

3. Consumer Choice

Perhaps because analyses focused on status and signification can be perceived as negative and disempowering of the individual, other researchers have advocated for analyses of individual choice. One way of treating the house within this framework of choice is to treat it as a consumer product, though one deserving of special considerations. Richard Wilk takes this position, arguing that “allocation decisions” should be taken into consideration when thinking about the house, because “a grand, overarching theory of the complex balance of function, aesthetics, meaning, and social position” would lead one to overlook “the full range of human factors that affect decisions to buy, design, build, alter, improve, sell, and destroy houses” (1990, p. 35). This approach is exemplified most thoroughly, perhaps, by mainstream author Tracy Kidder. His popular book *House* studies the minutiae of decisions that led to the building and construction of one family’s architect-designed house (1985). Anthropologist Amos Rapoport’s article “Thinking About Home Environments: A Conceptual Framework” lists the “elements of environmental quality” with which researchers and designers could better understand consumer choice and designers (1985). J.B. Jackson’s 1956 essay “Other-directed Houses” is an explanation and celebration of the roadside buildings generated out of the need to convince the passing motorist to choose to stop the automobile (1970). More recently, Lizabeth Cohen provides a historical context for this category by explaining how consumer identity and American identity were made one and the same in postwar America, and by showing parallel linkages between the suburban house and consumption (2003). Cohen’s approach is well complemented by Susan Strasser’s edited volume, which shows the beginnings of this process in Europe and America with a finer grain of analysis. Strasser’s contribution, for example, chronicles the introduction of garbage disposers to the American home (1998). In this point of view, consumers have agency because they can choose to adopt or ignore the panoply of innovations offered by the market; the house is a container for and a backdrop to consumer choice, and the house itself is a product.

4. Appropriation

The assertion that consumers have agency because they can choose what to consume reflects a theoretical bias towards the processes of production. In response, a large body of work on consumption practices and appropriation follows the idea of appropriation outlined by Michel de Certeau in the two volumes of *The Practice of Everyday Life* (2002). These ideas have informed both method and theory. As Money explains, in this way of thinking, “individuals actively become producers of meaning rather than simply consumers of goods” (2007, p. 357). Geographer Doreen Massey argues that the idea of place itself should be re-appropriated by researchers. Her call is to “uproot ‘space’ from that constellation of concepts in which it has so unquestioningly so often been embedded (stasis; closure; representation) and to settle it among another set of ideas

(heterogeneity; relationality; coevalness ... liveliness indeed) where it releases a more challenging political landscape" (2005, p. 11). In literature focused on the home that engages with the idea of appropriation, objects are seen as a way in which people shift and re-encode cultural meaning. For example, McCracken's analysis of homeyness, discussed later in this section, includes three mechanisms he refers to as "correctors." These function to turn parts of the home into points of resistance against the forces of status differentiation, marketplace manipulation, and the unrelenting forward march of modernity (1989, pp. 41-45). The concept of appropriation can also work in the world of immaterial ideas about the self as it relates to the home. For example, in "I Would Never Do That in my Own Home," Michelle Janning and Lindsay Menard see women's use of television decorating programs as a resource from which contemporary middle-class women can appropriate ideas about home design and décor and use judgments of taste to differentiate themselves from others (2006). While most who use the concept of appropriation as a way to show how humans act on the material world, Daniel Miller shows how material objects as representatives of human action can themselves appropriate human beings. He describes how homes become "haunted" by their entanglement in a past web of social relations and meanings, so that "the prior presence of material culture may have a constraining impact upon what one feels one can do with possessions in such a manner that they may appear to possess their own agency which must be taken into account" (2001, p. 112). While this way of thinking helps to give objects more agency than approaches built around self, signification, or choice, the flow of meaning – in this case, perceived or perceptible meaning – is still seen as originating from the individual and acting upon a discrete material world. As geographer Nicky Gregson explains, these approaches "rest on an identification of an object world that is distinct from human life, yet which is continually appropriated and re-appropriated within human life; which is not only distinct from but fabricated by people... and which is used to constitute social relations and identities, as well as relations of unequal exchange and dependency" (2007, p. 20).

5. Material Culture

Miller, who was trained as an anthropologist, has been an influential figure in the formation of the field of material culture. In his 2010 retrospective *Stuff*, Miller traces the intellectual genealogy of his field. First is the idea of Hegelian philosophy, from which Miller identifies the importance of a dialectical relationship between self and other, which functions as a structure from which durable social institutions emerge. Miller traces Karl Marx's materialist bent to his early rooting in Hegelian philosophy, but faults Marx in part because his privileging of communism over capitalism necessitates that nature be cleaved from the world of things made through labor and also separated from people as enactors of labor. Thus according to Miller in a Marxist analysis the implication is that material objects can function as nothing more than the "objects provided by capitalism" (Miller 2010, 60). For Miller, the work of sociologist and

philosopher Georg Simmel provides a way out of this dead end by positing that all dialectical relationships embody contradiction. According to Miller's synthesis, Simmel agrees with Marx in that money can be a form of oppression, but he also points out that money functions to liberate people in a way that is core to our idea of modern selfhood. Miller connects his way of thinking to Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice* – and not to *Distinction*, which likely represents more of a focus on status and differentiation through hierarchy than Miller could stomach. Differentiation is fine in Miller's schema, but in his frame the idea of greater and lesser, better or worse, more or less refined, is a problematic remnant of Durkheimian sociology.

In general Miller rejects any attempt to separate objects and people, just as he rejects any attempts to separate the individual from culture. But Miller does work to separate his own field of material culture studies from the academic departments of social anthropology where most material culturalists work. This is because, as Miller claims, of the collective academic rejection of God in favor of a equally sacralized idea called "society." Thus the material world can still remain separated from the social world, and in the same relative position of lower status. Miller's call is not for scholars to elevate the material to the same position as the social or to reverse these extremes. Rather, he calls for treating everything – human beings are material, after all, he points out – as "part and parcel of our existence in the world" (Miller 2010, 78).

Miller's work follows the ethnographic tradition of anthropology. On the whole, Miller's work moves between theory and analysis, though he seems most at home when writing a variety of Geertzian thick description – seemingly straightforward depictions of ordinary life that nonetheless illuminate broader patterns. His early work includes a well-known study of the relationship between Trinidadians and Coca-Cola, drawn from earlier fieldwork and reprinted in an influential book that shaped the field of material studies (2002). His more recent work, such as two studies on shopping (1998) and home life (2008), both centered in London, is closer to home for Miller, who was educated at Cambridge and teaches at University College London. These works, and a forthcoming study on the global fabric of denim, illustrate the impetus of material culture studies to interrogate the ordinary and the taken for granted. Miller claims – rightly, I believe – that culture can be best understood through the careful study and description of something as banal as blue jeans, or, as I assert, a concept as ordinary as coziness or *hygge*.

6. Practice

In contrast to this division between human life and the material world of objects, proponents of practice theory see the perception and reality of the material world as a result of a continuous process. Rather than focusing on abstract meaning or objects, practice theory requires close attention to what people *do*, and in particular to what is done without special consideration, such as habits and routines. This approach informs the work of much recent work on the home. The application of practice theory to the

study of consumption has been best described by the recent book *The Design of Everyday Life*. Citing practice theorist Andreas Reckwitz (2002), Shove writes:

Theories of practice consequently overcome the limits of classical models of human action and social order grounded in the rational purpose-orientation of Homo economicus or in the norm-driven action of Homo sociologicus. In common with other cultural theories, theories of practice emphasize tacit and unconscious forms of knowledge and experience through which shared ways of understanding and being in the world are established, through which purposes emerge as desirable, and norms as legitimate. What distinguishes theories of practice from other strands of cultural theorizing is their location of the social. Rather than existing in mental qualities, in discourse or interaction, the social exists in practice (Shove et al., 2007, p. 12).

An abbreviated applied definition is this: practices are made up of the interrelationship between image, skills, and stuff (figure 1). Put another way, to understand a practice is to analyze – without assigning privilege to any particular category – a way of thinking, a way of doing, and the material objects, including the human body, involved in accomplishing a particular practice (Shove et al 2007; McMeekin and Southerton 2007). The study of practice, then, is well exemplified by anthropologist Pauline Garvey’s study of furniture rearranging in Norwegian homes (2001), by Gregson’s (2007) study of practices she labels “accommodation” and “ridding,” by Rachel Hurdley’s study of the use of mantelpieces in the English home (2006), and Christena Nippert-Eng’s differentiation between practices related to home and work (1996). While ethnographic, in-home interviews are the typical framework for research in this field, historical

A Model of Practice

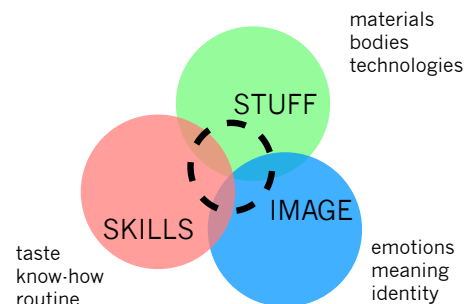


Figure 1. A Model of Practice. *Hygge* is part of a system of practice. Adapted from Shove et al (2007) and McMeekin and Southerton (2007).

analysis is possible with the extensive use of primary sources. Two examples of such work are one, Jonas Frykman and Orvar Löfgren's historical look at middle class culture in Sweden (1987), and two, Lydia Martens and Sue Scott's investigation of representations of cleaning in British *Good Housekeeping* (2005). Visual anthropologist Sarah Pink uses insights gained by her work exploring practice to build a critique of the typical academic form of transferring knowledge – the written paper – to argue for research methods and representations of research that are “plurisensory,” that engage the participants and the researcher in the representation of sounds, smells, and other unseen (and unseeable) elements of practice (2006).

7. Integrative Approaches: Consumer Culture Theory; Science and Technology Studies

Miller distinguishes his position from that of Latour through noting their divergent readings of dialectical philosophy. This is largely an issue of semantics; it seems that both routes would lead one to largely similar conclusions. To Latour, dialectical philosophy reinforces a problematic difference between subject and object, whereas to Miller, dialectical philosophy is key to transcending the separation between subject and object. Perhaps the clearest way to sort out the difference is to explain that while Miller finds that engaging these concepts as analytical tools is a useful mode of analysis, Latour would prefer to reject outright any difference between subject and object.

Following this rejection through to its logical conclusion is discussed in Latour's book *Reassembling the Social*. Researchers following this line of thinking look not on upon the dialectical relationships between people and objects, but rather on the ways in which objects have agency over other objects and people (in Latourian terms, “actors” or “actants.”) For example, sociologist Franck Cochoy argues that marketing researchers might best understand culture not by studying consumers, as has been the focus of much past research, but rather by paying closer attention to material objects and the sites in which they are used (2009). This proposition draws from previous work by Cochoy (2004, 2007) that connects consumption to Science and Technology Studies, and in particular Latour's articulation, mentioned above, of Actor-Network Theory [ANT]. In contradistinction to theories that imply a stable social order or division between the social and material worlds, ANT holds that there is no overarching structure or framework underpinning culture. Instead, continuous work is required to maintain what we recognize as stable entities such as nature, culture, and the material world. I see parallels between the core principle of ANT, which is the symmetrical tracing of associations between people and things, and the field of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) as defined by Arnould and Thompson. While most of the work in this field is focused on meaning – and so belongs to the sphere of practice labeled “image” – Arnould and Thompson call for researchers in the field to tackle “broader analyses of the historical and institutional forces that have shaped the marketplace and the consumer as a social category” (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, p. 876).

Rich sites for further analysis in this mode are those objects that merge knowledge with materiality. Cochoy refers to Star and Griesemer's (1989) influential definition of boundary objects as those things that are "simultaneously concrete and abstract, specific and general, conventionalized and customized." The emergent property of this category of objects is emphasized in Zwick and Dholakia's definition of the epistemic consumption object, which they define – without reference to Star and Griesemer – as an object "that has not yet entirely been purified (and ontologically sealed) by modernist discourses of science and culture. Such ontological openness enables an ongoing forming and mutating of relations around the object, thus adding to its increasing complexity as it is being revealed and discovered" (2006, p. 21). Returning to ANT, Latour explains the ideal site for studying the formation of associations by invoking the metaphor of a building construction site, which makes visible not only the materials and labor that go into the construction of a building, but also the precarious nature of the enterprise itself. Bad materials, careless work, faulty connections: all these can cause failure. Indeed, even for those directly involved in the work, a successfully completed construction project can seem miraculous (2005). At the risk of being accused of taking Latour's metaphor too literally, I propose that the object of the home is an ideal boundary object for study. It is, among other things, a way to bridge the divide between the house/home problem described above, and to study the intersection between the material and symbolic aspects of routine consumption. The method I have devised for my research builds on this idea.

The Study of *Hygge*, Atmosphere, and Homeyness

Hygge

Scholars have written analyses of *hygge* from a diversity of theoretical perspectives. *Hygge* accounts for a significant portion of anthropologist Judith Friedman Hansen's dissertation, later published as the book *We Are a Little Land* (1980). *Hygge* is only one component of Hansen's analysis, which uses proxemics as an analytic tool to reflect on her own role as a participant-observer in Denmark in the 1970's. She notes that the typical setting for *hygge* is a dinner party with close family and friends, where guests are drawn close together around a table much narrower than its American counterpart, where people are seated on armless chairs and shared benches close enough that their elbows touch, where alcoholic beverages are poured generously, and where food is passed on trays to encourage an atmosphere of conviviality. After dinner, everyone moves to sit around a coffee table, where later in the evening dessert and coffee will be served (82-83). In my time in Denmark, I have observed that this is still a frequent pattern of interaction today. As Friedman Hansen points out, closeness is allied with familiarity. The similarity in Danish material culture and the arrangement of domestic space furthers feelings of familiarity and being close to home. This sense of domestic familiarity is extended outside the home by material goods known to the public as icons

of Danish design, most famously a “superelliptical” table that can be found in many Danish homes, corporate offices, and government buildings (Øllgaard 1999).

Most Danish living spaces, even ones built recently with a modernist open plan, contain spaces that Friedman Hansen claimed constitute an ideal for middle-class Danish domestic space: “an entryway (*forværelse* or [the more contemporary] *entré*), a living room (*daglig stue*), a dining room (*spisestue*), bedrooms (*værelser* or *soveværelser*), and a balcony (*altan*)” (81). She speculates that the smallness of the typical Danish apartment at the time, which does not leave room for all of these spaces, “requires maximum flexibility of furnishings,” because one might, for example, have to drag the daybed out of the way to make room to enlarge the dining table for guests. Elsewhere Friedman Hansen extends this idea to a potential rationale for the typical design of Danish modern furniture, especially the choice of lightweight wood over the heavier steel that was a central symbol of international modernism. While there is reason to challenge this causal connection — today, Danes live in much larger spaces, but still prefer relatively lightweight and mobile furniture — her summary of the typical contents and arrangement of a Danish house holds true. Friedman Hansen wrote:

It is noteworthy under the circumstances that the minimum furnishings are as standard as they are. A couch flanking one wall, facing a narrow low table approximately its own length over which a low-hanging chandelier casts a circle of light is typical. One or two other comfortable chairs are set in corners of the room or in convenient spaces along the walls. In addition one may expect to find a television or radio, a small bookcase, and similar focuses of leisure activity. (82)

Aside from closeness, Friedman Hansen identifies moderation as another important part of *hygge*, explaining that “neither meticulousness nor messiness in a room are *hyggelig*, but the organized disorder of a home which is being lived in can be” (67). Likewise, an entirely new room cannot be *hyggelig*. The rule of moderation also plays in the way light is engaged with *hygge*. Illumination should be neither too bright nor too dark. As Friedman Hansen explains, echoing the more recent findings of cross-cultural research conducted by Norwegian anthropologist Harald Wilhite and his Japanese collaborators, “subdued lighting (*dæmpet belysning*) and candles (“living lights”) are typical accompaniments of *hygge*. Fluorescent lighting was seen by informants in contrast as cold, non-*hyggelig*” (70).

Following closeness and moderation, enclosure is the third element of *hygge* that Friedman Hansen identifies. Enclosure is bound up closely with the feeling of being warm in bed, which one author in a newspaper series on *hygge*, discussed later, likened

to being in the womb. But Friedman Hansen saw enclosure in action in other ways, such as the following.

One Danish woman, married to a sailor who was away from home for months at a time, lessened her feelings of loneliness by making herself a *hygge*krog (*hygge*-nook). Fashioning curtains out of open-weave material, she hung them around one corner of the apartment when her husband left for ship duty, and used the nook for evening reading and knitting in his absence. On his return she took the curtains down and enjoyed the whole apartment with him. In another case, an elderly couple had built a “*hygge*-corner” in their living room, a raised platform about thirty square feet in expanse set before a small window. Here stood a small round table and two chairs, enclosed by a low wooden balustrade. (75)

In other contexts, this *hygge*krog or *hyggehjørne* (*hygge*-corner) is sometimes also referred to as a *hule*, a word that literally translates to “cave” but that has a slightly childlike, playful overtone; Danish children make a *hule* with the sofa cushions. A *hule* is a place of safety and warmth. Other words in Danish that appear to translate directly to English, especially the word *rum* (literally “room” or “space”), likewise have meanings that are culturally shaded. As Friedman Hansen explains:

The Danish word *rum*, here translated as space, means also room. In the latter meaning, which is probably the more correct translation, the word implies emptiness and impersonality. A room per se could be termed a *rum*; but a room that serves a function would generally be referred to by a more specific name. The two main types of *rum* in Danish living space, *stuer* and *værelser*, represent respectively rooms in which one spends the bulk of one’s waking hours – the living room and dining room – and rooms in which one performs more peripheral functions, particularly sleeping rooms. A hotel room, as in this example, would be known as a *værelse*, inasmuch as its primary function is for

sleeping;... a *værelse* is a room in which someone “dwells.” Thus neither the bathroom (*badeværelse*²) nor the kitchen (*køkken*) is a *værelse*. (86-87)

With this historical context, it is therefore not surprising that the largely successful attempts by Danish marketers of kitchen and bathroom fittings to increase sales by transforming the concept of the bathroom have focused on turning these rooms into places where people dwell. Thus the concept of *hygge* has been central to the transformation of the ideal Danish bathroom away from a room of minimal size into a place of indulgence and luxury (Quitau and Røpke 2009). Likewise, though I am not aware of an accounting of this process, it appears that these same ideas have been at play in the development of the idea of the *sametalekøkken*, or “conversation kitchen,” by the Danish kitchen company Kvik.

Borish’s participant observer analysis and history of Danish culture contains a chapter devoted to *hygge* (1991). It can be faulted for being somewhat sentimental and romantic, but more recent research agrees with Borish’s connection of three elements: Denmark’s past as a powerful empire contrasted with its present as a small, relatively powerless country; its resulting homogeneity; and a worldview strongly influenced by Nikolaj Frederik Grundtvig, who set out along with a group of supporters in the mid-nineteenth century with the explicit goal of establishing a national identity based on “individual freedom, classical liberalism, voluntarism, free association, popular education, and the development of civil society and social solidarity” (Campbell and Hall 2006, 22). Borish, who sees *hygge* as a uniquely Danish phenomenon that arises from an ability to participate in the moment, connects these qualities of Danish national identity to *hygge* through an analysis of his own experience spending time in two Danish *folkehøjskole*, or Folk High Schools, and a cultural institution established by Grundtvig.

Hygge has long been strongly associated with positive elements of Danish national identity. This was an undercurrent of a series of newspaper interest pieces published by the Danish newspaper *Politiken* in the 1960’s. These articles, which both Borish and Friedman Hansen turn to as definitional sources, were since published as a slim book. In the articles, well-known public figures in Denmark – actors, architects, and so on – were invited to weigh in on the status of *hygge* in a quickly modernizing Denmark. One article in the series notes that Denmark’s association with *hygge* was cemented by a 1960’s marketing campaign that aimed to turn *hygge* into a world-recognized brand associated with a visit to Copenhagen. This was a period where Denmark was gaining a

² The reader may question how Hansen can claim that a bathroom, or *badeværelse*, is not a *værelse*, as it contains the word itself. A likely etymological explanation is that at the time of the introduction of the bathroom into Denmark the prevailing way to make a new word was to combine existing Danish words into a new compound word. Thus *bade*, which means bathing, was combined with *værelse*. It was likely not combined with *stue* because a *stue* is considered a more public space than a *værelse*.

position on the world scene through its role in exporting Danish design, building on Denmark's economic strength in shipping. In the period that followed the improvement of airport infrastructure to allow efficient plane connections to the US and Europe, a development which led to the commissioning and construction of Arne Jacobsen's iconic SAS hotel.

There is broad agreement between scholars on the elements of *hygge*. Danish scholar Anja Melby Jørgensen's analysis of the *Politiken* series and other Danish-language literature on *hygge*, for example, concludes that *hygge* is bound up with national identity, the home, and the family. In addition, she contends that there is also a psychological or emotional component to *hygge*, and that it is bound up with the "golden middle way," a cultural principle that she links back to a feeling of balance between modernity and tradition. I think this is what Friedman Hansen indicates in the quality of *hygge* she calls "moderation." Likewise, a political analysis of modern-day Denmark relates this cultural tradition to how the Danish political and economic system has been able to combine elements that would, in other countries, be thought of as strongly opposed – such as a strong union system *and* the ability for firms to lay off workers for most any reason at any time (Campbell and Hall 2006, 30).

Indeed, the visual evidence of the connection between *hygge* and national identity is overwhelming evidence of the phenomenon Michael Billig termed "banal nationalism." In an article that analyzes Swedish allotment gardens as a space of banal nationalism, anthropologist Christopher Tilley defines banal nationalism as "something practiced and reproduced in everyday life, something so commonplace and ordinary that it is taken for granted rather than discussed" (Tilley 219). As Tilley explains, most of his Swedish informants did not see the flag as a marker of nationalism.

The flag instead was a sign of greeting. You flagged, or welcomed, the visitor who was arriving by raising the flag. Flag poles in the past have generally been characteristic of larger houses and gardens, and especially country gardens, a national symbol primarily associated with royalty, the military, and the well off, but in recent years such flagging has become 'democratized' and has swept through suburbia. (242)

Likewise, it is readily apparent that many Danes, especially those who live outside of the central city areas, fly the Danish flag. One also learns quickly that the flag is also a powerful symbol invoked at particularly *hyggeligt* occasions, such as birthday celebrations, where a small Danish flag is certain to grace the table, at least a few presents, and perhaps be dangled from the walls in the form of garlands. Birthdays for members of the royal family are an object of media adoration and are commemorated

by mounting little Danish flags on public transport busses. Grocery stores have picked up on this use of the flag – even small grocery stores will devote at least as much aisle space as they would, say, to jam and jelly, to Danish flags and the other category of consumer good most closely related to *hygge*: candles. Furthermore retailers of all types of goods regularly have birthday and anniversary promotions wherein the interior of the store will literally be covered with Danish flags. This is a regular enough occurrence that some Danes do not seem to notice the proliferation of the red and white flag, which can, at times, become so visually dominant that to an outsider it takes on an alarmingly propagandistic element. Indeed, the flag has become a central symbol of the conservative and vehemently anti-immigrant *Danskefolkeparti*, or Danish People’s Party, a development which has caused some irritation among Danes who feel this new layer of meaning has curtailed their ability to display the flag. The allegiance of *hygge* with certain types of food and drink – in particular the hot dog and beer sold from street carts in most larger Danish cities – can be seen as further evidence of *hygge* functioning as a mode of group formation that effectively excludes Muslim immigrants from a highly visible way of participating in a core cultural practice (Dencik 2006).

It is not surprising, then, that it is quite common to see the experience of *hygge* described as process of turning away from the outside world. As American historian and resident of Denmark Jonathan Schwartz explains, the typical Danish “house is surrounded by protective trees and bushes. What is Danish in Denmark is so obvious to the foreigner here. *Hygge* (coziness), *Tryghed* (security), and *Triøsel* (well-being) are the three Graces of Danish culture and socialization. Faces look toward a common *gård* (yard), or a table with candles and bottles on it. *Hygge* always has its backs turned on the others. *Hygge* is for the members, not the strangers” (1985). The most atomistic group in the member-only scheme of *hygge* is the family unit. At its most basic this is a pair of people, but the concept is strongly connected to the nuclear family of husband, wife, and children. The connection of *hygge* with family life is a central feature of work by the Danish ethnologist and scholar of consumption Jeppe Trolle Linnet, for whom *hygge* and interiority emerged as an organizing concept during his ethnography of four middle-class families in Copenhagen (Trolle Linnet 2010). *Hygge* also features strongly in an analysis of home life by Danish anthropologist of education Ida Winther. For Winther, the most *hyggeligt* time is children watching cartoons on TV on Saturday morning with a stock of sugary candy (2006).

Atmosphere (*Gezelligheid*)

A concept related to *hygge*, though not as strongly attached to the domestic setting, is the Dutch *gezelligheid*. Sociologist Paul Pennartz studied twenty five households living in modernist public housing in Amsterdam to better understand how this concept, which he translated, regrettably, into English as “pleasantness,” is associated with domestic space. Citing MacPherson (1984) and Spradley (1979), makes the mildly

controversial claim that “the phenomenological approach is rather akin to the ethnographic tradition.” Here is how he sees the connection.

In other words, atmosphere is the most comprehensive characteristic of a place. Places incarnate our experiences and aspirations and are foci of meaningful events in our lives (cf. Tuan 1971). A place, according to Norberg-Schulz (1971, 1980), is a ‘total phenomenon;’ which cannot be reduced to its individual components without losing its qualitative character. (95-96)

However, what is unself-conscious is difficult to investigate. A more workable definition put forward by Canter (1977) conceives place as an amalgam of related activities, conceptions, and material attributes. Conceptions of public and private spaces, and actual behavior in places, have been studied empirically (e.g., Nasar 1989b; Pennartz 1989, 1990), but how are conceptions and behavior related to the material attributes of place?

The urban sociologist Gans (1972) clarifies this relationship by distinguishing between the potential and the effective environments. The material and architectural attributes are the *potential environment*. The cultural or individual conception of the potential environment is the *effective environment*. In this view, the material environment is not effective in itself. Its potentiality has to be made effective on the conceptual level. In the present study, we attempt to distinguish those components of the home environment that are likely to function as *effectors* of the experience of atmosphere. (Pennartz 1999, 96; emphasis original)

Thus, Pennartz roots his approach in phenomenological studies of place. But despite citing Norberg-Schulz’s claim that place is a “total phenomenon,” Pennartz notes the difficulty of establishing a connection between places themselves and the idiosyncrasies of human behavior — much less culture. Accordingly, he invokes the a sociological mode of analysis that establishes a clear separation between the material (in Gans’s language the “potential environment”) and what people think about the possible use of a given material arrangement of spaces and objects (the “effective environment.”)

Within, or despite, this theoretical frame, Pennartz's mode of analysis is semantic and ethnographic in nature. Based on close reading of semi-structured interview transcripts, he identifies five themes to answer the question, "When is it most pleasant at home." These themes are:

1. Communicating with one another;
2. Being accessible to one another;
3. Relaxing after having finished work;
4. Being free to do what one wants; and
5. Being occupied, absence of boredom (Pennartz 1999, 101).

These themes are related to a set of recommendations targeted at future architects of public housing. Many of the recommendations have to do with use; Pennartz observes that "a room does not necessarily have to be large to be pleasant, but it needs to provide opportunities for people to do the things they want to do." Other insights are more actionable, for example a recommendation to reduce the size of windows in order to allow for more wall space and to include architectural features such as niches and sloped ceilings. As Pennartz explains, "a sloping ceiling fills a room up and eliminates empty spaces, which are experienced as spaces where 'nothing is done or to be done.'" Removing these spaces to increase the perception of pleasantness is a spatial analogue to the fifth theme (Pennartz 1999, 105).

Homeyness

Pennartz notes in a footnote that related research includes Grant McCracken's (1989) "Homeyness: A Cultural Account of One Constellation of Consumer Goods and Meanings." Pennartz characterizes this article as focusing "on the meaning of consumer goods in the construction of a homey atmosphere" (1999, 95). But this is not quite a fair characterization, for there is much more of a focus on the relationship between meaning and space in McCracken's article than Pennartz's footnote might lead one to believe.

McCracken's work is rooted not in phenomenology but rather in the tradition of anthropology. It draws from an analysis of interviews in the summer of 1985 and 1986 with forty individuals living in an unspecified number of urban households in southern Ontario, Canada. McCracken notes that previous studies of home have failed to account for the apparently useless "bric-a-brac" that many people find to be a key material ingredient of domestic space (McCracken 2005, 26). He summarizes participants' descriptions of homeyness this way:

Homey interior details include bay windows, breakfast nooks, wainscoting, wood-beam ceilings, kitchens, dens, "snug" rooms, low ceilings, and fireplaces. Exterior characteristics include a low-slung "bungalow" roof, well-enclosed and well-treed backyards, paned and mullioned windows, shutters, porches, lawn

ornaments, ivy-covered walls, plants and shrubs close to and encompassing the house, mock-Tudor timbering, brass lanterns and other lamps, an asymmetrical front, and a small front door. (McCracken 2005, 26).

Homeyness, he notes, is a strongly oppositional concept, and respondents often had an easier time explaining what homeyness is not, using words such as, “‘pretentious,’ ‘formal,’ ‘stark,’ ‘elegant,’ ‘cold,’ ‘daunting,’ ‘sterile,’ ‘showpiece,’ ‘reserved,’ ‘controlled,’ ‘decorated,’ ‘modern,’ and even ‘Scandinavian’” (McCracken 2005, 27).

From his analysis of the interview data, McCracken distills eight “symbolic properties” of homeyness. The properties are the: 1) Diminutive; 2) Variable; 3) Embracing; 4) Engaging; 5) Mnemonic, 6) Authentic, 7) Informal, and 8) Situating. These points are summarized below.

The Diminutive Property

Homey houses are ones that are small and that appear to be small, with low ceilings, small windows, divided spaces, and broken lines. Breaking spaces up makes them easier to inhabit, to use, and to modify. Smallness also relates to status: homeyness “cannot tolerate sparse furnishings, clean, un-cluttered lines, or ‘elegance’ of any kind.” (McCracken 2005, 28) McCracken claims that smallness simplifies thinking as well, relating this aspect to anthropological concepts that equate smaller, simple environments with being more “graspable, conceivable, thinkable” (ibid). The property of homeyness is opposed to the “monumental and brutalist aspects of modern built form” (ibid).

The Variable Property

McCracken writes that “variability makes things appear more contingent” and that “contingency makes things appear more individual and authentic.” Among McCracken’s informants, an exterior wall built of irregularly shaped rubblestone is the prime example of variability. On the interior of the house, “homeyness is seen to be inconsistent with symmetry, balance, and visibly pre-meditated order” (ibid, 29). The rational, ordered elements of modern production are, in turn, opposed to homeyness. This sets up contradictions in the home: wood gingerbread ornamentation, notes McCracken, is prized for the variability it introduces in the home environment, but, as is well known to architectural historians, gingerbread trim is machine-made product of rational, ordered factory production. But contradiction helps homeyness: as McCracken notes, following semiotic theory, contradictory signs can function to increase perceived veracity. It should be noted that this same tension between handcraft and machine production is a central theme of interpretations of the Arts and Crafts movement.

The Embracing Property

McCracken describes the house as having layers of physical and material objects that serve to “extend its embrace” (ibid, 30-31). The roof and outer walls of the house, sometimes complemented with ivy, the books that serve to thicken walls and encircle spaces such as dens, the meanings contributed by books, and the arrangement of furniture itself all serve to encircle the occupants with layers of protection from the outside world. This protection allows a parallel idea of constructing one’s idea of self and family identity as a process of creating a private, interior life as opposed to a public, outside world, an idea which Trolle Linnet (2010) builds on in his analysis of *hygge* as a phenomenon related to interiority.



McCracken chose this image to represent the embracing quality of homeyness for a blog post he wrote in 2008.

Accordingly, the overhanging hipped roof is especially homey for the way it embraces the home below. As McCracken explains, “this roofline appears in several architectural styles common to nineteenth- and twentieth-century North America (e.g., mock-Tudor cottage, pitched Gothic house, California bungalow, and some of the domestic architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright)” (McCracken 2005, 30.)

The Engaging Property

McCracken writes that the engaging property draws one into a home. It is through the engaging property that material objects, such as a wreath on the front door, can be perceived as welcoming. Engagement is achieved through a process of body language when the home’s inhabitants welcome a visitor and making them part of the scene. Engagement is also achieved through the deployment of the “conversation piece” in decor, such as knickknacks, decorative features, or furniture that invite comment and therefore draw the occupants of the room into conversation with one another. This is a key property of homeyness, according to McCracken, because while the previous three have only passively acted on an individual, the engaging property demands the participation of individuals and groups with the experience of homeyness (ibid, 33-34).

The Mnemonic Property

The mnemonic property refers to the abilities of homes and their contents to situate the occupants with respect to time. Family photos, antiques, and other “memorial

objects” enforce the sense of the present by creating a cohesive and comprehensible narrative of the past. McCracken calls this process temporal emplacement, explaining that “the individual is now much more vividly ‘somewhere’ than before because the environment is much more vividly ‘sometime’ than before” (ibid, 35).

The Authentic Property

Through this process, in McCracken’s terms, the spaces and objects in the house “reflect the particular details of personal lives” (35). In order not to wade too deeply into the study of authenticity, an academic area that has exploded since McCracken’s piece, I will define authenticity in his terms. “Homey things and spaces,” he writes, “help distinguish the home from the homes around it and things and its occupants from other people.” Homey things and spaces, such as handmade furniture and settings that are consciously designed not to impress (think of the difference between a middle-class American family room and living room) are key to homeyness because they engage with the meaning resources available in the mass market in a way that disarms the threat of an undistinguished identity. McCracken found that his participants viewed “homey things and space as being strongly opposite in character to things that were ‘contrived,’ ‘artificial,’ and ‘forced.’ In their view, inauthentic styles were the product of modern aesthetics, interior designers, showpiece homes, and high-status individuals” (35). Home is the only place under the direct control of the modern individual, and so is seen as authentic because it is “untouched by the calculations of the marketplace, the doctrines of politics or religion, the falsehoods of the status system, the impersonations of the fashion world, the contentions of the advertising enterprise, or any of the other meanings that are served up by the meaning-manufacturers of a mass society” (36). Thus, homeyness creates a sense of place that is strongly linked to the individual.

The Informal Property

McCracken writes that “homey homes and rooms appear deliberately to ‘lower the tone’ of human interaction” by providing “conversation pieces” that individuals can use to direct communication towards topics that are unlikely to offend (ibid, 36). Homey materials are described as “warm” and “friendly” and are often unfinished and rustic. Homey places do not demand special care or attention for the sake of preventing soil or averting damage. This is a semiotic strategy that is intended to alter behavior from what would be expected in other contexts. Homey places are designed to “diminish the formality of the interaction that takes place within” (ibid, 37).

The Situating Property

Through homeyness, the individual, according to McCracken,

ceases to be an observer, ceases to be a participant, and becomes finally simply a part of the surrounding homey environment.... Homey objects and their arrangement seek to make the individual a homologue of the environment, an integral part of the whole....these meanings then turn back upon the individual in such a way that he or she is claimed by them. Individuals create homey material culture and, eventually, homey material culture returns the favor. (ibid, 37-38)

This transformation of individuals subject to market forces to what McCracken calls "homey creatures" is considered the final stage of the homeyness process, when "the occupant of homey space becomes, in effect, part of the arrangement.... In this final stage the individual ceases to be an observer, ceases to be a participant, and becomes finally simply a part of the surrounding homey environment" (ibid, 37). This is the beginning of a circular process of meaning transfer wherein meanings "turn back upon the individual in such a way that he or she is claimed by them. Individuals create homey material culture and, eventually, homey material culture returns the favor" (ibid).

Pragmatic Qualities of Homeyness

Homeyness also has what McCracken labels "pragmatic qualities," by which he means "ways in which it [homeyness] is pressed into service in the creation of the social self and world" (McCracken 2005, 39). Though he acknowledges that there are "many," he acknowledges four. These are homeyness as 1) enabling context, 2) status corrector, 3) marketplace corrector, and 4) modernity corrector. Once deployed through the above stages, homeyness becomes a tool that is used to fashion individual and collective (i.e., family) identity. The enabling context, status corrector, and marketplace corrector functions are summarized in the following section titled "Homeyness and Status," which is followed by a discussion of the relationship between homeyness and modernity.

Homeyness and Status

Of special concern to this study is the relationship of homeyness to class status. According to McCracken, high-status people have a fraught relationship with homeyness. Many high-status people feel that their home environments must be a perfect symbolic reflection of their high status. This, of course, precludes much that would be considered homey, especially if their status is newly gained. In this situation, for example, many of the objects used to convey the mnemonic property would be excluded from public display. Furthermore the house would encourage a certain

standard of behavior opposed to feelings of homey authenticity and informality. Three strategies emerge in this group. First there is the avoidance of the home environment altogether as a setting for socialization. Instead a private club is favored. The second strategy is the merging of objects that have the material qualities of homeyness (handmade, unfinished, rustic) with status symbols — so a wood figurine becomes an opportunity to impress a visitor with a story of exotic travels. The third strategy is to sequester homeyness in a private realm of the home such as a den or study.

In contrast, people of middling status have a relatively straightforward relationship with homeyness. It is still considered a difficult state to achieve, but a desirable one, primarily because of its role as a status corrector. While McCracken explains this story in terms of high and middle status, it might be more accurate to think of it in terms of mobility. Those who are at risk of losing status are the most inclined to display status in their houses, which are therefore less likely to be homey. People whose class status is relatively fixed — as is the case with most of the middle class — are more likely to create a homey environment that insulates them from the demands of the status system and marketplace that operates outside of their control. As McCracken explains, this translates into a feeling of ownership: “homeyness is homemade meaning, whereas all of the meanings of the status game are market-made meanings” (ibid, 43). Thus considered, homeyness is a way to strip the status meaning out of objects and replace it with an alternative scheme of meaning — homeyness itself — that protects the individuals in the household from “the intrusions and demands of the designer, the marketer, and the showy neighbor” (43).

This assertion, of course, is a not-so-subtle challenge to two prevalent ideas. The first is the idea that modern consumers, and especially those subject to the American economy, are passive dupes manipulated by corporate interests. The second is that the primary force behind individual action (and, thus, consumption) is the pursuit of status. As McCracken posits:

North Americans are for some purposes entirely capable of judiciously selecting and manipulating the meanings of the marketplace. Far from being the vulnerable playthings of the forces of marketing, they are possessed of their own culturally constituted powers of discrimination. The study of homeyness helps us to see one of the mainstays of this culturally endowed (and endowing) ability. More research is needed here to tell us which social groups have these powers of discrimination and whether their distribution varies with class, age, and sex.

(ibid, 44)

Aligning Homeyness and Pleasantness

If one intersects McCracken's eight elements of homeyness with the five components of pleasantness Pennartz identifies and then identifies the strength of the association between the concepts, the result might look something like this:

	Communicating with one another	Being accessible to one another	Relaxing after having finished work	Being free to do what one wants	Being occupied, absence of boredom
Diminutive	●	●	●	●	●
Variable	●	●	○	●	●
Embracing	●	●	●	●	●
Engaging	●	●	●	●	●
Mnemonic	○	○	●	○	●
Authentic	●	●	○	●	●
Informal	●	●	●	●	●
Situating	●	●	●	●	○

Strength of Association	●	●	○
	Strong	Medium	Weak

This table shows the effect of clear difference between the two theories. Pennartz's is strongly focused on the quality of experience perceived at the level of the individual, or with the quality of experience in the interaction between individuals. This makes sense given the phenomenological basis for his theory. McCracken's scheme, however, deals with both the quality of experience and the physical and material qualities of the environment. Thus Pennartz must explain why sloped ceilings are related to the "being occupied, absence of boredom category," whereas McCracken can simply state that an attic room is both diminutive and embracing with little further explanation needed. Furthermore, it seems that McCracken's theory can contain all of the concepts Pennartz identifies, while making it possible to achieve a finer grain of analysis.

Because of its anthropological approach and its consideration of consumption, material goods, and the arrangement of space, McCracken's scheme is the most fully elaborated articulation of a metaconcept related to the home that I have found. It also meshes well with the previous work on *hygge*. Separating out the embracing, engaging,

informal, and situating qualities, for example, allows one to better understand the actions of the woman described by Friedman Hansen who fashioned a *hygge* in the absence of her husband. Likewise, the diminutive property might well explain why Danes' appreciation for small, lightweight, and movable furniture has persevered despite the trend towards larger living spaces. Furthermore, McCracken's analysis deals with consumption decisions and space, and as such bridges areas of academic research relevant to my analysis. This makes McCracken's framework a particularly useful tool. I refer to it in the sections that follow and structure my analysis of the US media *Sunset* and on *The Not So Big House* accordingly.

Homeyness and Modernity

McCracken's framework is also different from Pennartz's in that it emerged from the context of a study in North America, rather than Europe, and from a study of single-family owner-occupied structures, rather than the public housing that was the site of Pennartz's study. A long tradition of architectural research focuses on the manifold failings of modernist architecture to satisfy its users (e.g., Boudon 1972) and Pennartz's study, even if it adopts a significantly less vituperative tone, is part of this tradition.

Because McCracken's research focused on middle class owner-occupied homes, it offers a useful construct for the study at hand. Middle class homeowners, as McCracken notes, not only have the resources to achieve a particular vision of home, but the home also features prominently as a central identity project. Towards the other ends of the class and income spectrum home may not so closely reflect identity and aspirations: at the lower end, of course, for reasons having to do with lack of resources or time, and at the extreme upper end, because domestic environments are not seen as an opportunity for creative expression or refuge, but rather as primarily a symbolic expression of status.

Interestingly, McCracken's analysis does not quite escape the anti-modernist trope. He notes that according to the participants in his research, homeyness is diametrically opposed to architectural modernism. He writes:

Modern homes with the undifferentiated, multifunctional, open-plan spaces; long lines and smooth unbroken surfaces; and lack of ornament violate the tenets of homeyness. They especially contradict the intentions of the diminutive, the variable, and the embracing aspects of homeyness. But the modern aesthetic also contradicts the mnemonic, authentic, informal, and situating properties of homeyness. So thoroughgoing is the opposition between homeyness and the modern aesthetic that the latter appears almost to have been created in contradistinction to the former. (45)

McCracken backs up this assertion not only with his own ethnographic research, but also with a passage quoted from Creighton and Ford's classic book *Contemporary Houses Evaluated by Their Owners* (1961) in which the occupants of an architect-designed modernist house pine for a "'cozy, den-like room to sit in sometimes as a change of pace'" (219).

Although McCracken does not discuss the connection between national identity and homeyness at length, he draws on his participants' language to make a rhetorical connection between modernism and environments seen as "Scandinavian," a style that evokes images of teak bookcases and IKEA assembly instructions at the same time it alludes to an alien political system.³ Of course, in the years around the second world war, the proponents of architectural modernism in the US worked hard to create a difference between their preferred variety of modernism from that associated with Nazi and Fascist regimes (Castillo 2010). In contrast to architectural modernism, McCracken sees the possibility of homeyness in postmodern styles of architecture. Yet, despite this prediction, one trend since McCracken originally wrote his article in 1989 has been an alignment in the marketplace between values associated with sustainability and an identifiably modernist aesthetic. This begs the question: are modernist spaces really so opposed to homeyness? My findings indicate that the answer is no, and that McCracken was overplaying this distinction to make for a punchy rhetorical flourish. As metaconcepts, homeyness and, especially, *hygge* seem to be durable enough to be mapped to a number of different ideal orderings of objects.

³ A recent bit from the US news parody television show *The Daily Show* makes this connection with great comic effect (The Daily Show, 2010).

Method

A Comparative Approach: Copenhagen, Denmark and Portland, Oregon

The site for this study is the middle-class and upper-middle class home, which I see as the primary site of interaction between symbolic meaning, everyday practice, and material artifacts. To study this interaction, I developed a research method in order to compare perceptions, representations, and practices associated with *hygge* in Denmark to coziness in the US. I chose Portland, Oregon and Copenhagen to center my research because the two cities are similar in population, demographics, and worldview; both, for example, have a disproportionate bulge of well educated people age 25-35. Both share a rainy, but mild climate, and a reputation as forward-looking, politically progressive, and environmentally conscious, and both have reputations as regional centers of innovative food and culture.

The research in each site has two components. The first component is in-home research using my innovative method of video ethnography. The second component of my research is an investigation and analysis of representations of coziness in popular media, including popular books and magazine. These two components are described in detail in the following sections.

Participant Ethnography

First, my method involves in-home ethnographic interviews, which are conducted as a collaborative effort between researcher and participant. I was able to develop this method while working as an intern for Intel Corporation's Domestic Designs and Technologies research group. A paper I presented at the 2008 Ethnographic Praxis in Industry Conference summarizes my experience studying the concept of *hygge* by using this method in eleven households in Denmark (Bean 2008). There, I recruited eleven households using a snowball sample facilitated by a letter of introduction distributed via email. I focused my research on childless, upper-middle class households, so that my findings could compliment other work on the role of *hygge* in family life (Trolle Linnet, 2010; Winther, 2006). I have applied this method for interviews of six households in and around Portland, Oregon, to develop a comparative set of data. Likewise, American participants were selected from a snowball sample. All participants were middle or upper-middle class. Most participants worked professionally outside the home in research, consulting, education, health care, or in other formal professions. To be selected for inclusion in the study, participants had to recently have moved house, to have made a significant renovation to their home (loosely defined as any project more involved than painting or other changes in decor), or both. All participants in the Danish group identified themselves as Danish, except for one participant (Chris, below), who is half American and half Danish. All participants in the American group identified themselves as American, except for one participant (Frederick, below), who is Danish by birth and whose work for an international Danish shipping firm sent him early in his

career to the US, which is where he met his wife. Participants were clustered into two groups: those about age 30, and those about age 70. Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants.

Here is how the method worked: I explained, in vague terms, that my task was to document the home, and I asked the participant to help me in this task by choosing a video camcorder or a digital SLR camera. They picked up one device, I picked up the other, and we set off on a tour around their home. I found this method very effective for quickly establishing rapport. Giving the participant direct control over the creation of a representation of their home helped to level the power differential between researcher and participant. Some participants needed a bit of encouragement, but others spoke and directed the cameras so quickly that I could hardly fit a word in. Where needed, I guided the participants so that we spent time in the areas inside and outside their home that they considered part of their domestic space. The process resulted in a series of pictures and a video recording. Among other things, the video camera captured the discussions about which objects are chosen for pictures – and it recorded those objects in the context of the rest of the home. I came back for a follow-up visit, where we discussed the concept of coziness in more detail, and I asked the participants to complete a cognitive mapping exercise to create a drawn representation of the home as an additional technique of data collection. First participants were asked to draw a map or floorplan of their home, and then, with different colors, they were asked to mark their path through the house on a “regular day” in green, areas of limited access in blue, areas associated with conflict in red, and areas associated with coziness or *hygge* in pink. Participants were not given any instructions for graphic coding other than the color. At the conclusion of this exercise, participants were asked to photograph the areas of their home they associated with coziness or *hygge*.

Representations of Coziness in Popular Media

The ethnographic data is complemented by an investigation of how coziness is represented in popular culture. Whereas the ethnographic research aims to understand how people experience coziness and *hygge* in American and Danish homes, this component of the research is concerned with cultural representations in popular media.

I decided to study the Danish magazine *Bo Bedre* after noticing it in nearly all of the homes I studied in the Intel project. To understand representations of *hygge*, I plan to analyze data I have collected from the Danish home design magazine *Bo Bedre*. The metaconcept of *hygge* is used throughout *Bo Bedre* in both advertisement and editorial content. In my analysis, I was interested, broadly, in analyzing the kinds of images *hygge* is associated with through time. I was also curious about the spatial arrangements depicted in representations of *hygge*. The homes *Bo Bedre* features are usually located in Denmark by Danish people, and homes elsewhere are typically presented as bringing a Danish sensibility to another place. This feeling of a specifically Danish kind of place is remarkably consistent through time, even as fashions changed. “Read old issues of *Bo*

Bedre,” wrote Danish scholar Ida Winther, “and one feels like a time traveler” (Winther 2006).

After conducting the ethnographic research in Portland, I decided that *Sunset* magazine would be the most comparable popular media to study because of its similar reach, its classic status, and its role in the creation of a mythic sense of place (Starr 1998). No US magazine precisely replicates the mix of content in *Bo Bedre*, but it is somewhat similar to *Sunset*. Both create a strong narrative of imagined place. The *Sunset* sense of “living in the American West” compares to the sense of “Danish living at home” invoked by *Bo Bedre*.

A final point of reference is American architect Sarah Susanka’s book *The Not So Big House* (1998) published at the dawn of the housing bubble, which challenged a nascent trend for ever-larger and more showy American homes. I found that it was a frequent and resonant point of reference for the American participants in the research, which is why I have included an analysis of it here.

Prior research on popular magazines offers a store of methods and insights relevant to this project. Researchers in marketing have studied the meaning of visual representations in advertisements (Belk and Pollay, 1985). Others have looked at the practice and meaning behind representations of cleaning in British *Good Housekeeping* (Martens and Scott, 2005). *Bo Bedre* has also been studied before by marketing researchers, who looked at the differences in how three Danish brothers attributed meaning to advertisements (Mick and Buhl, 1992). Environmental researcher Maj-Britt Quitzau made extensive use of representations and discussion of bathrooms in *Bo Bedre* to analyze how trends for larger and more luxurious bathrooms function as a barrier to sustainable practices (Quitzau & Røpke, 2009). Anthropologist Gertrud Øllgaard used representations in *Bo Bedre* to support her brilliant accounting of how Piet Hein’s superelliptical table became a visual symbol of “Danishness” (1999).

The method I used for narrative analysis merges elements of the methods used by these researchers. Following the analysis of home magazines in the US (Belk and Pollay, 1985) and UK (Martens and Scott, 2005), my sample consisted of all content, both advertising and editorial, cover to cover, in every issue of *Bo Bedre* published in 1966, 1971, 1976, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, and 2006. With the assistance of a digital camera and computer database program (DevonThink Pro) I recorded each instance of the word *hygge* or *hyggelig* and analyzed the images and narrative associated with their use. Among other things, I compared whether and how the meaning of *hygge* changed over time.

An analysis of the concept of coziness as it appears in *Sunset* magazine follows. I did an online search of recent *Sunset* magazine content that contained the words “cozy” or “coziness.” I coded the resulting 212 articles according to which of McCracken’s eight principles of homeyness each engaged. This analysis identified some of the narrative strategies *Sunset* employs to communicate the principle of coziness, and also illuminates key differences between coziness and homeyness. Notable among these is that coziness

is more often used in *Sunset* in articles in the food, travel, or garden categories than it is in articles about home.

The findings from the research are presented in the following section as follows. From the set of interviews I conducted, I have selected four pairs of participants, each consisting of one American household and one Danish household. This selection represents half of the households that participated in the study. The section that immediately follows this one contains a brief overview of each of these households and the reason for inclusion. Data from the remaining eight interviews is introduced in the discussion section when it is useful to illustrate common themes.

Following the discussion of the interviews are sections dealing with the representation of *hygge* and coziness in popular media. First, I present the study of *Bo Bedre* and discuss the three regimes of *hygge* I identified. Second, I move on to Susanka's book *The Not So Big House*. In this section, I discuss the narrative strategies used to communicate the idea of coziness, the spatial configurations associated with coziness, and summarize an interview I conducted with Susanka. Last, I present a study of content from *Sunset* magazine.

I start with the interviews that are likely to challenge the portrayal of coziness as a feminine domain of cushions and lace. Rob, who lives in Portland, and Per, who lives in Copenhagen, are both young, heterosexual men who live in gentrifying, working-class areas of their corresponding cities. Rob lives with his wife, but stereotypical gender roles are inverted. He works as a freelance photographer and is more frequently at home, and it fell to him to furnish the home. Per, who is single, has a long commute to his job. At the time I interviewed him, had just taken over a friend's flat in Copenhagen. Neither Rob nor Per are particularly attached to the particular home they are living in at the time of the research or the bulk of their possessions.

From this challenge, I swing back to the pair of participants who might best embody stereotypes. Americans Matt and Dora are a spry couple in their early 70's who are in the midst of a considerable building project. They have just finished building their home in a scenic, semi-rural area about an hour's drive from Portland, and Matt is completing work on a shop a few hundred feet away, the size of which rivals their home. It is large for a good reason: Matt is an avid collector and restorer of garden tractors. Poul and Karen, their Danish counterparts, live a couple hours' train ride from Copenhagen in a sleepy coastal town. Their house that is relatively large by Danish standards. Poul is also a hobbyist, though his passion is computers, and his shop is simply one of the bedrooms, backed up with additional storage space in the basement. Both couples spend a fair amount of time away from home visiting their children, who live far away.

The third pair of participants are two young couples whose use of space shows how they simultaneously engage individualistic and joint identity projects. Al and Peg — a fun-loving couple with no kids, two dogs, and a cat — have recently moved into a large house in a historically working-class neighborhood in Portland. They are at the

beginning of what looks to be a long remodeling project, though their work so far has mostly focused on addressing plumbing leaks and obvious electrical hazards resulting from a previous illicit use of the house. Al and Peg, who like to entertain, take great care to eliminate obvious markers of status from their house so that their guests will not feel intimidated or “afraid to sit on the sofa.” On the other hand there is Ann. She lives in a leafy Copenhagen neighborhood with her boyfriend Mads, who was not present during the research, in a set of two walk-up apartments that have recently been combined. Ann and Mads have strategies for neutralizing the symbolic content of pieces that might otherwise be perceived as status symbols. And both Ann and Morten and Al and Peg are in the midst of remodeling. They have strong preferences for how the existing space of their home should be reconfigured to fit their identities, relationships, and social practices.

The fourth pair are Chris and Ditte, who live on a houseboat in Copenhagen, and Rebecca and Garth, who have recently moved in to a relatively small, very energy efficient home of their own design in a close-in Portland neighborhood. Both Chris and Ditte and Rebecca and Garth have a very close relationship with their houses, and both couples have sought out and created houses that are distinctly different from most of those on offer. Their choices highlight the qualities of home that are valued within a taste culture that aligns itself with a form of the aesthetic of modernism common among the young, worldly, and upwardly mobile.

Three notes about the following sections: first, participants’ words are represented verbatim. I have noted where my interpretation diverges from what was actually said. Second, a note on format: because the visual data is an integral part of the description, the following pages have a narrow column of text to allow for images to appear in line with the text at the right. Accompanying each section is a selection of photographs generated in the research process. Because I have selected these photographs to compliment the totality of text on the same page they are not captioned or labeled. Third, the cognitive maps that participants drew have been rescaled to fit the page size and restrictions of this format. The shadow around the white space surrounding each drawing represents the edges of the original letter-size sheets given to the participants.

Findings: Ethnographic Interviews

Participant Profiles

Name, age, occupation	Location	Number in Household	Dwelling Type and Approximate Size
PAIR 1			
Rob, early 30's, male, professional photographer	Portland, gentrifying neighborhood	2	Condo 600 ft ² / 56 m ²
Per, mid 20's, male, assembly line engineer	Copenhagen, gentrifying neighborhood	1	Apartment 650 ft ² / 60 m ²
PAIR 2			
Matt, early 70's, male, retired optometrist Dora, late 60's, female, retired librarian	scenic area about 1 hour's drive from Portland	2	House 2800 ft ² / 260 m ² main level and loft, plus 2000 ft ² / 185 m ² conditioned basement plus detached shop & tractor shed
Poul, late 60's, male, retired special education teacher Karin, early 60's, female, retired public program manager	scenic area about 2 hours train ride from Copenhagen	2	House 1900 ft ² / 176 m ² including conditioned basement/shop plus tow-behind camper (caravan)
PAIR 3			
Al, early 30's, male, corporate manager Peg, early 30's, female, corporate manager and grad student	Portland, mixed working/middle class neighborhood	2	House 2700 ft ² / 250 m ² including conditioned basement
Ann, late 20's, female, graduate student; Mads, late 20's, male, corporate manager	Copenhagen, gentrified close-2 in suburb		Co-op Condo 900 ft ² / 85 m ²
PAIR 4			
Tim, male, late 30's, NGO worker. Ditte, female, late 30's, NGO worker	Copenhagen harbor near a gentrifying area	3 plus 3 tenants	Houseboat 1000 ft ² / 93 m ² plus 500 ft ² / 46 m ² apartment (rented out)
Rebecca, female, early 30's, nonprofit administrator. Garth, male, early 30's, self-employed architect	Portland, in a gentrifying neighborhood	2	House 700 ft ² / 65 m ² plus 450 ft ² / 42 m ² unconditioned basement

Other Participants - Denmark

Name, age, occupation	Location	Number in Household	Dwelling Type and Approximate Size
Birgitte, mid 20's, student	Copenhagen, gentrifying former working class neighborhood	1	Co-op Condo 650 ft ² / 60 m ²
Jæger, late 20's, consultant	Copenhagen, gentrified close-3 in suburb	3	Co-op Condo 900 ft ² / 85 m ²
Rikke, late 20's, architecture student	Copenhagen, upscale newly developed area	2	Co-op Condo 900 ft ² / 85 m ²
Trine, late 20's, artist	Copenhagen, gentrifying former working class neighborhood	2	Co-op Condo 1300 ft ² / 120 m ²
Pernille, early 30's, author	Copenhagen, gentrified close-2 in suburb	2	Co-op Condo 800 ft ² / 75 m ²
Mikel, mid 30's, freelancer	Copenhagen, gentrifying former working class neighborhood	3	Co-op Condo 1200 ft ² / 60 m ²
Knud, late 40's, chef	scenic area about 2 hours train ride from Copenhagen	5	House 2200 ft ² / 205 m ² including conditioned basement

Other Participants - US

Name, age, occupation	Location	Number in Household	Dwelling Type and Approximate Size
Stacy, late 20's, graduate student. Mat, early 30's, research consultant.	Portland, gentrifying former working class neighborhood	2	House 2200 ft ² / 205 m ² including conditioned basement
Carolyn, late 60's. Frederick, early 70's, semi-retired manager.	Portland, upper-middle class neighborhood	2	House 4400 ft ² / 410 m ² plus 5 enclosed garage spaces

Pair 1: Rob and Per

Rob

Cognitive Map



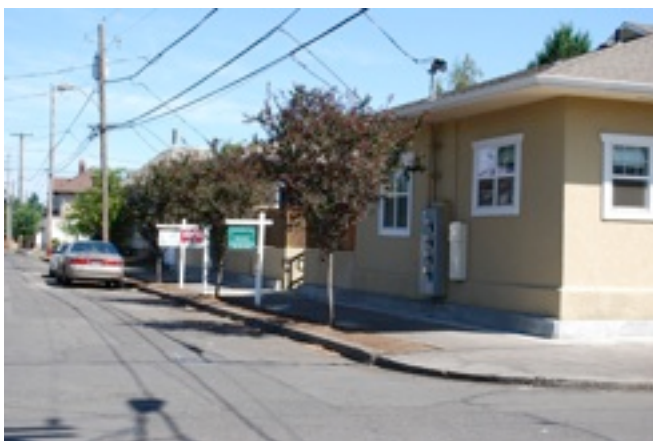
F	furnace
HW	on-demand hot water heater
DW	dishwasher
Arm...	armoire (rather, a high dresser)



Tour

It is late summer when I interview Rob, who is married to the friend of a former co-worker of mine, and it is clear to me upon first sight that he enjoys spending time outdoors. His appearance communicates this; when I show up for both of our appointments, he is dressed in a cotton short sleeve shirt with collar, a pair of shorts, and sandals, which he kicks off the second I am through the door. He is fair but deeply tanned, no small achievement this summer in Portland. The weather has been exceptionally rainy and cool.

Though I had never been there before, it is immediately apparent that the condominium he shares with his wife, Stephanie, an acquaintance of mine from a past job, is small. Most of it is visible from the front entry. It has the spatial qualities of an older home – low ceilings, relatively small windows – although most of the surfaces inside are new. He apologizes for the size immediately and explain two things that reveal his attitude towards it. First, he explains that it is on the market, then catches himself and remembers that he emailed me a link to the listing with photographs. Second, he explains that this was never intended as a permanent home; it was supposed to be a toehold in a quickly appreciating real estate market. He and his wife envisioned themselves in a larger, freestanding house, in a nearby neighborhood known for its stately houses, many of which were built in the 1920's, and relatively stable real



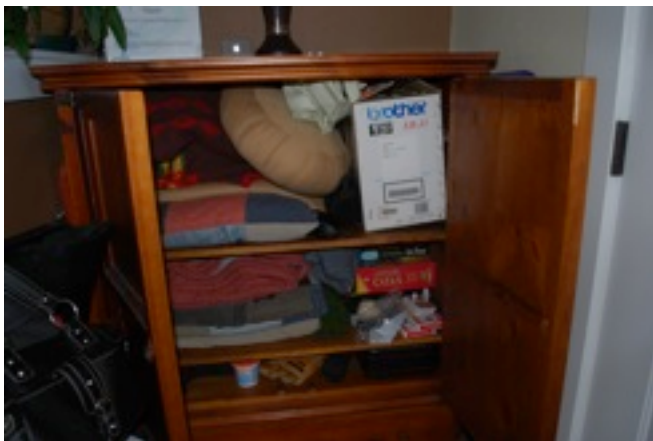
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estate values. This imagined house, he explains quickly now and in detail later in our conversation, would need a considerable amount of work, which they would do themselves.

In light of his description of this imagined dream house, the next thing Rob tells me seems odd: he says, after apologizing for the size of his place, that this is actually the largest place that he and his wife have lived, and that this is the longest they have been in one place. The real estate market has held them down and kept them stuck in this place, which they've put on the market for considerably less than what they paid.

The primary draw was the price — it was one of the few condos close to downtown that they could afford — but particular qualities of the unit held appeal to Rob and Stephanie. He tells me a story about the origins of the condo development, a small complex of about ten one-bedroom units oriented around a courtyard. Rob appreciates that the buildings were salvaged; according to the developer, they were moved to this site years ago by an earlier owner. The developer gutted the buildings entirely, removing all the interior partitions and finishes except for the original wooden floors. In the hollowed-out shells, the developer built remarkably efficient one-bedroom units with the markers of middle class status that still contribute to higher values when a home is appraised. Although there is no front hall closet, there is a vestigial entryway (shown at the top right of Rob's



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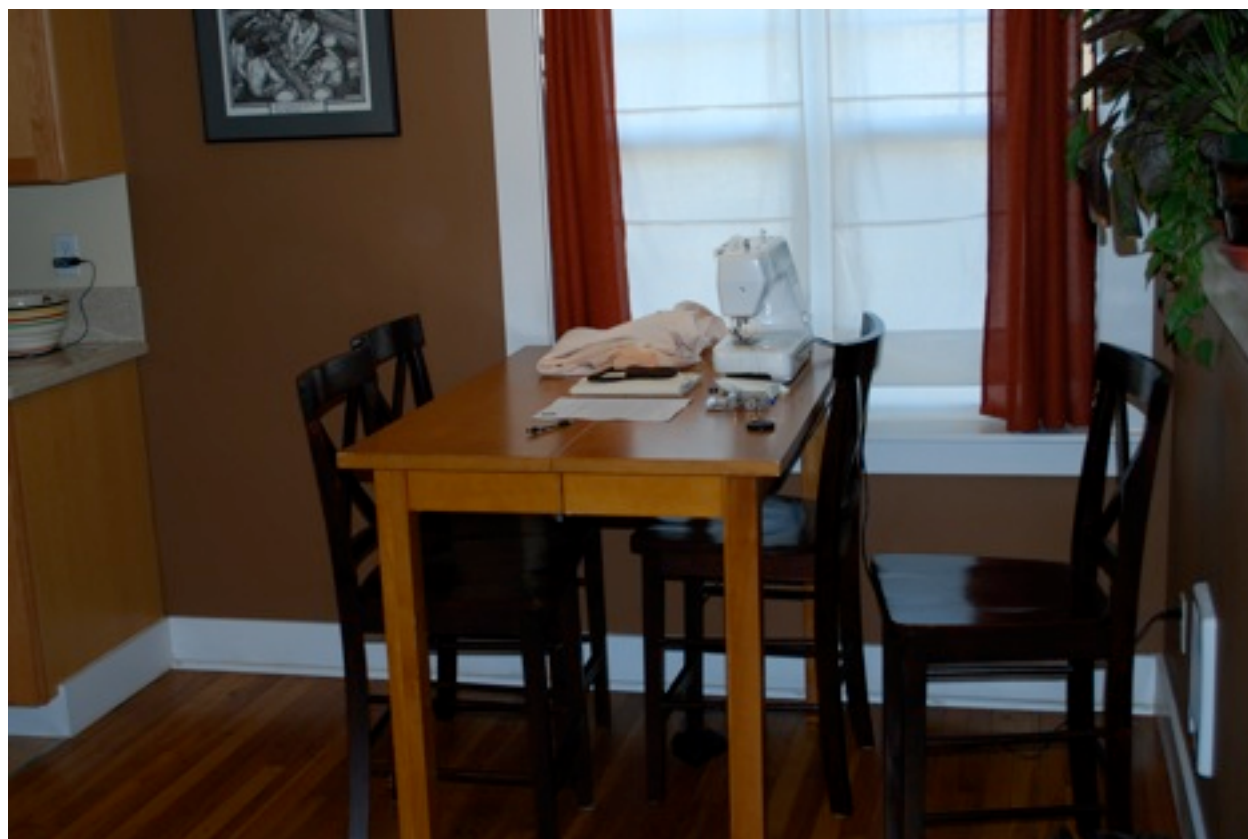


cognitive map) separated from the main living and dining space with a half wall. Between the living and dining space and the bedroom and bathroom, there is a small hallway with a linen closet and a stacked washer/dryer combination. The kitchen has a long run of countertop with a full complement of stainless steel appliances, including a dishwasher and built-in microwave.

Significantly, part of the changes to the floor plan involved moving the front doors of the unit from the street facade to the interior courtyard. The entire complex is enclosed with a tall fence and the only access is through a gate with an intercom. It is like a miniature gated community without the cars, driveways, and garages. Rob describes the neighborhood as transitional, and, while there is a brand new duplex going up across the street, there are also houses within a block or two that haven't been painted in years. There are a few older cars parked down the street with very large, chrome wheels. This is one of Portland's neighborhoods that is historically black and poor, but it is changing due to the forces of gentrification, including projects like the one Rob lives in. Inside Rob and Stephanie's apartment, during both my visits, I noticed that the windows facing the street were all obscured with curtains, but that the blinds facing the interior courtyard were left open.

It is a pleasant place, but I get the distinct feeling that it has been staged by a real estate agent. It is clean, tidy,





and smells distinctly of air freshener, but it also feels like pieces of furniture have gone missing. I ask if changes were made for putting it on the market, and Rob explains that no, no furniture had been moved, but they have been extra conscious of removing clutter, and that they had stashed some stuff that was ordinarily in the closets in a friend's garage nearby. They had cleaned up a bit, however, in preparation for my visit. Stephanie had a sewing project going on for a few weeks, and she put the machine and her work away because of the presence of a guest. I push a bit further in an attempt to sort out my perception that



there is something missing, but as we talk, I begin to realize that Rob and Stephanie's place looks like a staged home because it is not a place they feel is home. It was never intended to be, and they seem resigned to their entrapment by market forces.

So while the casualness with which Rob and Stephanie furnished their condo initially surprised me, it made sense in light of the feeling of temporariness Rob took pains to communicate. Rob made a strategic decision to acquire some of the furniture when Stephanie was out of town because that way they would not have to have long discussions. He

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knows what he likes and is willing to make a quick decision on something that fits a need, while Stephanie's style is to visit every place in town that she can think of and search for the most ideal object. Almost all of the furniture except for the couch and the mattress was acquired on Craigslist and selected according to price and size; the spaces are small enough that much furniture simply will not fit. Ideally, Rob explains, he prefers furniture made of solid wood, and this holds true for everything in the condo; there is not a piece of veneered or painted chipboard to be seen. There is also a remarkably uniform aesthetic. They get a lot of compliments on the bookshelf, which enjoys a prominent position across from the front door. It is vaguely Japanese in style, with heavy shelves and angled vertical supports that are both about twice as thick as usual. It is finished, like most of the furniture, with a dark stain. A coffee table sits in front of the sofa, with two small tables on each side holding magazines and games. The dining table and chairs — a compact bar-height unit chosen on Craigslist because it fit the space — is also a dark color. An antique dresser in the bedroom was inherited from Stephanie's grandmother, and the secretary is a similar color. It is positioned on a bit of wall between the living room and dining room and near the hallway; it serves as a work surface for Stephanie. This was the last thing Rob drew on the map of his house, and



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only after I gestured to it directly. He did not photograph it.

It takes a bit of prodding to get Rob to show me around the condo complex. When he does, we head straight for the storage unit. It is located at the opposite corner of the complex. There are only four storage units, he explains, and each unit that doesn't have a private yard and patio is assigned one. He unlocks the door to reveal a neatly ordered collection of tools and camping supplies, neither of which get as much use as he'd like. We walk down a sidewalk on the periphery of the complex and Rob shows me several composting units. He worked on the HOA board to get these installed. He opens one to show me how effectively it deals with the food waste generated by 10 units – it's been here for three years and is only halfway full – and expresses frustration when he sees that one of his neighbors has placed a small piece of tree branch in the bin. Explaining that it will take too long to decompose, he picks it out of the bin, and we move on to a covered waste area measuring about 10' x 10' that abuts the street. Several recycling bins and dumpsters line the walls, and someone has shoved a folding bookcase into the dumpster. This catches Rob's attention; he does not like that it has been thrown away, but he leaves it there after putting the tree branch in the yard waste bin.



When I press him further, he suggests we look at a copy of Sarah Susanka's *Not So Big House*. His house

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is not terribly cozy, he says, but these spaces, he explains as he flipping through the book, are. There are elements made of wood, window seats, and nooks, which he describes as places to curl up with a book. These are elements that his next house will have already, or that he will create or recreate.



Cozy

Rob is not interested in investing the spaces in his home with meaning; rather, he is more attached to objects. This becomes particularly clear when I get to the part of the interview where I explicitly ask about coziness, and the first thing to come to mind are objects. The bed and the couch are the two primary places; they are the places where he and Stephanie can get close and have different kinds of conversations than they do over the dining table. They often enjoy watching movies together using the Netflix movie rental service on their laptop, and Rob also uses the laptop

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with the Pandora internet radio service during the day when he is at home to create a feeling of atmosphere.

That the couch would be a place of coziness to Rob is certainly related to the fact that he enjoys spending time there and being close to Stephanie, but it is significant also that this is one of the few pieces of furniture that was shopped for together and purchased upon mutual agreement. It was also one of the first pieces they bought. It is a fairly high backed, padded couch that is neither totally contemporary or totally traditional. Echoing Miller's description of middleness (2010), Rob describes the sensory experience offered by this couch as occupying a middle ground: it is not too soft, not too hard. Likewise, Rob explains that the leather on the couch is neither the buttery-soft, but fast-wearing, nor the rock-hard, but durable leather "like in a doctor's office waiting room." He also likes that it is variegated in color, varying between tan and dark brown. He believes that this quality will make the couch more attractive as it ages and shows wear. Presumably the attractive wear will also be a reminder of the cozy time spent watching movies with Stephanie.

The bed is another site of coziness, in part because it also facilitates physical closeness between Rob and Stephanie; there's a bit too much, closeness, in fact, because the design of the room is such that the only possible place for the bed is for it to be pushed into a corner of the room with the head end up against windows that face out



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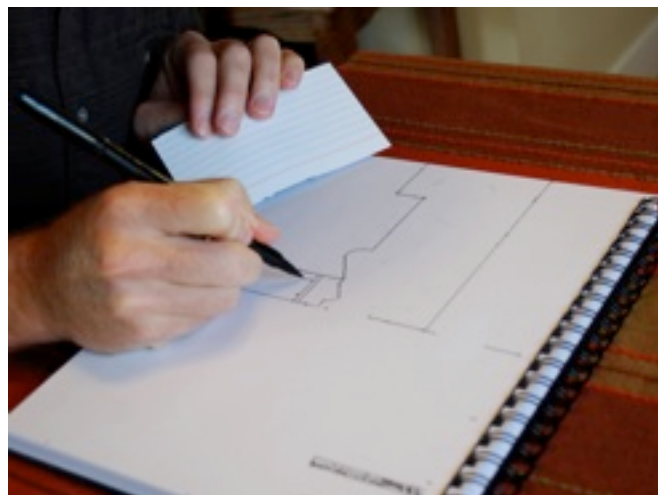


to the street. This creates access problems, but it is the windows at the head that are the larger problem. They are new and relatively efficient, so there is not a problem with cold or drafts. Instead, it is the proximity to the outside itself that is the problem. Their unit occupies the corner of the condo complex that fronts two streets, so the sidewalk is immediately outside their bedroom window. Part of this is an issue with noise — one neighbor is especially resented for having loud parties. But the larger problem seems to be that the relationship between the bed and the windows prevents Rob from feeling that there is enough enclosure. Their treatment of the windows with multiple layers of curtains and blinds (here shown open only because Rob adjusted them to allow more natural light for the photograph) can be seen as an attempt to add thickness to the exterior wall of the house, a thickness that serves to reinforce their sense of enclosure and insulation from the world outside, and in particular, the neighborhood, which is not one in which Rob really feels at home.

Rob's other associations with coziness are linked to the symbolic meanings he attributes to particular materials, especially wood, and to the way that the mechanical systems in the house support his bathing practices. Both of these associations are linked to the world "warmth."

Technical elements of the house that they perceive as energy efficient — the setback thermostat, new windows,

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insulation, and in particular the on-demand water heater were highly salient when Rob and Stephanie were considering buying the place (“that was a real selling point,” he said.) Of these things the on-demand water heater has a special place. It was one of the first things Rob mentioned when he showed me around his condo on my first visit. Rob talked about the water heater when he was taking his fourth photograph, a shot of the thermostat, and discussing its energy saving qualities led to a mention of the water heater. Likewise the on-demand water heater was one of the first features he placed on the cognitive map after drawing the walls. This is important because it provides a relatively endless source of hot water for the shower. Rob associates the warmth of taking a shower, which he does at least once a day, with relaxation and with coziness. Given his interest in energy efficiency it is understandable that the on-demand water heater would help to assuage any guilt he might feel for his daily indulgence in warmth.



Allied with literal warmth is a metaphorical warmth that Rob relates to the history of the apartment. In much the same way that he looks forward to the couch showing wear, he appreciates that these wood floors, which are original to the building, show some wear from the previous occupants. It should be pointed out that the floors are neither derelict or dirty; they are clean, shiny, and have been refinished with care. But whereas,

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say, a dark stain would have camouflaged the scratches, water damage, and gaps that others might have seen as “flaws,” these floors have been treated only with a clear finish. Thus warmth is connected to the sense of history that Rob values and furthermore to a feeling of authenticity that is bound up with a lack of pretense. For this same reason he eschews most furniture from IKEA. This is telling because, especially for a couple who profess to not to be particularly interested in material objects, one trip to IKEA would have saved considerable time and probably cost about as much as they have invested in the furniture they obtained by searching Craigslist. The pieces from IKEA that have been allowed into their apartment reveal a system of meaning that puts value in particular materials.

When I reviewed the photographs from my first visit, I did not notice any furniture from IKEA, so on this visit, I ask, and Rob informs me that there is indeed an IKEA chair in the living room. I am surprised that I missed it; it is the iconic POÄNG chair finished in the same medium brown color as the rest of their wood furniture. Rob is quick to point out that, unlike a lot of the “cheap plastic crap” that IKEA sells, this chair is made, like the other furniture in his home, of solid wood. Also, he explains, it has a certain status as a design classic, and because of his experience as a carpenter he appreciates that. They spent extra money for the organic cotton cover.



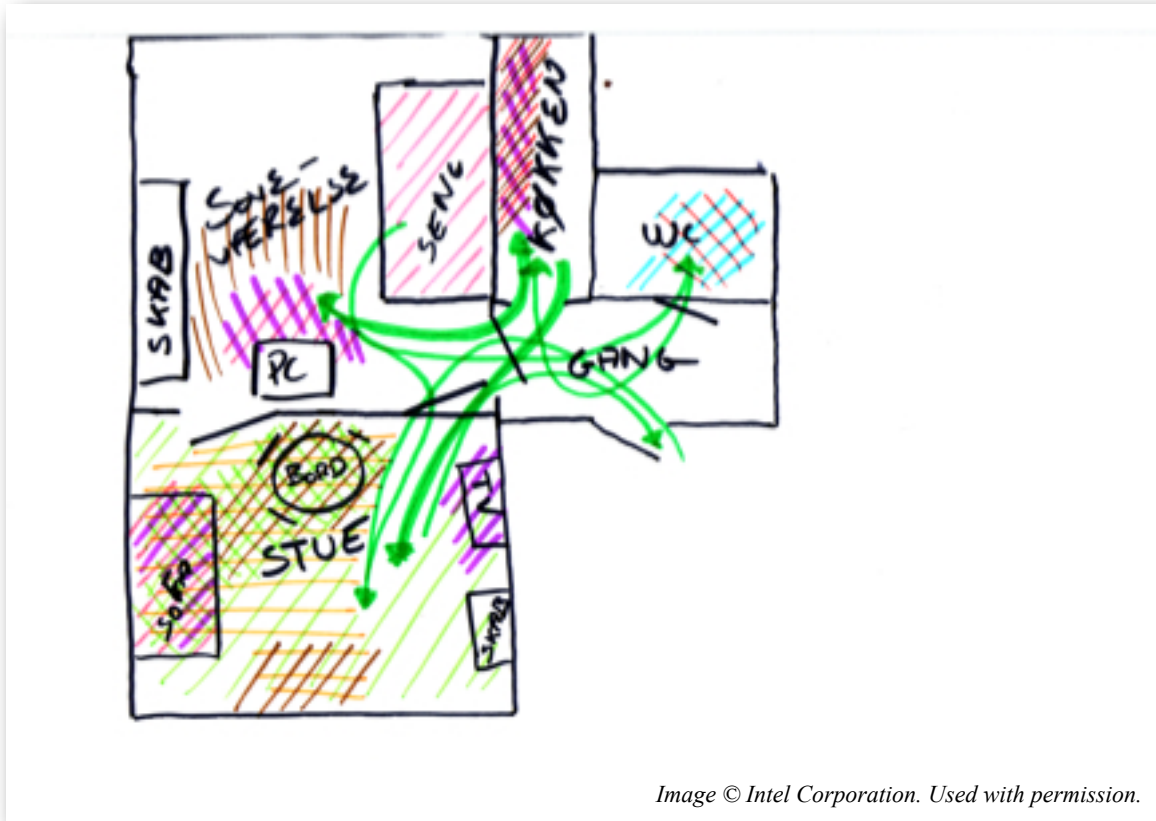
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Very little else in the condo, however, is from IKEA: just some café curtains in the window over the dining table and a black wrought iron spice rack over the stove. The curtains were bought out of expediency; Stephanie was going to sew a set but she has not gotten around to it yet. The black wrought iron rail and spice rack, though, while it is not a design classic, has a certain material similarity to the chair. It is “honest” in the modernist sense about its materials: it is not trying to look like something it is not. It is also, like the bentwood chair, a product whose manufacture involves some amount of hand labor.

Per

Cognitive Map



soveværelse
 seng
 PC
 skab
 sofa
 bord
 stue
 køkken
 WC
 gang

bedroom (lit. sleeping room)
 bed
 computer desk
 cabinet
 sofa/couch (actually a daybed)
 table
 living room (not an exact translation)
 kitchen
 bathroom
 hall



Tour

Per is the 30 year old brother of an academic acquaintance. He works as a process engineer on a production line in a factory that makes electrical fittings. His apartment is on the outskirts of Copenhagen in a neighborhood next to an industrial area. I have not been to this area before, but I recognize it from trips into and out of Copenhagen on the intercity train. His apartment is on the fifth floor of a five-story walk-up apartment building of a type that is commonplace in Copenhagen. The building fronts the street and sits immediately next to the building next to it. The flats it contains are separated by stairwells that span the depth of the building. Each stairwell is itself subdivided into two parts, one accessed from the street side of the building and a steeper, winding set of stairs leading from the kitchen of each apartment to the rear service courtyard. The front stairs switch back once between every floor. Every other landing, therefore, has a pair of doors. Usually these doors lead to two separate apartments, but recent legislation means that many of these apartments are being combined.

This is not the case with Per's apartment. It is a very typical small apartment — he estimates about 65 square meters, or about 700 square feet in layout. He shows me in, ushering me through the small hallway to the main room where there is a dining table and sofa. He disappears for a moment and returns with a pot of

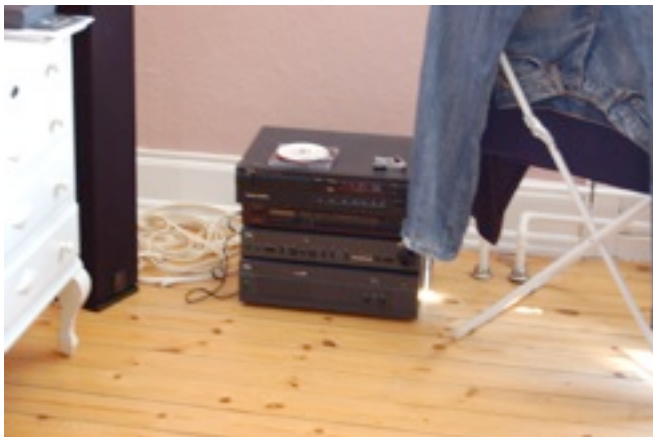


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coffee and two cups. At a glance, the apartment appears considerably less designed than others I visited in Copenhagen, and it also stands out because the walls are not the warm white favored by most of my other Danish participants, but rather a shade of mauve in the living room.

Per has recently moved into the apartment; it is a sublet from a friend of a friend. This apartment is a provisional space for him — he is here while he figures out what he wants to do and where he wants to be. But he is also quite casual, and, while the apartment is clean and tidy, it does not appear that he has gone to great lengths to prepare for my arrival.

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Clothes are drying by an open window. He has placed his belongings around the perimeter of the room. They consist of a component stereo set, several guitars, and a rowing machine.

We stand by the window in the living room and talk. Per explains that this neighborhood used to be working class people and unemployed people, but now it's "all kinds of people" and "quite a lot of kids." About 50% in the neighborhood are "foreign," Per estimates, and most of the Danish residents are older. Ownership structures have been changing so that it is now possible to own, rather than rent, a flat in the neighborhood.

The municipality has invested quite a bit of money in this neighborhood, converting one part of a previously run-down block into a "pedestrianized" area. Per tells me that a park in the neighborhood is quite pleasant, even though it is frequented by people "who drink a lot of beer."⁴ The neighborhood compares favorably with his previous neighborhood, Nørrebro, which has a similar social dynamic, but here "people are a bit more open in the street... there's a lot life in the streets."

⁴ Danish urban planner Søren Møller Christensen refers to this social group as "beer drinkers" and notes that there are several subgroups therein. They are a common sight in neighborhoods in Copenhagen which are not yet completely gentrified. Beer drinkers are not generally perceived as a problem but their use of and presence in urban space coupled with a lack of available bathroom facilities often conflicts with the kinds of activities (eating, relaxing, exercising a dog) for which middle class people use urban space.

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We walk from the living room into the room Per uses as a bedroom. This is where he keeps his computer. Because it is used for recording and processing music, this space becomes a social area when he has friends over. Interestingly Per does not photograph the bed or anything on that side of the room. We walk over to the window in this room and look out on a large, green space.

The “back yard” of this apartment building Per describes as “fairly decent.” Because the buildings abut one another all around the entire block of apartments — measuring about 150 feet by 300 feet — it is possible to provide a semi-private park that is accessible (at least in theory) only to the residents of the surrounding buildings. In the courtyard are sheds for bicycle parking, places to sit, children’s playgrounds, and a soccer field. There is also a shared laundry facility in the basement of one of the buildings. It is accessed by going through the courtyard. The solid masonry construction of the buildings and the triple-insulated, wood framed windows that are required by strict Danish energy codes limit the amount of sound intrusion from activities in courtyard. Per is a musician — he was in a band when he was younger, but now he’s more of a hobbyist. This is apparent from the tangle of wires emanating from his computer, which is located in his bedroom. Sometimes friends come over to play together, but other times they will take the whole



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setup to a summer cottage where they can really turn up the volume.

Most of his friends live in similar apartments, perhaps ones that are a bit smaller, and they usually live together as a couple. Per is satisfied with the size of his apartment, but he would prefer to live “out in the countryside somewhere,” rather than in an apartment block. He couches this in terms of acoustic considerations and the feeling of guilt – he would like to live somewhere where it would not annoy the neighbors if he wants to play guitar in the middle of the night, and where noise coming from others would not annoy him. Despite this, he acknowledges that the norm is for neighbors to come over and ask directly if he is making too much noise. This is “a nice way, rather than calling the police or something like that – why call the police when you could just ask them nicely to turn it down?”

Throughout our conversations, Per focuses on the experiences he has inside the apartment rather than on the quality of space, which he finds it to be quite ordinary and unremarkable. Nor does he dwell on the contents of the apartment. Most of the furnishings and a good amount of the kitchenwares and so on, of course, is not his, so, in a way, Per is living in a storage unit filled with someone else’s belongings. He has not made an attempt to reorganize the apartment or move things around, instead fitting his belonging in wherever there is space. He’s happy with this nomadic lifestyle and has made other consumption

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choices accordingly. He owns a car, for example, which is somewhat unusual for a person of his age living in Copenhagen, partially for economic – cars are heavily taxed and cost about four times as much as they do in the US – and he uses the car to get back and forth to work every day. This is unusual; most people use public transportation or bicycle to commute to work, and the car is a means of getting away on the weekend or going shopping at big box stores in the suburbs. Everything Per owns fits in the car, though not all at once, making moving a relatively simple task, and, because he has the car, he can easily

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get to his job in an outlying city from
anywhere in Copenhagen.

Hygge

It's a really difficult thing to describe. *Hygge* is more like – kind of like – it's a bit like music. If you play a note on the guitar, one note is just a note. If you play two notes, it's just; it could be just two notes. But when you put them together and the sum of the two is more than just two it's kind of more like a symphony so it's kind of brings something more to it. Then that's kind of *hyggelig*. It – it's not – one plus one isn't two; it's kind of like four or five; kind of builds up to something bigger.

Per's description of *hygge* is both poetic and made specific to his individual circumstance. As is clear from the way he lives in his (borrowed) home, domestic space and objects are not shot through with particular meaning to Per. Rather, it is the activities in domestic space, such as playing music, that matter. He is aware of and engages in active resistance to the marketplace messages that dictate otherwise. For example, he says:

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People have started spending time and money on decorating their homes... people are so influenced by TV, it's ridiculous. All of a sudden they start showing shows on five different channels about how to do your garden... and everybody does their garden. People change their kitchen every five years and spend \$20,000 on a new one and then they throw it away, and it's very strange to me. But if you go to Southern Europe, people spend their money on good food.

Again, for Per the emphasis should be on activity, not on the symbolic qualities of space. Thus when I ask Per to take photographs of places in his apartment that he thinks of as being *hygge*, he takes images of rooms and labels them with description of the types of activity that would be required to render *hygge*.

Some of the objects Per photographs can be understood in terms of a stage set (Sandberg 2007): the confined area in the kitchen, the small round table and armless chairs, elements of Friedman Hansen's earlier analysis of *hygge*. But one photo Per



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snaps, a windowsill, which he labels “having a coffee/beer and cigarette with friends,” takes advantage of both the ability of the material qualities of space to organize human behavior and the chemical properties of certain objects to affect behavior. Here *hygge* is associated not only with shared indulgence and a willing alteration of mental state (Borish 1989), but with a particular position in space, one that reinforces the boundary between inside and outside, and therefore that references the idea of interiority that is strongly related to *hygge* (Trolle Linnet 2010).

This idea can be extended to a state of being. As Per explains, “if you sit by the ocean, you have water and you have yourself. And then it kind of becomes one, and it moves into one with the water, or the sunset, or something like that — it becomes more than a sun that shines. You get a feeling out of it. It builds up to something more than a person sitting on a rock and the sun rising. It becomes a situation where you have the feel good factor...”

This way of describing *hygge* invokes an image escape and unifying transformation, and indeed, *hygge* is a quality that can transform a space that is not *hyggelig* into one that is. Per describes his bedroom, where he plays music with friends, this way: “the room itself isn’t very *hyggelig*; it’s very basic, just whatever was there. But if we gather around and start playing music there then all of a sudden it becomes quite cozy and nice.”

Pair 1: Doing Coziness and *Hygge*

Per and Rob exhibit a similar lack of emotional connection to the home, but for very different reasons. For Per, this appears to be an intentional strategy. It is a way of avoiding the entanglements of material goods that allows him to focus on the things he enjoys, including long days at work, spending time at vacation houses with friends, and making music. Tellingly, the photographs Per took were not so much of spaces but of the objects associated with these activities: the guitars, computers, desks, and things on a window ledge that facilitate certain desired states of being. Thus *hygge* is distributed in the space of his apartment through practices, such as smoking near the windowsill, playing the guitar in the *stue* or *soveværelse*, or bringing a pot of coffee from the kitchen to the table in the *stue* to drink it with a friend. For Per *hygge* does not have particularly material qualities; he has not rearranged the furniture in the apartment to reflect his own idea of *hygge*, nor is he bothered by the unusual lack of white walls. The furniture his acquaintance and landlord left behind and the puce walls do not bother him in the least; he is not, in Miller's terms, possessed by the agency of others as represented in these possessions. By choosing to become a permanent sub-tenant and jumping from apartment to apartment every few months, Per has consciously opted out of having to construct and maintain a universe of meaning for his own home, while the similar layout and culturally standard furnishing of Danish apartments, as noted by Friedman Hansen (1980), makes it likely that he'll find what he needs in whatever apartment comes next, for it almost certainly will have a *stue* with a table and chairs, a couch or daybed, and a separate bedroom.

In contrast, it is not the agency of others that possesses Rob, but rather his own past action of purchasing a condo that he always perceived as temporary and thus undeserving of anything more than cursory improvement. Even though Rob and his wife are now locked out of the real estate market with dim prospects for selling, their furnishings are thin in symbolic value, selected primarily for reasons of cost and accessibility, with a vaguely Arts & Crafts aesthetic code imposed mainly for reasons of convenience. Choosing dark wood furniture is not so much a preference as an efficient way to sift through Craigslist. Valuing IKEA products that bear some mark of hand production or craft — the laminated bentwood strips of the Poang chair or the wrought iron of the spice rack — is a way to limit the overwhelming universe of choices offered by IKEA down to a manageable few that fit in for reasons that are not so much visual as narrative.

When it comes to the question of *hygge* and coziness, Per and Rob share an preference towards describing it in terms of practice. The way Per labeled the photographs of the empty spaces he photographed to represent *hygge* makes this clear. The kitchen is *hygge* only when a couple friends chat in it; the table needs people to "have a nice meal," the window ledge needs coffee or beer and cigarettes and friends. For Rob particular places in the house — the bed and the couch — are cozy, especially when he's spending time with Stephanie — but, unlike Per, Rob's focus on the rest of

the house is on either his perception of experience, such as taking a warm shower, or on the visual material qualities of distinct material objects: the IKEA chair, the wood floor, the particular quality of leather on the sofa. Likewise, it is clear from our discussion that Rob primarily associates proximity to others, and in particular his wife Stephanie, with the idea of coziness. A second order association, almost as important, is his perception of warmth. But Rob also maps particular visual qualities to coziness, such as the worn wood floor, the couch leather that will age attractively, and the craft of the IKEA chair and spice rack. These visual qualities are ones he associates with his environmental ethos — durability and craft are tantamount — and that are also present in the Susanka book, which represents the coziness his current home lacks.

This vacuum of coziness, compounded by the importance of durability and surroundings that reflect age by registering marks of wear in a way Rob finds to be attractive, explain why Rob feels so alienated from his home. Furthermore, even though elements of the home, such as the wood floor, have the capacity to enter into this scheme of meaning, Rob and Stephanie's decision to sell this condo has resulted in the divestment of what little meaning the home did hold. Compounding the problem is that they feel the condo is too small to entertain friends, which of course limits the amount of togetherness that can be experienced in the house. Thus, whereas for Per simply occupying a setting where *hygge* can be experienced — and that means most any apartment in Copenhagen — for Rob, it is comparatively more difficult to experience coziness. To communicate the fullness of the concept requires that both engage with representation and metaphor, such as Per's example of playing a guitar versus making music. Likewise, this is not only why Rob showed me the Susanka book, but also why he had such a carefully thought out explanation of the stuff in his house — the stuff that he professed not to care about, and which will only be temporary, despite his interest in durability.

Pair 2: Matt and Dora, Poul and Karen

Matt and Dora are the parents of former neighbors. They've recently built a house on about two acres of land with a sweeping view of green hills in a semi-rural area outside of Portland in the Columbia Gorge. Matt is in his 70's and Dora is a bit younger. Both are retired. Matt worked for the US government and after that as an optometrist. Dora worked as a librarian. They've been together for most of their adult lives, and they have two grown children who live in distant states. This is the second house Matt and Dora have built. The previous house was in a suburban area closer to Portland.

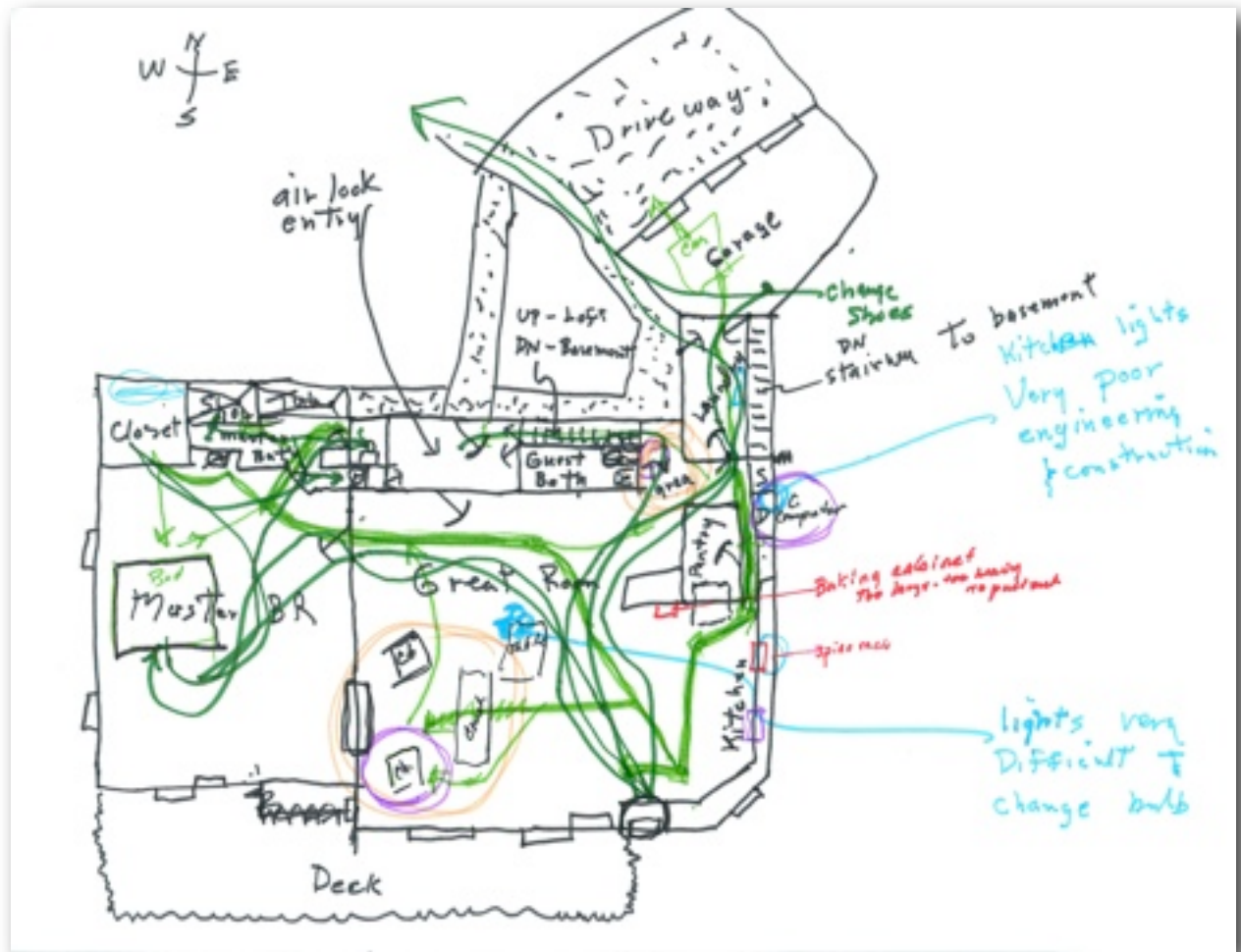
Matt and Dora worked for the foreign service and lived in Germany for years before they started a family. They still have a network of friends in Germany. They have hosted German friends, a family of four, for the past two summers, and the unusual layout of their house was inspired by another connection in Germany, a friend who happens to be a paraplegic.

More than a third of the bulk of the house, which they estimate to be about 4800 square feet, is accounted for by the doubling of the floor plan of the main floor in the basement of the house.

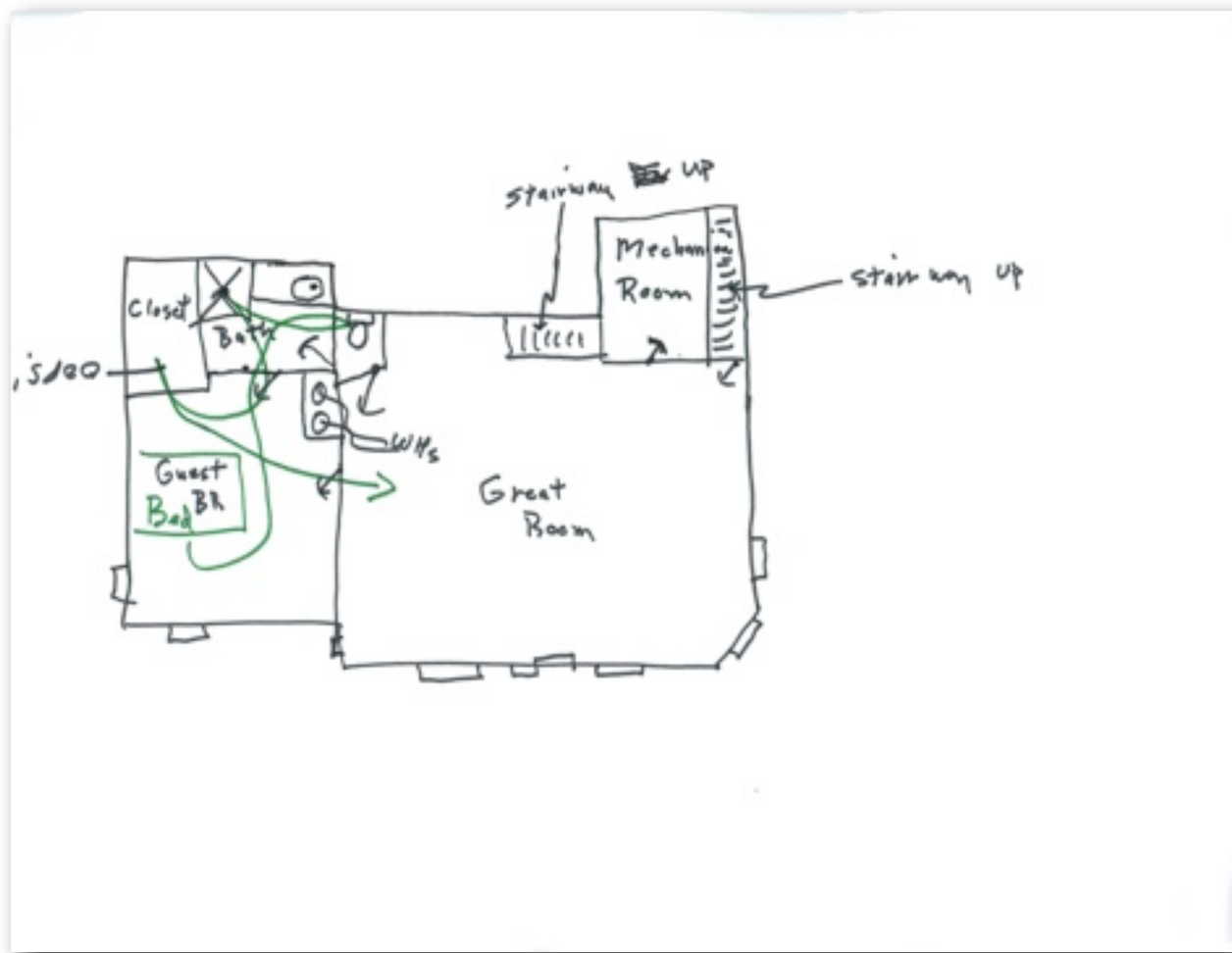
Poul and Karin live in a coastal town that is about an hour and a half's drive from Copenhagen. Karin, who is 61, is the mother of an acquaintance. She is recently retired and worked most recently in a managerial role in county government. Poul, a few years older, is her second husband. He had a career as a special education teacher and also had a computer business for the past ten years, which is now officially closed because he has retired and is taking a pension, although he still does favors for friends and family.

Poul and Karin's house is typical of many Danish single-family houses. On the main floor it has a large living room with two separate sitting areas, one focused around the television and the other around a coffee table with a lamp overhead. This room also contains a dining table. Elsewhere on this floor is an office, a half bathroom, and a kitchen that can be closed off from the other spaces with a door. Upstairs are bedrooms and bathrooms; downstairs in a half-basement is mechanical equipment, storage, and shop space. It sits in the front of a lot that is about a quarter of an acre. The backyard is fully enclosed with a fence and hedges.

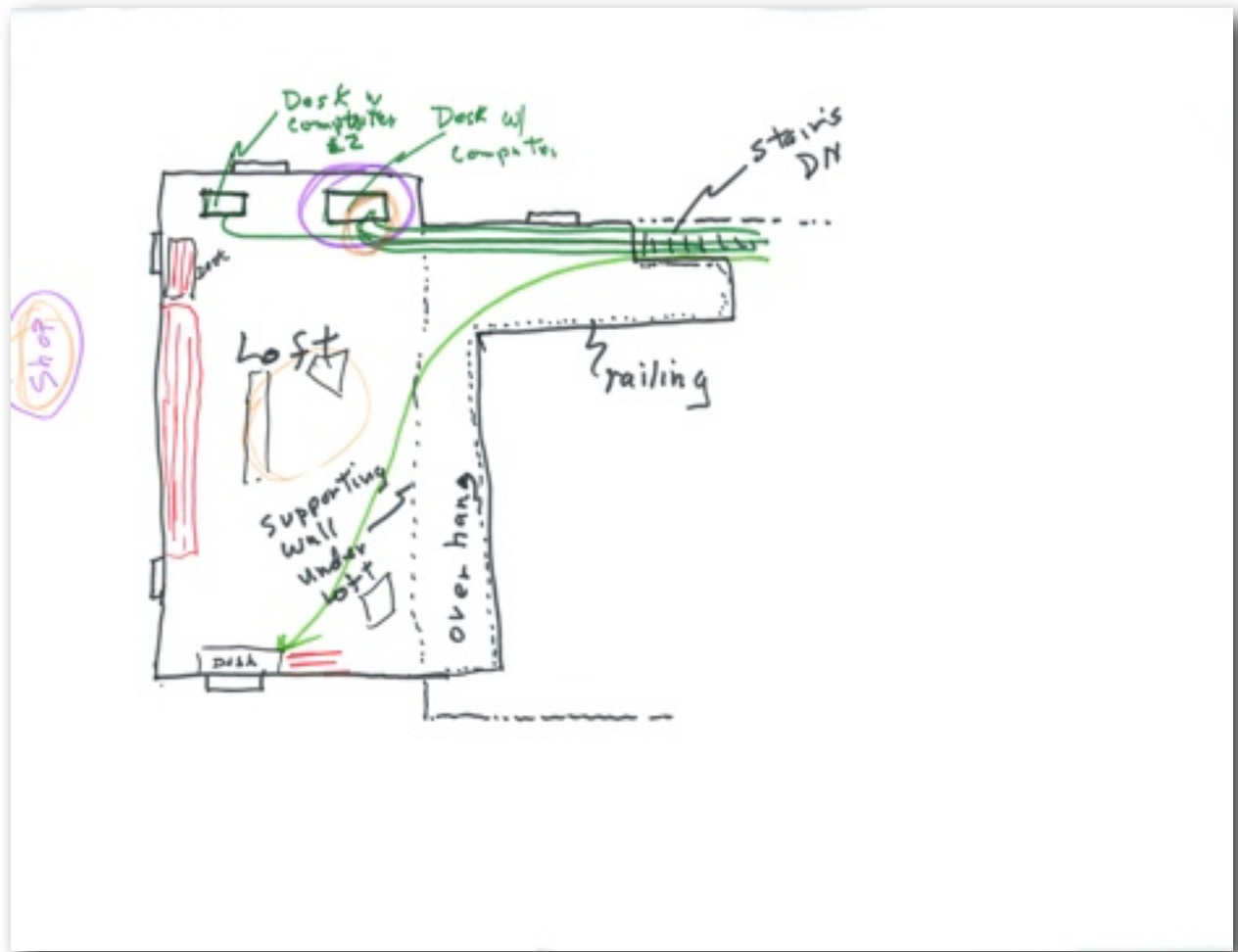
Matt and Dora
Cognitive Maps



Main floor



Basement



Loft



Matt and Dora

Tour

I walk up to the front door and knock. It's a hollow fiberglass door, the type that is energy efficient, and it has been stained to look like wood, but the sound of the knock instantly betrays its construction. I hear a man's voice from inside the house announce "he's here," and a few seconds later the front door glides open, the weatherstripping whooshing across the tile floor.

I am welcomed inside the house. We pass through an entry and go through another door, which has been left open, and sit down at a small table near the kitchen. As I explain the research, it becomes clear that Matt forgot to tell Dora until shortly before my visit that I was coming. It dawned on me that I had only communicated with Matt through email, and, as Dora busied herself neatening a few stacks of paper on the kitchen cabinet behind Matt's chair, I debate whether I should offer to come back at another time. But I had to drive for about an hour to get here, so I decided to wait a few minutes. Dora sat down shortly thereafter with a smile on her face, and I decided to press on.

I explain the research, and it is decided that Dora will take photographs while I operate the video camera and Matt tells the story of the house. We start the tour on the back deck – the sliding glass door leading out to it is immediately next to where we have been sitting – and Dora



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snaps photographs while Matt starts telling the story of the house.

“The reason for buying the property is the view — the view of Mt. Hood — and that I want space to play with my tractors, says Matt, “so that has a lot to do with the design of the house.” Dora chips in, “my sink faces Mt. Hood... and the house is a little bit passive solar.” Matt continues, “yes, this wall faces south. The last house we had was passive solar, much more so than this one. The whole south side was glass. This one we didn’t put as much glass in it because of the type of construction we used, which is ICF construction. With ICF construction you need more space between the windows for structural stability. Before we just had three 2x6’s in between each window.” ICFs are insulated concrete forms — essentially, hollow styrofoam blocks that are stacked up like giant Legos and then filled with concrete. Matt asks me if I know what they are; when I say yes, he nods approvingly.

Matt is familiar with the design and the structure of this house because he designed the entire house himself and built large parts of it. It is quickly clear that durability and permanence are of an importance second only to energy efficiency, but this strongly stated value is only selectively expressed in the material arrangement of the house. Other considerations, such as the view and ideas about practicality and long-term maintenance, took precedence in some places. For example, there are standoffs — brackets tied to the



structure of the house — so that solar panels can be easily installed in the future, although this has not yet happened. He's decided to install the solar panels for electric and hot water vertically, rather than horizontally, even though this means they will operate at less than peak efficiency, because he figures that this way they will function in the winter when they would otherwise be covered with snow. Matt explains that in a typical winter in this area about eight to twelve inches of snow accumulates on the ground.

Despite the focus on energy efficiency, the house looks fairly conventional from the outside. The materials, especially, are typical for this area. The ICF forms have been covered with a typical material for new construction in this area, HardiePlank lap siding, which is a concrete fiber product that is stamped with a woodgrain pattern and painted in a light brown color. The only unconventional detail immediately visible is the corner, which is usually crudely constructed of two abutting pieces of trim with a gap between to allow for expansion and contraction. Instead, Matt has had a piece of powder-coated sheet metal bent to cover the corner. "It holds the paint better," he says, and it provides a better surface for the caulk that seals the edges of the siding. "Same as around the windows," he continues. Similarly, the roof, eaves, and soffits, are completely wrapped in metal. "It's an



entirely enveloped house in metal, concrete, and steel.”

This, however, is a secondary benefit. Matt and Dora are members of a national organization called FireWise. As they explain it this organization educates people who live in fire-prone areas to become more aware of the risk of fire, and this is the driving factor for the material choices on the house. “There’s no wood in the deck, the roof is metal, the house is cement, the siding is cement,” says Dora, who was evacuated three times from her home in Southern California when she was growing up. “[In] the Columbia Gorge, even though we have a lot of rain, we can have fires. We’ve been told that the time is right for another one.” The view of trees begins to look a bit more ominous to me.

While Matt has long been interested in energy efficiency, the decision to build this house out of ICF, which is unusual for this area, came out of a conversation with a friend of his who owned a concrete pumping company and who was a fan of the technology. “A lot of people just do the basement; we did the whole walls, all the way up to the roof.” As he talks, Matt leads us back into the house and to the garage, much to Dora’s dismay. “We’re going back through the front door, right?” she says, with a tone in her voice that indicates this is not really a question.

“I have a three car garage because I have several cars, and I made the garage a little bit longer than most of them, 26 feet instead of 24, because in

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the old garage you couldn't walk around the big pickup," a four door Ford Supercab.

We head outside where Dora is busy moving a metal mesh box the size of a large dog kennel. "This is how you protect your rose bushes in the mountains from deer," she says. Matt asks her why she's moving it and she explains that it's ugly. "I was going to put it in there so it doesn't distract," she says, as she tucks it out of sight around a corner of the garage. Dora takes a few more photographs of the front yard and Matt leads me away to look at the house from the street.



As we're walking he explains that "in this area we have a lot of wind. You have to design for 110 mile an hour winds, and so there's no doors on the east side, there's no holes on the east side — no vents or anything goes through that side of the roof. When the wind blows it all goes up and over the house. I had to look around for a while to find someone who could roll a steel roof that was 44 feet long, and I found someone in Salem [about 2 hours away] who could do it. The ends of the roofing are bent underneath and hooked into a piece of metal that's underneath the eave, so the wind can't tear the roof off. I like that — it worked out well."



Dora catches up with us and asks if she should take a picture despite the glare, but Matt's already off again directing us onward. "Come this way, he says, walking further away from the house."

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Dora snaps the photograph. When we catch up to Matt, I ask him if he's an engineer.

"I'm a optometrist by trade and a hobby construction guy. I designed the whole house."

"With some input from me," Dora interrupts, laughing.

"Yeah, well. The southeast corner of the house is at a forty-five degree angle, so it faces Mount Hood, so that Dora, when she's washing dishes at the sink, she can view Mount Hood."

We continue to circumambulate the house. Matt shows me the well and then we walk up to the deck. "I designed the deck and I didn't want to have a lot of maintenance; I don't like wooden decks outside, so I build this one all out of steel, the railings and the support and everything. I cut it and assembled it here. I have a friend who has a machine shop... I set the main beam on some big tall sawhorses, took the backhoe and set the beam — a big forty foot steel beam — up on them. Then I cut the posts to fit. Each one is different a little bit, and originally it was designed for two decks, but a lady from Germany asked me what I was going to do about children falling out of that window up there, so I decided to extend the deck all the way across." Once everything was cut and tacked in place with a welds, it went to his friend's machine shop, where it was carefully welded, then on to a sandblasting shop, and from there to a two separate powdercoating shops — the local one was not large enough to accommodate the main beam. Then all



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the assembled components were brought back to the site and assembled.

The design of the deck is as impressive as its execution; the components are sized and assembled in an aesthetically pleasing way. I ask Matt if he worked with an architect or engineer, and he responds firmly, “No, no. There’s no architect involved. It all came out of my head. I did have engineering done; I had to get it past the county, but it turns out that the iron components are all oversized.”

We walk around to the west side of the house. This is where the septic tank is located; Matt has built special covers of aluminum topped with the plastic deck material. We look back at the house. Dora is telling me about the vegetable garden — no one in the neighborhood has had luck with tomatoes this year — when Matt cuts in, saying “the only thing about the west side, I guess, is that the windows are all small because there’s not much solar gain, and we don’t have a great view out the west side.”

Dora cuts back in sharply, saying, “other than the fact that we didn’t capitalize on the sunsets on the west side. The sunsets are amazing... but the sunset gets framed in that little window right there,” she says pointing to the one in the middle on the right. “We couldn’t have planned that.”

“But you need wall space, too,” says Matt. “We didn’t have that in the old house, with all the glass, we lost so much wall space for hanging pictures and that sort of thing. We had that in



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mind when we built this house.” Then he switches his attention again, pointing out the five bathroom exhaust vents. Following his concern with the wind, he wanted them to come out on this side of the house and constructed an especially long duct for the guest bathroom so that it would exit here rather than in the north, street-facing wall of the house.

We walk around to the front. Dora apologizes for the landscaping. Matt says matter-of-factly “well, it’s not done.”

“We don’t have any windows on the north side, either,” says Dora.

“Yes,” says Matt, “the only reason this window is here is for egress. The stonework on the front is Dora’s idea, not mine. I have to admit it makes a nice improvement, or a nice addition to the house.”

I ask Dora why she wanted stonework. “Oh, it just needed some — erm — aesthetic beauty. The stonework added a lot. This corner needs something tall. Matt’s against putting a tree there... maybe a lilac. But you just need a break between the siding and the ground level, and that’s why I chose the stonework. I spent a lot of time choosing that, didn’t I? I wanted something that was as natural looking as I could find. It’s cultured stone. The fireplace inside though is real stone, and it somewhat matches this.” “I have to admit it added a nice touch. It does look very nice. It was a good idea,” says Matt.



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I ask why one is cultured stone and one is real, and how they decided what to put where.

“Well, there’s a tremendous difference in price. When you’re designing a house and building a house and you have a budget you go high-end on some things and you have to cut back on others, and that’s one of the others that we... actually, most houses unless they’re really high end are not using real stone, and our fireplace isn’t that big. Another place we cut back was flooring – we didn’t use real hardwood flooring – but I like this flooring because it’s so easy to take care of, it doesn’t scratch, dogs don’t tear it up. And it cost about half as much.”

“We were advised to use plastic for the front door, because it’s more durable, and we’ve had several compliments that the door looks like it’s wood, so that’s fine,” says Matt.

“The painter took a long time doing that door,” says Dora, “and I think he did a good job making it look like wood.”

While Matt opens the garage door, Dora directs my attention to the roofline. “One of the unusual things about this house is that the beams from the inside come all the way out.”

These, too, are trimmed in metal, a detail Matt conceived to preserve the ends of the glulam beams, which tend to split if they are exposed to weather.

Matt starts to lead us back in to the house though the garage.

“We can’t go through the front door?” asks Dora.



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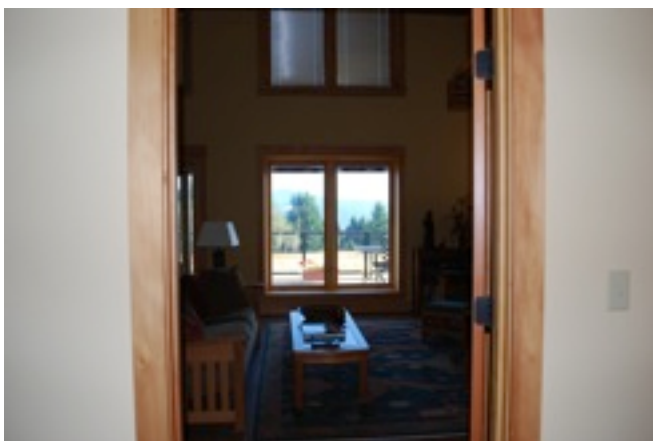
“We can in just a minute,” replies Matt. There is something he wants to show me first – the central vacuum system. This is something they had in the last house and that they liked a lot, so they put one in this house, too.

A further example of Matt’s ingenuity is underfoot: the planting beds that line the sidewalk are edged with metal, a detail that Matt and Dora hope will keep the lawn from taking over the flower beds. Matt moves a rock back to show me the metal underneath.



We head inside through the front door. “In the last house we had an airlock entry and we wanted the same thing in this house, energy-wise,” says Matt. In continuing he suggests that another motivation for this decision is comfort. “We see so many houses that are built that have no airlock entry and the front door just opens into the main living space, and in the winter you just get all that cold air in.”

We walk through the door from the airlock entry into the main living space of the house, and Matt says, “so the interior is pretty much Dora’s. I had very little to do with the paint or the decoration or anything. We worked on the lighting together, but all the coloring and the decoration and the fireplace stone and all that stuff is Dora’s not mine. I did the outside, she did the flooring and the carpet. She had the carpet here specially designed for the house... everything in here is hers.”



Dora continues, “well, we didn’t buy everything in here new. We had a

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few antiques, which we started with, and we bought these two chairs from the Joinery [a high-end furniture studio in Portland], and so all that's really new is the couch and the rug. These are real craftsman antiques, so I was trying to pull in a little of the..."

"The library table came from your grandmother," says Matt.

"Yes, the craftsman and sort of the Northwest look, too, with the wood," Dora says, pulling the conversation back to questions of aesthetics and style.

There's one especially meaningful antique, a surgical instrument case that belonged to Dora's grandfather and



that survived, glass and all, the San Francisco earthquake. "I was fortunate to inherit that – considering that there were seven grandchildren. Things tend to get divided up."

Matt directs the camera across the room to the fireplace. "It's direct vent, so it takes no air out of the house... I put the mantel up. It's got big iron pipes that stick into the mantel, so it's not going to come down." The overall effect of the arrangement is very similar to a photograph in *The Not So Big House*. The overhang of the loft is also Dora's idea. She was going through magazines looking for fireplace ideas. One of them had this arrangement of loft that protruded over the fireplace..., and that really clicked with me, and I said that's what we really need to do in the house is to build it so it hangs out over the fireplace, which I think is a really, really, really nice part of the house. If the railing had been right above the wall it wouldn't have had nearly the nice effect that this does."

This area is another place where Matt has significant labor invested. He explains that when the construction workers put up the rough structure, they dragged the beams through the mud outside, so he stayed up all night with a light, a hose, and a brush cleaning the mud off the newly installed beams.

We stand near the kitchen and I ask Dora about which magazines she used for inspiration. "Oh, *Oregon Home* was one of them," she says, continuing, "I would pick up the ones that were set

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in the mountain areas, a lot of them were for log homes, it was the more rustic ones that I picked up. But – oh, I gave that book to Sally. There was one book where I really got not so much the ideas for decorating, but the concepts... it was really helpful.” She can’t remember the name. When I check back later it is Sarah Susanka’s *The Not So Big House*.

We walk into the master bedroom. Matt points out that there is no level change, even though this room is carpeted, and his is the case throughout the first floor. This was done in the interest of making the house wheelchair accessible for the future. There’s a sliding glass door to the deck. The bed is centered on the wall opposite the door to the great room. It is flanked by equally sized windows and a print is hung above the bed with a light installed over it.



There are more antiques in here, ones that Dora refers to as “Victorian.” Dora points out the back of the fireplace, which is boxed in with drywall with an L-shaped metal chimney connecting the fireplace to the exterior wall. “This is unique and it gives this room a rustic look” says Dora. “That, and the master bedroom right off the great room, that’s sort of a cabin feel. But at the same time, the house lends itself to – if the next buyers were to be a larger family, the whole upstairs loft can be changed into two bedrooms easily, which is similar to what we had in the other house... and then downstairs, as you’ll



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see, is unfinished but has a lot of potential.”

Matt is often up earlier than Dora, and the lights bother her. Matt considered this habit when he designed the bathroom; Dora’s sink is located in the bedroom itself, but the sink he uses is located behind a door in the main area of the master bathroom through a 36-inch wide door, which was made wider than the standard 30-inch door for reasons of accessibility.

The bathroom has a large walk-in shower unit with two separate showerheads, a Jacuzzi tub, and an electric heater for supplemental heat. The toilet is in its own room they refer to as the “water closet”, a room that measures about three feet by five feet and contains the toilet and a small sink in the corner. The design of this room is linked up with a German friend of Dora’s who has a similar room in her home, and with another friend who lives in an RV, who helped Matt and Dora find a suitably small sink by suggesting they buy a model designed for a camper trailer.



We leave the bathroom and go back to the living room, where Matt tells me about the windows, a part of the house is very important to him. He brings this up on his own without any prompting. “I should say something about the windows, because that was a major part of our building effort. Being interested in solar, I wanted windows on the south side that had a high solar heat gain coefficient [SHGC], so I got a big book, and all the manufacturers could talk about was low-E glass, and I

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knew I didn't want that, because that keeps the sunshine *out*. So we went to a variety of different manufacturers and we went to see the showroom of one of the manufacturers over in Tigard, and I was not impressed at all with the windows. They were all fiberglass – plastic – windows. So on the way back from over there we went by Pella and I knew we didn't want Pella windows because they were far too expensive. So we went in there and the first thing they talked about was low-E glass, and I tried to tell him, well, I don't want low-E glass, and he said that he'd have one of the sales representatives call me. And so it happened that a relatively young sales rep called, a guy about 25 or 30 years old, called me, and he wanted to know how we could help me, and I told him that I was looking for windows that met code and had a high SHGC. And so apparently he got a little book out and said "oh, here's one," and I asked him about some of the other parts of the code... and he said he'd look some more. It was just maybe 20 minutes or 30 minutes and he called me back and said here's another window design that does meet the code and has a very high SHGC, and I said, OK, if that's the case we'll come and look, even though I knew they were too expensive for us. So we went over and talked to him and one of his colleagues, and they explained the features, and they made the fatal error of showing Dora the blinds that go inside the glass."

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Dora interjects here, laughing, “yes! You put blinds inside of a window and I don’t have to clean ‘em.”

“And so...”

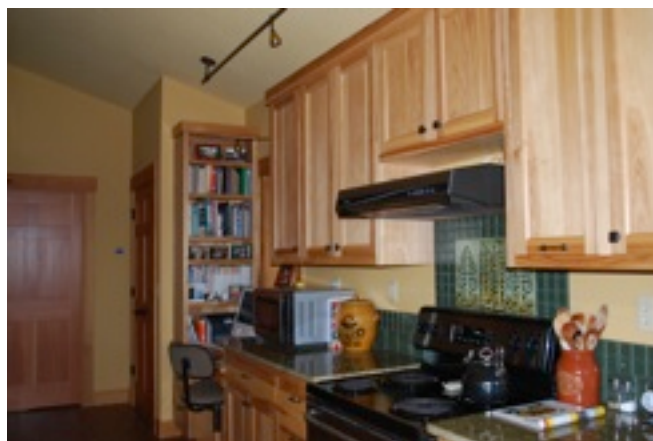
“They weren’t that much more.”

“I wouldn’t change them for anything. So we ended up with Pella windows with aluminum cladding. These are triple pane. Before we left we were sold. As Dora mentioned there are some things that you really spend big on, and others that we cut, and we spent big on the windows. All the south-facing windows are clear glass and all the others are low-E.”

We’re standing in the kitchen, so I ask to hear something about it. Dora answers.

“The big trend right now is to have an island in the center of the kitchen, and I didn’t want that, because I’m kind of a messy cook. So we have a peninsula arrangement, and my stove is back here, out of sight, and, oh, my refrigerator needs cleaning. When we started designing this house, we put the kitchen on the east side, and I realized I didn’t want to look at the neighbor’s house. I mean, we’re on five acres in the country, and I want to look at the view. So then we started to shift things around.”

The new plan of the kitchen has a pantry constructed out of stud walls that floats in the middle of the space. It serves to conceal the stove area from the living and dining area. A large peninsula extends from one side of the pantry. It has stools on one side and divides the kitchen from the area that holds the television.



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Matt picks up, "Yeah, the kitchen in the old house was also on the east side, but in the northeast, and the eating area was on the east side." Therefore, in order to accommodate Dora's wish to exclude their neighbor's house from the view, their kitchen, relative to their old house, has moved amoeba-style towards the living area.

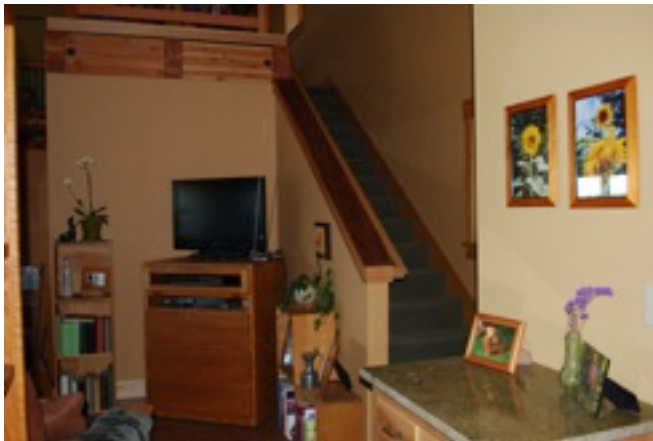
Matt is vexed by the outlet for the range hood (extractor); on windy days the outside damper is overwhelmed and the pressure makes it flap noisily. It exits on the east side of the house, the one where Matt decided not to put any windows out of his concern for the wind. He has at least two solutions in the works; one involves a solenoid that would open and shut a motorized damper. The other solution he is mulling over involves installing a large vertical duct on the outside of the house topped with a chimney top that would rotate in the wind. Near the range hood is another problem waiting to be solved: a pull-out spice rack mounted too high for Dora to reach.

Matt declares the tour of the kitchen to be completed and we start to move back towards the center of the house. He directs my attention upwards to the large ceiling beams, saying, "we liked the glu-lams. We could have used smaller ones, but I made them as big as I thought aesthetically proper." His looking at the volume of the ceiling reminds him of the difficulty of opening and closing the high windows with a metal rod, and he expresses a desire for an electrical opening and closing system.

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He also points out a jog in the floor plan of the house — the master bedroom is set four feet closer to the street than the great room — and this detail he attributes to Dora. “What caused that is that Dora said that we don’t have any west-facing windows, and we really need one in the great room. She came in one day while I was drawing and suggested that I shift that wall over four feet, and I really like that idea because it give the house a lot more structural stability.” Matt shows me a few of the different connection details in the living room and master bedroom, showing his knowledge of the building code’s requirements for wood to ICF walls.



We end up back near the TV. “Dora wanted a little TV area.” The TV is not where it was meant to be in the plan, so it is across the room from the cable outlet, but this is not a big deal. “We’re not big TV watchers — we rent from Netflix.” There’s a decoration on the wall, another thing from the old house that Dora moved. Its location is much more prominent here and many of their friends assume it is new. This is another place where Dora reminds me that she did not buy much new furniture for the house.



We head up to the loft, Dora explaining to me how it’s got “potential” to be used by a future family, but Matt stops me on the way up to show off the walnut cap for the half wall, which *is* quite beautiful.

We catch up with Dora. “This over here is Matt’s mess,” she says, “and that’s my next task to get bookshelves,

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and hang pictures and paintings, not necessarily those that are there. See, here, you could split this right down the middle and have two bedrooms, which is very similar to what we had before.”

They use this space as a computer room, a sorting space for stuff and books that they has not found a space. “I guess you could call it a library, study, whatever,” says Dora. There’s a pull-out couch in this area that has become a favorite spot of houseguests, too.

There’s a view down to the floor below, and this area is quite spacious. Dora points out the expanse of floor, referring back to her earlier mention of cost. “This is a laminate floor from Denmark, so well, it’s Scandinavian, and that puts it on the high end of laminate. But it was a lot less expensive than a wood floor, and certainly easier to maintain.” Dora also frames the compromise in terms of maintenance, explaining, “this house was much larger than I ever anticipated. Because I’m not really a housekeeper, maintaining it and keeping it up is a challenge, so anything that’s easy – that works for me.”

I ask how big the house is relative to their old house.

Dora replies, “oh, not that much bigger,” but Matt is quick to correct her. “It’s much, much bigger. It’s about 4000 square feet, and our old house was about 2700 square feet.”

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Dora continues, “we mostly live up here, though, so we’re really living in less space.”

Matt says, “yes, so we’re living in about 1700 square feet.”

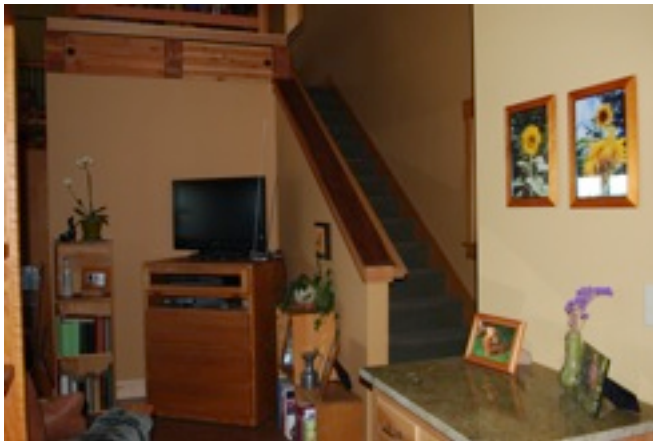
Matt explains the construction of the radiant floor and an ingenious improvised heat exchanger made of an assemblage of 60 feet of PVC and \$450 of copper pipe. It’s still not quite working right – he thought convection would do the trick, but it needs a motor – but Matt has plans to finish it up. It might be modified to work as a pollen filter; Dora’s got bad allergies.

Dora suggests we keep moving and we head down to the basement, but before Matt points out that the ceiling is spray foam – not fiberglass, which, in his opinion “is totally useless.” Dora stops us in the kitchen to show off “her island,” a small kitchen cabinet mounted on wheels topped with the scrap of leftover granite which inspired the project.

“This is the stereo cabinet,” says Matt, and Dora ribs him a bit, referring to me and saying to Matt, “oh, this is so old-fashioned! He doesn’t even know what a stereo is.”

We pause again in the laundry room, where Matt shows me a stepped series of cabinets installed in the space over the garage. “We had that in our old house, so we did it again, and I did it in my shop, too,” he explains.

We go back into the garage and then head down a stairwell. One wall is open wood framing and the other is the Styrofoam face of the ICF exterior



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walls. “There are two stairways, a front and a back, and this is the back,” says Dora. We arrive in the basement area, which is also unfinished, but hardly feels like a basement – one wall is windows looking out on the same sylvan view as upstairs. “This is the unfinished part, where you put all the stuff that you get from your family,” says Dora.

Matt, in a pattern that should by now be obvious, heads into the utility room to show me the “ground source, closed loop heat pump,” asking me if I know what that is and nodding approvingly when I reply yes. The tubing is buried in the yard. This equipment is not yet in use – “that’s the only part of the house that’s not done,” says Matt. I suspect Dora would disagree but she is out of earshot taking photographs in the other room. This room also has the wiring control panels for the solar electric system that has yet to be installed.



We emerge from the utility room. Dora is nowhere to be seen. “This down here can be made into a complete apartment, so when we get older if we need someone to come live with us to help us, this will be their living area. They have a private access to the garage, they have a view of Mt. Hood, just like we do – the sink and everything will be the same. The only thing they don’t have is a washer/dryer. They’d have to use the one upstairs.” Right now there is a bed and table where the kitchen will be in the future.



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At the opposite end of the room, where the fireplace is upstairs, is a wood stove, which is flanked by a piano and a bulletin board decorated with photographs of the house while it was under construction. Dora is unsure about whether she should take pictures of this area because it is unfinished. The plans for the house are on a fat sheaf of heavy 11 x 17 inch paper. Matt picks it up, saying, "this is the house here," flipping through the thick sheets of paper. Floorplans, elevations, and framing plans for each wall in the house are drawn in heavy pencil. Most of the drawings have been repeatedly reworked.



They do use this space on a regular basis, sometimes for neighborhood gatherings, and sometimes as a space for long-term guests. Twice friends from Germany have visited them for a summer with teenage daughter in tow.



We walk into the bedroom that corresponds to the master bedroom upstairs. The walls in this room are finished and painted, but the ceiling is still open awaiting installation of the solar hot water heating system. There are two beds in this space; one of them has been jacked up on a chair because Matt is in the process of replacing the casters. Dora apologizes for the "strange" appearance of the room. Initially I think that she is referring to the bed, which is at a 20° angle to the floor, but then I realize that she is talking about the antique wood furniture, which she perceives as mismatched. "Every bit of the furniture downstairs has been given to

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us from both sides of the family, so it's a real hodgepodge of stuff." I wonder if this represents everything they've ever been given, so I ask if they've ever had to give away furniture left them by another family member.

"Give anything away? Never!" laughs Matt.

"Well, I'd give some of it away, but he keeps everything. Our kids are going to have some mess to contend with," says Dora. "If you think this is a lot, wait until you see the shop!"

Matt shows me the closet for the solar heating apparatus — they've salvaged two tanks from their old house, which they sold to a developer who planned to remove the solar hot water system as part of renovations. "Well, that's the house," says Matt.

We head out to the shop — and shop is an understatement. Tractor Palace better captures the spirit of the place, which feels about as big as the house. It needs to be in order to house Matt's sizable collection of garden tractors. The exterior is made of the same materials — light brown HardiePlank siding with green metal trim and roof — as the house. The building is finished on all four sides, but it is still only about halfway done; Matt has poured a foundation on the downhill side, facing the back of their lot, to allow for room. When done it will be close to the size of the house. Inside is an enormous connection of antique garden tractors. Matt's father was a dealer of a particular brand of tractor, and this sparked his interest. He is now active in a global network of



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tractor enthusiasts, although his interest in garden tractors, rather than full-size models, sets him apart somewhat. The shop is separate from the house, as Matt explains, to mitigate the risk of fire. The air is heavy with the smell of motor oil and gasoline.

Cozy

Matt and Dora have a strong association with their house and a friend's house in Germany. As Dora explained, this was inspiration for the upstairs-downstairs arrangement of their house: "We kinda got some ideas when we were in Germany at Peter's house – he's that German friend that we mentioned before. We were there, we had some free time. He's a very interesting old friend of mine – he's quadriplegic. [With the money from the accident settlement] he was able to have two houses built for him, so unlike a lot of the traditional German houses that have a lot of little rooms, he has a big open space – kind of a great room idea. And he has a house near Nice, with a housekeeper who lives downstairs."

As we continue to talk, Dora starts talking about coziness without any direct prompting from me, mentioning the hand-built armchairs in their living area. I ask her to elaborate about other cozy places in the house.

First up is the living room, which she calls "the focal point of the house when it comes to coziness." Next is the TV area, where she and Matt might "sit down and watch a movie together."

The loft upstairs might become cozy, but it is not in its current state, which Dora described during my first visit as unfinished. Pointing at the loft area upstairs on the map that Matt has drawn, she says, "I think this will be a cozy area when I'm finished with it,





probably more for guests. It depends on how we finish it."

"What needs to be done to make it cozy?" I ask.

"The bookcases need to be built and installed, this desk needs to go, and the mess up here needs to be cleaned up. We had the lights up there to hang paintings on that wall." These are three components evident here of creating coziness. First is the creation of a superstructure (in this case, bookshelves) for the arrangement of material goods in a way that invites an ordered relationship between people and things. This relates to McCracken's principle of engagement and what he

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describes as signs of premeditated order. Second is the removal or concealment of any indication of disorder or that serves as a reminder of work remaining to be done, which clearly relates to Pennartz's principle of "relaxing after having completed work." The third is the hanging of the pictures and the importance of the planned built-in lighting. This will allow for the creation of an environment that can function to fulfill McCracken's mnemonic principle (painting is their son's hobby) and at the same time communicate a sense of specialness by creating contrast and therefore directing attention to both the mnemonic paintings and the enclosing surface of the wall with the bookshelves.

We continue to talk and it becomes clear that books are very important to Dora. She did work as a librarian, but her affection seems to be another way of linking this house back to the times they spent in Germany, so I ask if her house has features that are inspired by the time she spent there. "The European home – number one, they have a lot of books in their house," she muses.

"The other thing I think gives a certain element of coziness are antiques, and we do have several, which includes this library table, and this cabinet [the one shown above that survived the San Francisco earthquake]. Both are from my grandmother."



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“In a way this is somewhat European, you have the chairs and the couch and the big coffee table, they serve their dessert in that area of the house. But if we have guests we serve here at the table. We have potlucks with food on the counter.”

When I start digging deeper about coziness and mention that I have also done research in Denmark, Dora volunteers the German word *gemütlich*, which she sees as preferable to cozy. Her intention of decorating the house was “to get that *gemütlich* feeling. I like that word, *gemütlich*. Cozy – it’s not quite the right translation. Warmth, cozy, friendly, all put together is *gemütlich*.”

They thought about incorporating elements that would be clearly identifiable as German into their home, but their actions indicate that they favor a pattern of adaptation and inspiration. “Originally, at one time, we were going to have a German *stube* – but we needed more flexibility for more people.” Matt picks up here – he has let Dora do almost all of the talking since the conversation shifted to coziness – to back her up by saying, “we didn’t want a *stube* sticking out here.” Matt’s comment is a direct reference to the physical qualities of a built-in table and bench, an arrangement that could not be easily reconfigured. But “sticking out” also seems to indicate the notion that a German *stube* would not fit in with the style of the decorations in the rest of the house. Indeed, most of the objects with a clear connection to Germany are



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quarantined along with Dora's doll collection in what would otherwise be an unusable dead-end corner of the loft.

While Dora did not set out to recreate the style of the German houses they remembered, she did consciously try to create a feeling. "It's not easy — in a house that has high ceilings like this — to get that *gemütlich* feeling... I think the colors of the walls and the ceiling makes a big difference, and the warmth of the wood, definitely. To bring a house that is really full of space down into a more cozy, warm feeling."

Their old house, even though it was about the same size, lacked qualities that this new house has, qualities that both Matt and Dora struggle to explain in words before settling on "character" and "warmth." Matt attributes this to the lack of quality of the woodwork; Dora to the large amount of windows, a result of the passive solar design.

Poul and Karin

Cognitive Maps

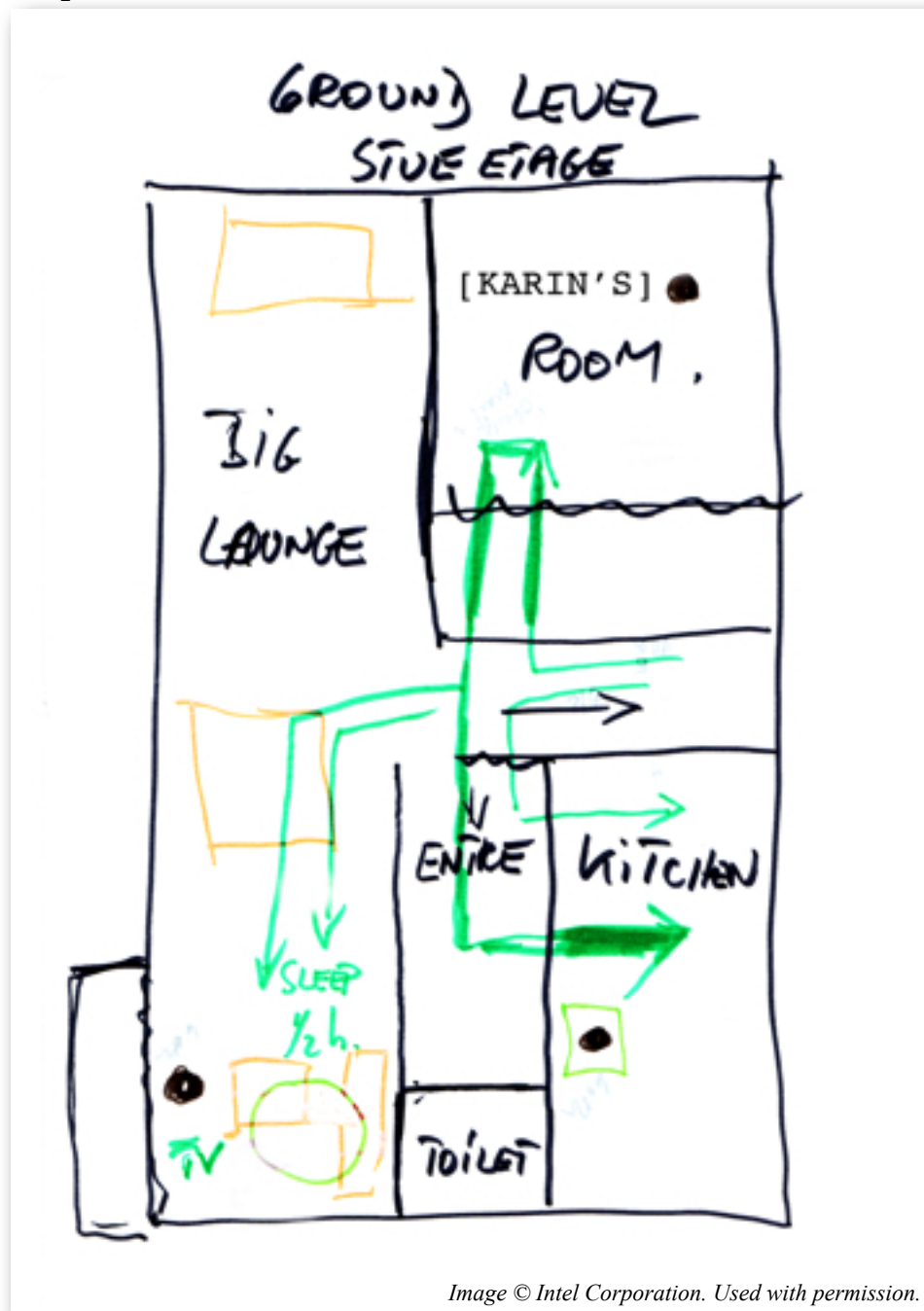


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stue etage
entrée

living room level (lit.)
entry

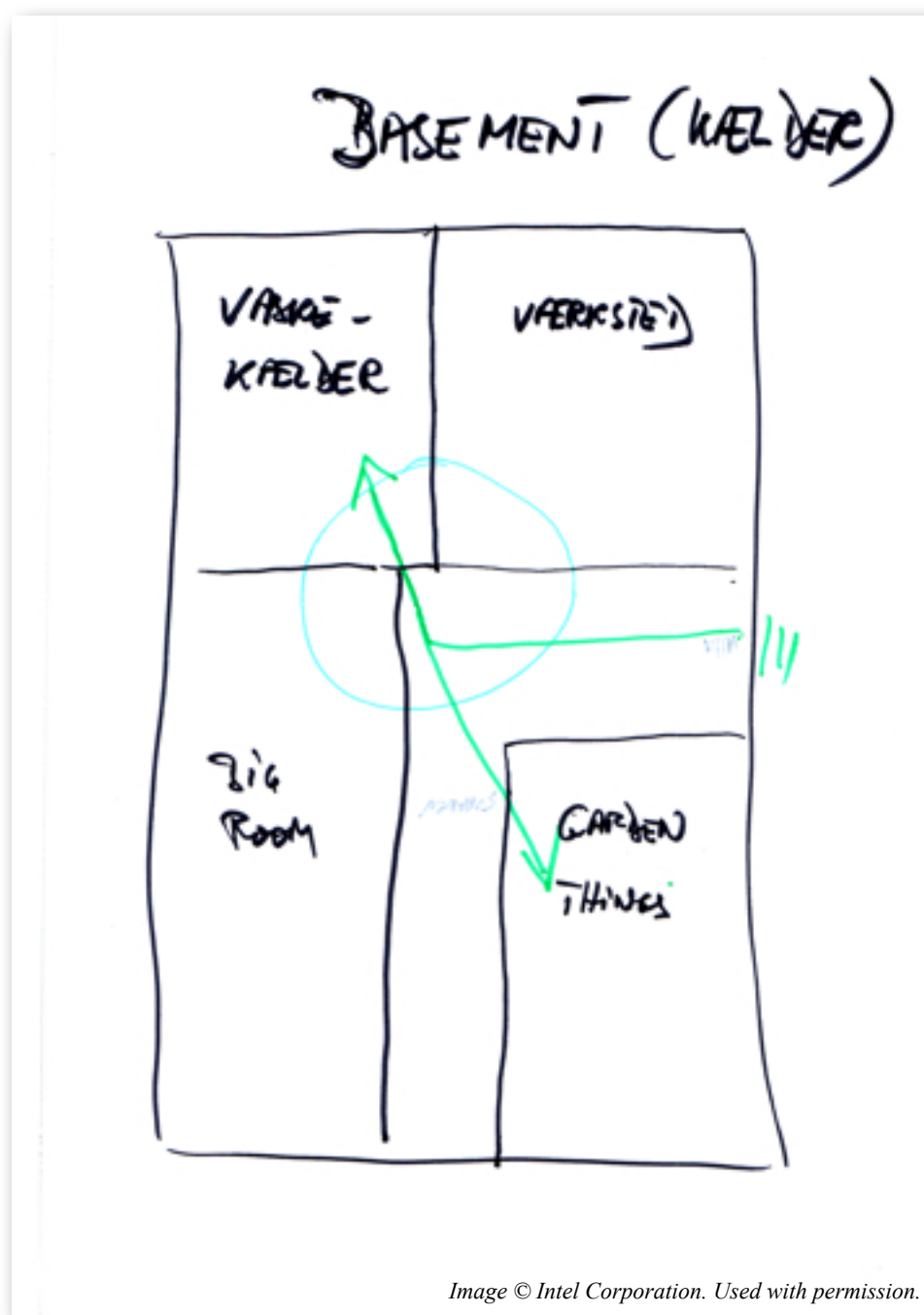


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vaskekælder
værksted

laundry room (lit. "washing cellar")
workshop



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Tour

The table has been set for my arrival with cheerful yellow placemats and matching napkins. Karin has made a pot of coffee and Poul, who insisted on picking me up from the train station, also picked up Danish pastries on the way. We eat the pastries and drink coffee while I explain the research. I am feeling especially self-conscious because I have had the misfortune of selecting an exceptionally flaky pastry that spews crumbs all over the immaculate table every time I touch it with my fork.

When we are done with the snack, Poul picks the camcorder and Karen wields the SLR camera. Poul immediately turns the camera on a large tree outside the window in a lush backyard. There is a bench underneath the tree and a small red painted shed at the back of the yard.

“That tree is our church,” says Poul.

“Yes,” says Karin, “we were married there, under that tree. I, especially, spend hours there, in the garden, the yard, yes, that’s the American word... we could never move because of that, because of the church – the tree – and the garden.”

Karin is frustrated by the weather – it has been an exceptionally wet summer in Denmark. Poul pokes the camera outside on the wet patio but we decide to venture outside later, so that our shoes do not muddy the white carpet. We stay in the living room and Karen next points out “Poul’s *fjernsyn*,”

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using the Danish word for television. Poul picks up from there, explaining that watching the TV is a typical part of their evening ritual. “Poul calls this,” Karin says pointing at a leather chair, “his brown bed, because he always goes to sleep when he sits there.”

The opposite side of the living room, however, gets less use. It is set up for formal socializing, with two small loveseats facing each other at a right angle with a coffee table in between. A pendant light is hung from the ceiling. This space is not often used, explains Karin, because although she loves to visit and to chat, Poul had to do a lot of that with his job, and so they don’t entertain much. This is the place in the house where they have hung family mementos. They refer to these as “stories.” Poul’s, a collection of oil paintings from his grandparents, are hung over the loveseat, and Karen’s, a collection of six carefully framed antique photographs, including one of her parents when they were young, are on the facing wall out of direct light.

Karen tuns to the wood stove – in “a hard winter it can heat up the whole house.” The house is also heated by a district heating system, but the wood stove has the advantage of being under their direct control. Poul and Karin have an unpleasant memory of the oil crisis in Denmark – “there were some days when you were not allowed to drive in your car on Sundays” – and this wood stove is insurance against the future possibility of future coldness

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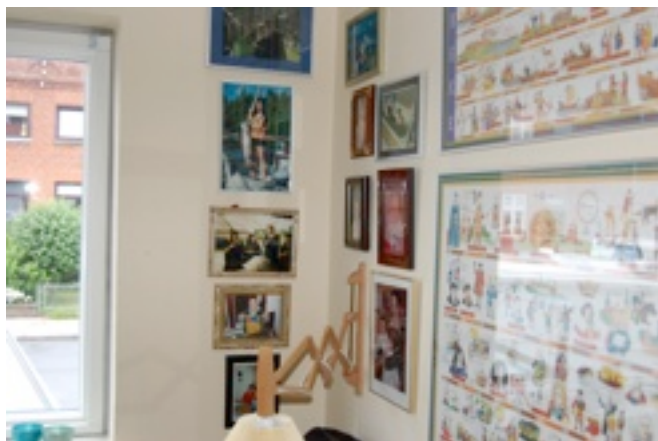
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and deprivation. The art hanging on the wall, a Sami embroidery, has a related meaning. This is discussed in the *hygge* section that immediately follows.

We move on to Karin's library. One wall is lined with floor-to-ceiling shelves in raw pine. Books are neatly arrayed in rows with photographs interspersed. This is "the only room where we are allowed to have photos of our children, we won't have them in" the rest of the house. It is significant that she has used the word "our" because she, as I learned later, does not have children with Poul; the children in the photographs are from a previous marriage. So this room is a bit of a containment strategy that not only keeps photographs of children from taking over the house (they don't want to be "one of those people with pictures of family everywhere," Karin explains.) But it also functions, like a number of other rooms in the house, to allow Karin to maintain a split identity as mother and wife. This room backs up Karin's identity as mother to her children and emphasizes her ongoing role in creating meaning in her children's lives; she keeps her computer in this room, as well, which she uses to exchange email and to talk on Skype with her children, who both live in the US. But in the living room, where Karin's "family story" photographs hang, Karen is at the receiving end of the relationships represented.

Elements in this room also work to reinforce the connection between



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individual and collective identity. The largest framed pieces hanging on the walls are not family photographs, but instead two illustrated timelines showing important figures in Danish history. Karin justifies their presence because of role as a grandparent; the posters compliment a section of books they use for reading to the children – picture books, a bible, a book of Danish history. “That’s why I have this one,” she says, pointing at the pair of posters, “so when the grandchildren are here, we can talk about when King Valdemar was living, and that’s good.”

Karin’s use of “this one” when she was referring to two objects is not a random error. Her English is excellent overall – she’s corrected Poul several times when he has made mistakes such as substituting “in” for “under” – and, as I discuss later in the section headed “pairing,” it is revealing of a deeper way of perceiving objects. Also significant, and, from my research, fairly typical, is her role is communicating Danish identity to her grandchildren, who are growing up in the US, and to her nieces and nephews, who live just down the street.

The virtual and physical presence of family is a prime motivating factor for Poul and Karin. They often have Karin’s children and their families stay with them for more than a year, and this is another reason that they, as Karin says again “can never move from this house.” Poul points out that this has also motivated them to make a number of changes in the physical structure of the house itself, in order to

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better accommodate their guests. Since they have moved in, he explains, they have changed almost everything, and he has done a fair amount of the work himself.



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An old wooden type case in the hallway is filled with small souvenirs from trips away: an antique vial for smelling salts; a piece of the Berlin wall; colorfully painted wood tchochkies of the sort you buy on the beach while on vacation. The only thing that seems to unite the things in the case is that they are small, a few inches on each side. Much like the rule that family photographs can only be

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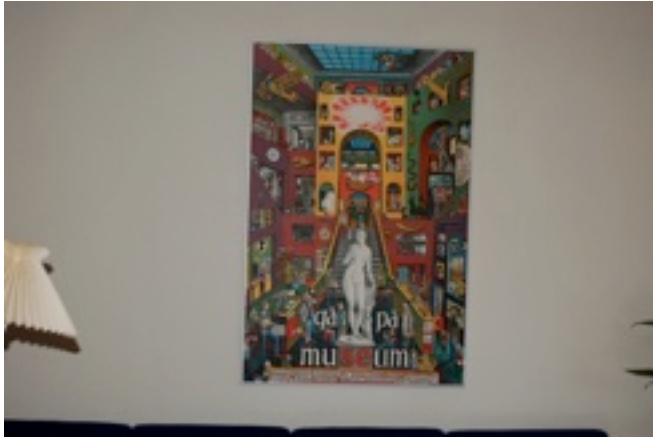


installed in Karin's office, this seems to be another strategy for creating order and containment through designating not only a place in the home for mementos, but, by virtue of the dimensions of the compartments in the type case, the souvenirs themselves must be small. A few exceptions to the rule are arrayed along the top.

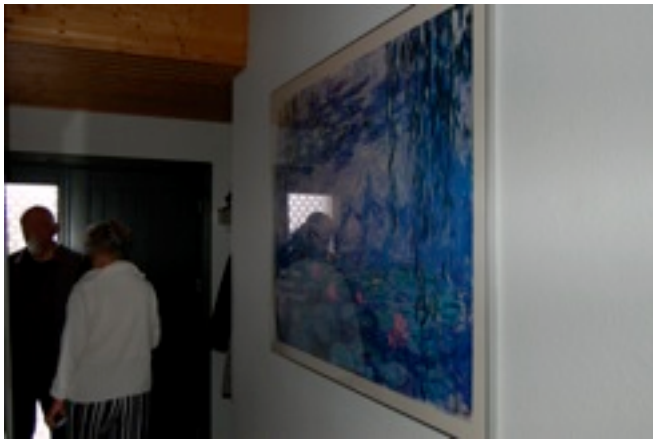
We move on to the guest toilet. They've redone it once already, but Karin would like to have it removed so that the kitchen could be enlarged, but as Poul points out "we are also at the age where it's very nice to have two toilets," putting this in such a way that it is clear that as far as he is concerned, there is no chance the bathroom is going to be removed in order to expand the kitchen. Karin pushes forward to the kitchen, showing off prints from Chez Panisse in Berkeley, where she went with her daughter and her daughter's husband. So, in a way, these decorations are representations of her family. Karin has placed the decorations in her house in such a way that the meaning apparent appears to align in some way with the use of the space where they are present. The Chez Panisse poster, for example, is in the kitchen, where food is prepared.

This encoding of family relationships into decor is not always a one-way process. Several pieces hanging on the walls are from Karin's daughter Mette. Karin and Poul like some of these, such as the print hanging in the *stue* near their television that was used as a promotional piece within Denmark to encourage people

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to visit museums. It is valued somewhat because it was a gift from Mette, but mostly for its engaging qualities. “You always see something different in this piece every time you look at it,” says Poul.

But another piece associated with Mette, a framed print of Monet’s water lilies, is not perceived as positively. It hangs in the hallway. It was in Mette’s first home in Denmark; Poul and Karin bought it from Mette when she was in a tough spot financially, and she has since moved to the US, making it impractical to reclaim the print.

We go upstairs where there are two rooms. One is Poul’s office.

“Karin and I each have our computers – we each have a stationary computer, a laptop computer, and then there are some extra computers. We have a wireless network in the house and a cable network in the house.” Thanks to Poul’s interest in computer there is a lot of technology in this room – he has retired from his job but living in a smaller town means that he is known as a guy who can fix stuff, and he still gets a lot of calls. Because he’s retired he is not legally able to work, so much of the work he does is in return for what he jokingly calls “black money” – bottles of wine, and even some bartering for painting services.

Karin leads us into the adjacent bedroom, where she immediately identifies two things of importance. First is their wedding certificate, embellished with humorous

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inscriptions from all the friends who were present. Second is a poster promoting a production of *Romeo and Juliet* at a theater where Karin worked when she was younger. It is done in a 1960's modern style and Karin says laughingly that her youngest daughter has already laid claim to it in the event of her death. I notice a gun sitting on the window. Poul laughs and explains it's plastic, used for scaring off the pigeons in the morning.

Each room we've been in has both a radiator and at least one air diffuser. I ask what they are for and Poul explains that the air diffusers are for a system that expels stale air. Karin chimes in with "in makes it so you don't have to open a window." Next, we enter a large bathroom room that contains a treadmill, extra toilet paper, and the mechanism for the air exchanger. I am shown the mechanism responsible for circulating the air – "it takes all the warm air and makes it hot water," explains Karin.

I ask whether this awareness of energy is driven by cost; other participants have struggled to remember even the approximate amount of their energy bills when I have asked them. Poul and Karin have a general awareness that some things are expensive to do: they do not own a clothes dryer, although they intend to buy one soon, even though it is "very expensive to run." But, despite the wood stove and their combined air exchanger-hot water heater heat pump, they don't see themselves as particularly energy conscious. "We

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have lights in many rooms," says Karin, "and we don't always turn them off." Poul hedges this assertion by saying "well, sometimes we do." Karin calls the money spent on energy bills "stupid money." It's like buying paper towels or toilet paper, she explains: it is money you have to spend but don't want to.

The treadmill, explains Poul, is needed "so he doesn't get too fat," and to keep his back in good shape; he's had problems for a long time. Somehow this conversation leads to one about telephones, and Karin explains that she's just gotten a mobile phone. While her sister and both of her children use theirs all the time, she rarely uses hers, preferring to connect to them on either the house phone or the Skype handset that they purchased in order to make less expensive international calls. This is partly a matter of habit, but Karin agrees with Poul when he explains that he does not like to be accessible all the time, and that therefore he often turns off his mobile phone entirely.

We head downstairs to the basement, entering a room lined with shelves, holding boxes, and filled with unused furniture. "This... this is a place where you put things," deadpans Poul. Karin, who has been doing most of the talking so far, wanders away and starts snapping photographs of another part of the basement while Poul talks to me. There are parts of computers down here, camping stuff, and things should be thrown away. The basement functions a bit like a

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holding zone for things that, in Poul's words, "it takes a little time to say to yourself that I don't need this anymore."



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We walk into the laundry room in the basement and Poul points out the low-energy washing machine. The room is festooned with clothing hung up to dry. Karin explains that they've called a carpenter who will fur out the concrete walls, install insulation, and paint this room so that it will be "nice." This triggers a follow-up to our earlier conversation about energy use. "Don't pay attention to my wife about the energy and the lights," Poul says, "she

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knows we have the air-hot water system, she knows we have a low-energy washing machine, but all our windows are high-energy windows... the house is highly insulated. We just changed the windows."

I ask why they changed the windows: was it only for energy considerations? "No," Karin laughs, "they needed painting." The new windows are aluminum outside and wood on the inside.

We go back into the storage area and Karin narrates this time, explaining that the bulk of the stuff in this room belongs to her children, left in her trust when they each moved to the US. "You can smell it's a basement" says Karin.

"This is my freezer," says Karin, opening it up to show me that there are only a few baskets filled up in the large box. This triggered an experiment. Poul plugged a device I recognize from the US, where it sold under the brand name Kill-A-Watt, that displays the dollar amount of energy consumed by the appliance plugged into it. Even though the freezer is "just as old as our marriage" says Poul, he was satisfied with the energy use, concluding that buying a new model could not be justified through energy savings.

We enter another room in the basement. Karin says "this is Poul's room," and Poul, half-jokingly, says "all the rooms are Poul's." This is the workshop or *værkstad*, where he keeps tools. "Mess! Mess!" says Karin. "But

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what's funny is that if I go down here and move one single thing, he'll know. It's not very tidy, but he knows where everything is."



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It may be Poul's space, but there are things of Karin's in here, too, including a computer she used to use for telecommuting and that belongs to her previous employer. They have repeatedly promised to pick it up since she retired, but it is still gathering dust in the corner. The workshop contains more things belonging to Karin's children, too.

We go down a hall. A cabinet contains the heat pump mechanism



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that warms water for heating and domestic use. An on-demand hot water heater is nearby but it has been disconnected. The warm water from the heat pump is distributed to a manifold system with valves leading to the hot water supply for each room. This system was installed about 20 years ago and was quite expensive at the time; it cost the equivalent of \$10,000. Its age, cost, and complexity have led Poul to decide not to replace it when it fails. “We’ll be ten years older when that happens,” he explains, and will not want to deal with such a complicated system. At that point they will hook the house back up to the district heating service operated by the municipality.

The charge for the district heating service is calculated based on fee calculated on the square centimeters of radiators together with a charge for use. For that reason they have disconnected the radiator in the basement and removed one from the upstairs. They were able to do this because they increased the insulation throughout the house.

This concludes the tour inside the house, but Paul has decided that we should go outside and see his caravan, which is how he refers to his tow-behind travel trailer. Poul and Karin spend a lot of time — more time than Karin would like, but less than Poul — traveling around Scandinavian and Europe in their caravan. This one is the third they have owned in two years; the first one got traded in on a more deluxe model almost immediately, and

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the second one floated fell victim to a recent flood.

Poul is still getting to know the replacement they bought with the settlement. It is even more fitted out than the previous model, with an extra insulation package so that it can remain comfortable in the dead of winter in the North of Sweden. This excites Poul, but Karin does not seem to see the point of going somewhere even more cold and dark than Denmark on vacation. It has the other features one would expect in a camper trailer, along with a two things that were a surprise. First among these is a remote control feature, shown in the photo left, that lets the trailer be detached from the towing vehicle and maneuvered on its own. This, as Poul explains it, takes a great deal of stress out of the experience, since you don't have to worry about the trailer falling off a windy road or backing into a tree. The second feature is an alarm system that is linked into Poul's mobile phone. It is not simply a perimeter alarm or a forced-entry type that detects if a door is pried open without a key. It also has a sensor for what Poul describes as "gas." I assume this means carbon monoxide — to alert the occupants to a malfunctioning heater — but Poul explains that it is for security in some of the rougher trailer parks in other countries. Burglars, he has heard, will use sedative gas — they just set a canister under the door or near an air intake — and then come in and help themselves to your stuff.



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If the contents of Poul and Karin's trailer are typical, I can see why they would make a tempting target. In addition to the standard equipment of TV, DVD player, and radio, Poul and Karin usually bring at least two computers, a printer, and several cameras along with them, in addition to a small stash of cash in various denominations. The electronic equipment is used to help them stay connected to their family while they are traveling, and Poul also uses the cameras, computers, and printers to facilitate his hobby, which is to take scenic photographs of the places Poul and Karin are visiting, then print and make postcards to send to friends and family.

One further observation about Poul and Karin's trailer: the degree of fit between the decor of their home and the decor of the trailer are striking. Even the outside of the trailer, smartly dressed in shades of off white, grey, and bold red, looks like the outside of their house. The cabinets inside the caravan are the same color and perhaps the same species of wood as the cabinets in Poul and Karin's house, and the caravan's red bedspread would look right at home if it were pressed into service next door, especially if it were located near the red-and-white themed downstairs bathroom that Poul and Karin redid when they first moved into the house. This consistency of material and color says a great deal about a parallel consistency in the *meaning* of material and color as related to home life in

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Denmark. Red and white, after all, are the colors of the Danish flag, and it seems that this is a prime example of banal nationalism (Tilley 2008). To wit, even the badge identifying the camper's manufacturer, a Swedish company, notes "Made for Denmark."

We conclude our tour of the trailer and set about to document the yard (or garden, as Karin thinks of it; there is a distinction in Danish between a *have*, which is usually a green place cultivated for the sake of appearance, and a *gård*, which is akin in meaning to a service yard or courtyard.) We spend very little time in the front of the house, the appearance of which is typical of many Danish homes. The front door is solid, but it is flanked by a window. Next to the window is a mailbox, with a placard above that clearly identifies the names of the home's inhabitants. This configuration, which is also common in Norway (Garvey 2003, 2005), is representative of a conceptualization of public and private that is different from the US, where the front door is usually a device used for seeing out.

Instead of lingering in the quasi-public front yard, Poul and I head around the side of the house, and Karin goes back inside. This area, which is mostly out of view from the street, the back yard, and the interior of the house, is where Poul and Karin keep the garbage rollaway bin and recycling bins, along with two separate technologies for dealing with kitchen waste and yard debris on site. They have a tub, about the size of a standard

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32 gallon American trash bin, connected to the downspout for collecting rainwater, and a vermicompost bin, which was given to the town residents a few years back, but is no longer in regular use because the worms have all died. Poul does not describe either of these things in environmental terms; the vermicompost bin, instead, was something that was imposed on everyone and described in terms of its failure, and the presence of the rainwater collection system is attributed the fact that “water is quite expensive.”

There’s also a semi-covered shed in the sideyard that functions as storage for the wood pile; sometimes wood is delivered here, and sometimes Poul will chop up a tree that they have removed from the back garden. This area is tidy – the grass is carefully edged around the sidewalk and the plants are mostly tended; what overgrowth there is serves to soften the presence of the various plastic bins. These objects do not meet the high level of design for most of the objects that Poul and Karin have inside their home, nor do they match up with the careful fit of function in the caravan. This is a place, like the basement, where a bit of looseness is acceptable.

We continue on and stand near the house overlooking the back yard, a position that gives us approximately the same view as we had from the inside of the house at the beginning of the interview when Poul and Karin identified the large tree as their

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“church.” Poul knows exactly how large this space is – 890 square meters (approximately 9500 square feet.) We turn back to the house and Poul explains that he’s invested a fair amount of labor in painting the house, which used to be pink.

The garden is extremely tidy, and the only exception of this is a fence that is starting to fall into disrepair. There are plans in the works to replace it, but it is shared property with a neighbor, Poul explains, and this means that its replacement must be negotiated and mutually agreed upon. Before returning inside, we walk to the other side of the garden near the house, where a large drying rack sits unused

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behind the garage wall that conceals it from the street. It would normally be in use during the summertime but the exceptionally rainy weather has prevented its typical use.

Overall, the arrangement of the garden is such that one looking out from the interior space of the house sees a green space that is clearly bounded. The spaces outside that are not planted and which are visible from the inside of the house – two patios with chairs and tables and a small children’s play house – are associated with hospitable sociality. Even though an abundance of work is evident in the tidy presentation of the garden and its plantings, most of this work is embarked upon to make the garden look “natural” (cf Tilley 2008, Gullestad 1992). Thus the side yard is the location for the elements associated with this maintenance, such as clippings, weeds, garden implements, and water storage. The drying rack for clothing, while certainly not a feature of the garden and screened from view from the interior of the house, is tolerated in what is otherwise an area for socializing because the laundering of clothes is seen as a natural part of everyday life.

We go back inside, where Karin takes the camera back to enthusiastically photograph more objects: a painting done by a life-long friend of Poul’s, a sculpture given to her by her daughter. Although effort has been invested in presenting these things attractively, these pieces, like the ones before, are first and foremost

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markers of social relationships. This is perhaps best symbolized by a native American figurine that Karin was given by her daughter when they were together in New Mexico. It is a sculpture of a woman, which, as Karin explains, is meant to symbolize her, holding others – her family. “And if there are more grandchildren, I just go back to New Mexico to have another one added on!”



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Hygge

We start the mapping portion of the research process after lunch because I have taken the train for almost two hours from Copenhagen to reach the town here Poul and Karin live. Though I have offered both of them a marker, Poul takes the lead on drawing the cognitive map, with Karin offering feedback and criticism as he works.

After I have asked them to draw the floorplan of the house and to label the areas they associate with conflict, learning, and so on, I explain that the purpose of my research is to better understand the relationship between domestic space and *hygge*. Karin literally jumps out of her chair at this point to explain “oh, you’re studying *hygge*! Let us show you how we *hygge* ourselves.”

At this point, Karin directs Poul to go upstairs and change his socks, while she goes to the closet and gets out a blanket. When Poul comes back downstairs wearing a pair of knit purple socks – “those are ones I made for him,” Karin says, beaming – they push two leather chairs close together and sit. Karin smooths a blanket over her lap and they hold hands and smile. “This is *hygge*!” says Karin, handing me the Polaroid camera that I had given them to take pictures with.

I hand it back and they go through the house to snap photos of the other places associated with *hygge*. Next stop is the kitchen, where Karin poses with a dish of food she retrieves from the refrigerator. Later Poul and Karin



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decide to label this picture of *hygge* with the caption “Karin i køkkenet,” which translates to “Karin in the kitchen,” a description that indicates that it is not so much the kitchen itself that is *hygge* but rather the presence of Karin (not to mention the products of her considerable cooking skills) that charges this space with a feeling of *hygge*. I have mentioned another participant’s insight that there are really three kinds of *hygge* – that by yourself, with close friends and family, and with your lover, and Karin says that this is the place that she feels *hygge* by herself.

We move on through the house, stopping next at Karin’s office. The photograph in this room is labeled “Karin’s *hygge*krog,” or “Karin’s *hygge* nook.” It is significant that it is not this entire room – as you will recall, the only room in the house with photographs of family – but rather just a corner that is photographed, a subdivision of space that is further reinforced through the reference to a *krog*. The words *hygge*krog and *hygge*hjørne, which literally means *hygge* corner, are often used interchangeably, and it originally struck me as odd that Karin did not identify this space as a corner. But the word *krog* can also be used to represent the words for hook or catch, a doubling of meaning that is significant when Karin’s use of this corner is considered. This is where she sits down at times of day when she considers it likely that she will find her family members in the US online. With



[POUL ' S]

HYGGE KROG
"CORNER"

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VUE OVER HAVEN
[ANNETTE ' S]
M. TITICUS LEBEHUS

few exceptions they do not schedule chats, but rather rely on a sort of forced serendipity, so Karin is not so much cornering *hygge* as she is trying to catch it, which maps neatly onto some of the more romantic explanations of *hygge* (*Om Hygge* 1967, Borish 1991).

Before we go upstairs, we go back to the living area, where Poul takes another photograph that illustrates the difficult of pinning *hygge* down to a place. It is of the garden, and is later labeled "*vue over haven med Annettes legehus,*" or "view over the garden with Annette's (their grandchild's) playhouse." Again, it is not so much the space of the garden that is *hygge*, but the act of perceiving it. In the image they take are multiple symbols of sociality: there is the handsome tree, the one they identified as "the church," that is linked to the memory of their wedding. Underneath it is a curved bench, which invites occupation, or, on this unbearably rainy summer, at least the imagination of a long talk on a pleasant day. And in the background is Annette's playhouse, a reminder not only of the presence of a grandchild in their lives, but also, I believe, of the cycle of life itself. Represented in their garden are two sources of joy in their life, so it is not surprising that simply looking at the backyard is a way to experience *hygge* for both Poul and Karin.

We head upstairs and snap a picture of Poul's office. This is *hygge* for Poul, but in quite a different way from Karin's office. Indeed, Poul here translates, after some discussion, the



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word *krog* to mean “corner.” Despite the physical similarity, Poul’s office functions more like Karin’s kitchen. This is the place that he withdraws to when Karin is away, where he can tinker with his computers undisturbed. Whereas Karin’s *hygge*krog is a place for experiencing that form of *hygge* linked to pleasant and serendipitous interaction with friends and family, Poul’s office is a place of alone *hygge*, where choosing (or being forced) to withdraw from social interaction can lead him into a similar state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi 1988) that Karin experiences in the kitchen.

The last *hygge* image requires that we go back outdoors to photograph the camping caravan. It is labeled in a mixture of Danish and English “*massiv hygge-place*.” *Massiv* means solid in the sense that we would use it to indicate mass or material consistency, similar to the way the term “solid wood” is used to indicate a certain quality of furniture. The caravan is portable *hygge* because it transports not only Poul and Karin, but also a sizeable number of their domestic practices. Karin takes pride in cooking well when they are on the road and sets aside recipes that she can make in the caravan’s tiny kitchen. Poul brings along his computers, and while the photograph/postcard printing activity is also Poul’s hobby, Karin is involved in selecting the images that are printed, deciding who gets which image, and in writing and addressing the cards. In short, the caravan accommodates most

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of the activities that render *hygge* in the space of their house. Even their routines are reproduced; Karin takes the side of the bed that is inconvenient to the bathroom, leading to conflict when she gets up in the middle of the night. Poul's path through the house avoids the area of the kitchen even though the space is so small you think it would impossible to miss. The caravan is *hygge* because it allows the practices associated with domesticity to be transported.

Pair 2 Summary: Material Anchors

Both households in this pair exhibit concern for conservation. For Matt, this is manifest as an extension of his identity as a tinkerer and a fixer of things. The clever metal details on the exterior of the house, the choice of ICFs as a construction material, and especially the improvised copper and PVC pipe air exchange are just a few ways that Matt's interests are reflected in the material of the house. Conservation here is ostensibly about saving energy, but a more important part of the equation is that Matt is investing the house with his intelligence and ingenuity, a point that became more poignant when Dora made a vague reference to some of Matt's past health problems and inferred that the future may not be so certain. Dora and Matt, like Karin and Poul, have a relationship that is clearly delineated among gender lines. In the split, Matt has handled the technical aspects of the house, whereas Dora takes care of decoration and upkeep. Thus the extreme attention Matt invested in achieving a low-maintenance and highly durable exterior is a way of showing care. Other relationships are anchored in the house through its design and decoration, in particular the network of friends in Germany, various of which are associated with the idea to use the basement as a caretaker's space, the compartmentalized design of the master bathroom, and elements of the decor, such as the collection of dolls.

Karin and Poul are not as concerned with conservation for its own sake as Dora and Matt, but they are concerned with cost, perhaps due to the comparatively higher cost of utilities in Denmark. This is well illustrated by Poul's careful accounting to determine whether buying a new freezer would be a sound decision from an economic point of view. Ease of repair and the complication of future maintenance are the primary concern of Poul and Karin's. This seems to outweigh any environmental or cost benefit, as is clear in the discussion of the windows, where Poul describes their energy-saving benefits, but Karin butts in to say that the real reason is that they will not have to be painted. Likewise, they justify their future switch back to the district heating system in the same way, acknowledging that it will cost more money, but that it will be less hassle for them to maintain as they age.

Comfort in both of these households is strongly related to representation. Dora looked to magazines and books to determine how to lay out the interior of her house and used these resources to make particular places in her house feel cozy, the most obvious of which is the sitting area by the fireplace in the great room. Matt used the design of their previous house as a template for this one, maintaining the same basic spatial relationships and exterior form. Poul and Karin, while experiencing *hygge* in many places in their home and camper, perform their nightly TV watching/reading ritual to show me what the immaterial *hygge* looks like. The house itself becomes a representation of care, and in Poul and Karin's case, the yard takes on meaning, too. Here, it is worthwhile noting that Dora and Matt do not feel as invested in their yard; even though it is used for gardening and they appreciate the view, they see it as mildly

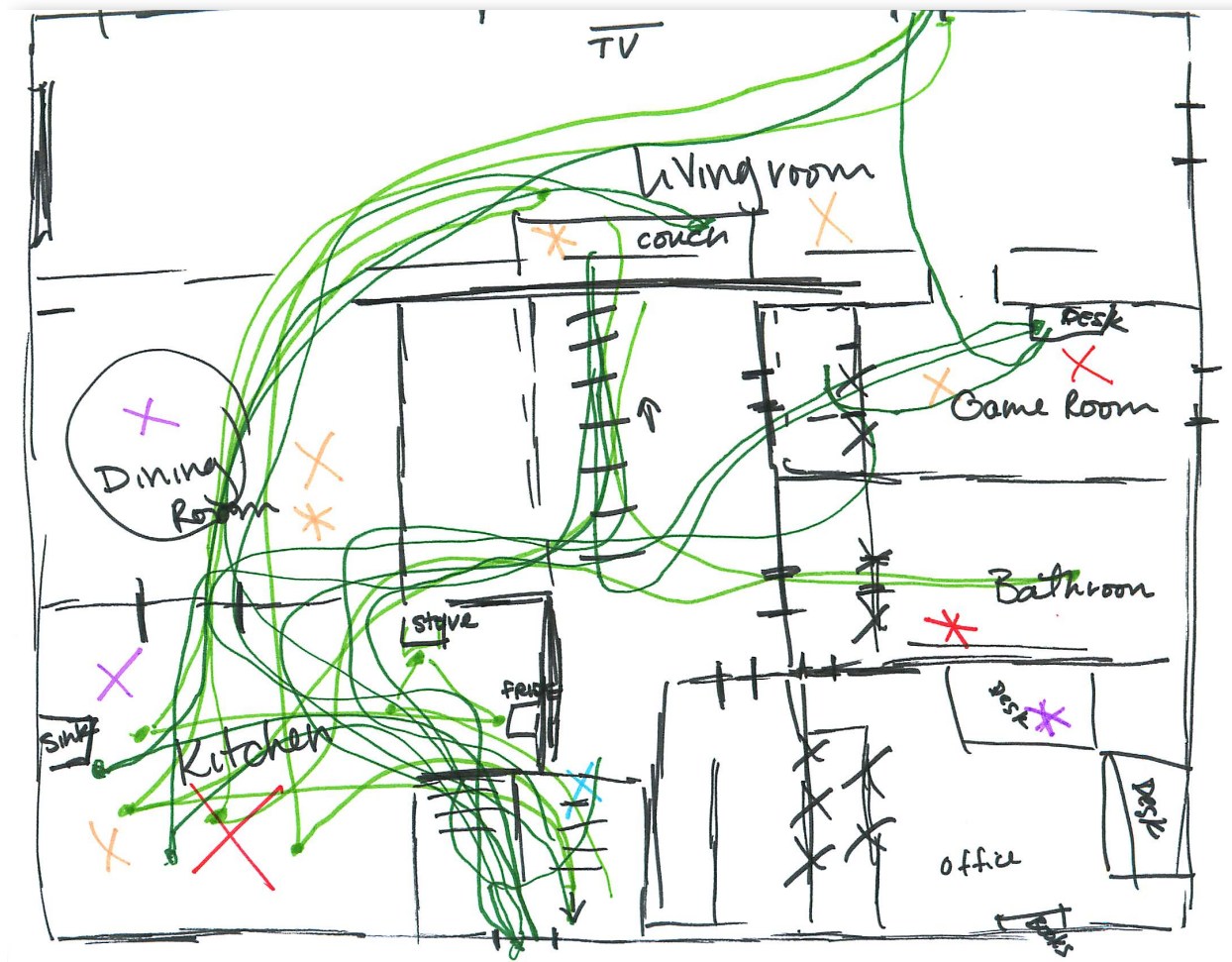
FINDINGS

threatening. Their house is correspondingly larger because it has to contain the universe of meaning that Poul and Karin have distributed over their house, yard, and camper.

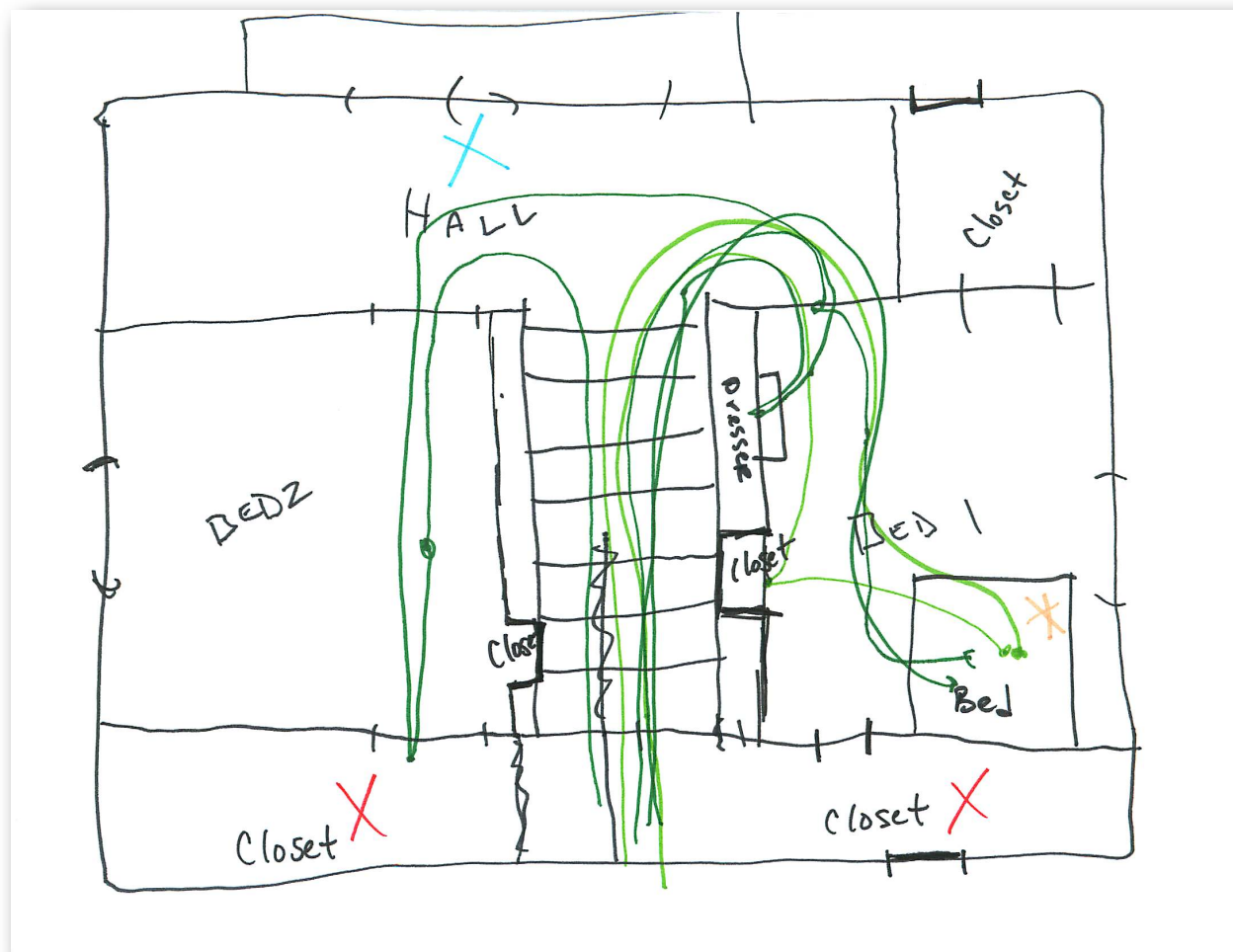
Pair 3: Al and Peg; Ann

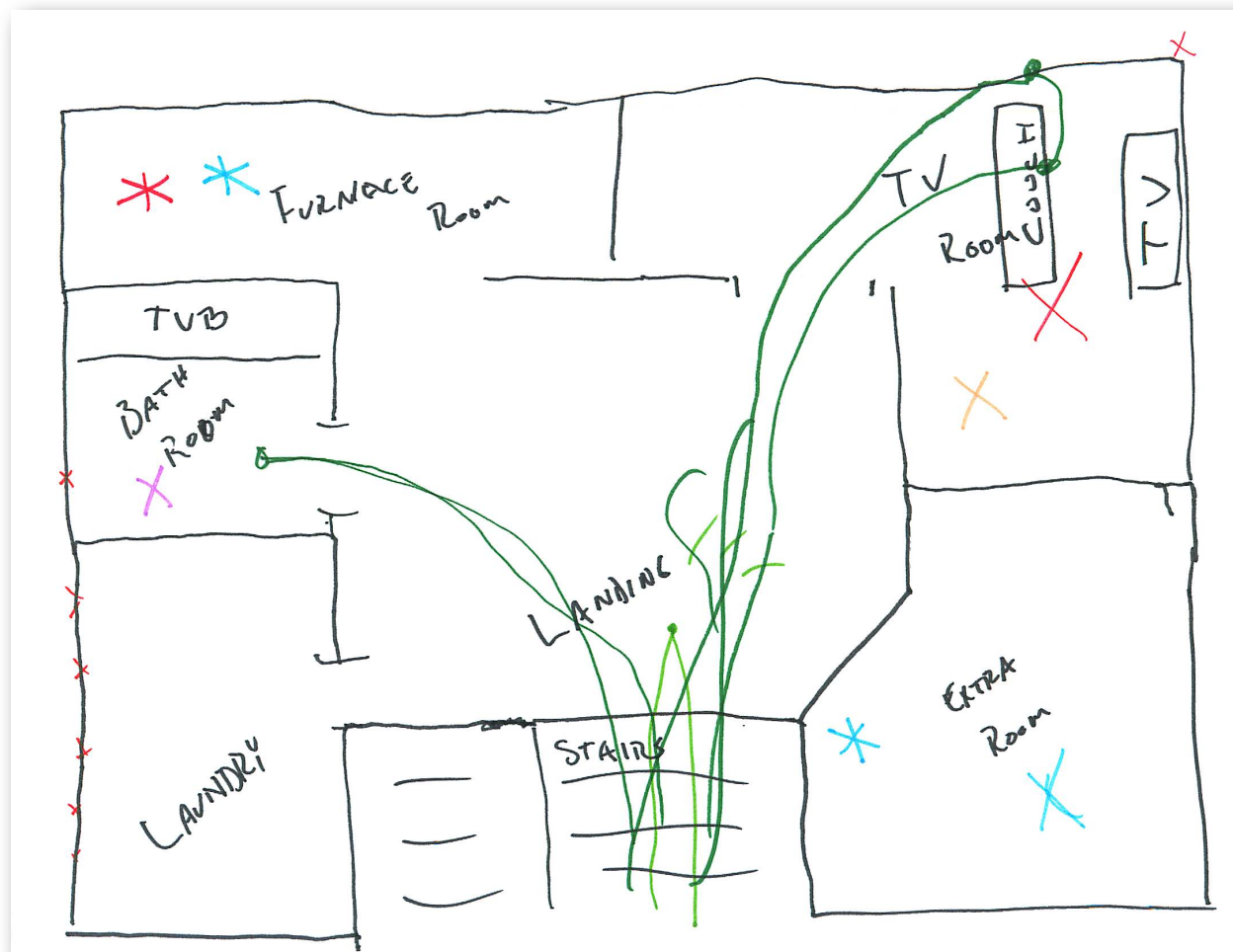
Al and Peg

Maps



Main Floor





Second Floor



Tour

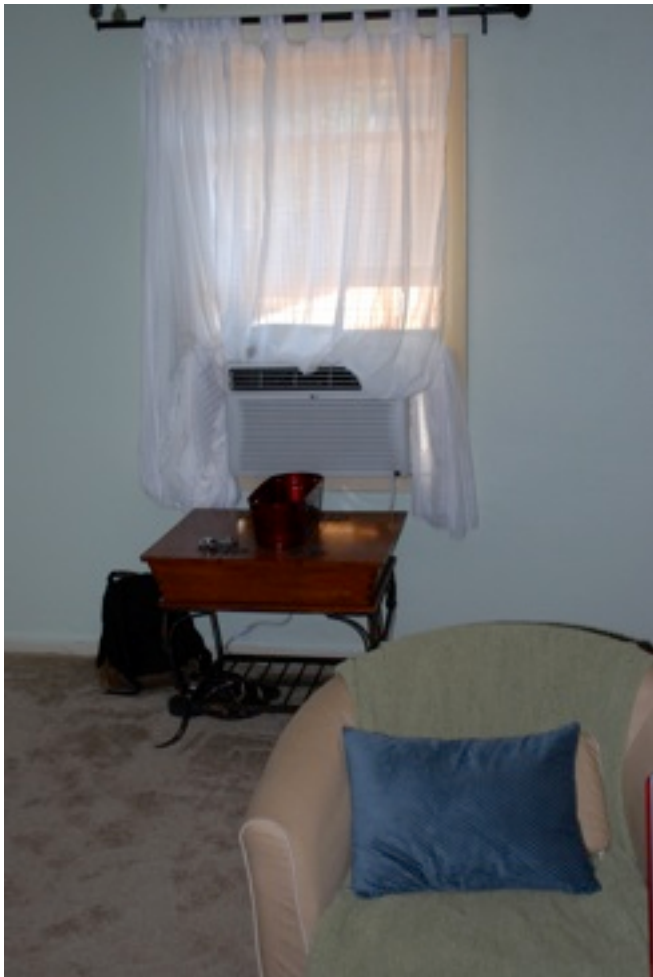
I go up several steps to a porch facing the entry door. A cat meows aggressively before slinking off towards the street where I have parked my car. Peggy answers the door and shows me into the house. I step directly into the living room, and she leads me to the dining room, where I meet her husband, Al, and describe some of the research. Al and Peggy bought the house several months earlier and live there with their pets, two dogs and the territorial cat.

Al and Peg chose these pseudonyms during my second visit as a reference to the American TV sitcom

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"Married with Children." They are married, without children, and genuinely funny, and our my two visits are punctuated with laughter. The choice of pseudonym fits in an ironic way. They have just moved into what they refer to as their first "real house," a farmhouse bungalow built in 1934 on a double lot. They lived in a townhouse before moving into this place, but that place never felt like home; there was not quite enough space for their pets, two dogs and a cat, and they did not meet their neighbors.



Our tour through the house starts in the dining room, and it quickly becomes clear that Al and Peggy have big plans for this house. Peggy immediately points out the carpet. Although it is new, it will be removed so that the hardwood floors can be refinished "as soon as the dogs" trash it. The hardwood floors underneath, Peggy says, were one of the big selling points of the house. She thinks they give it charm and character, which she could see despite a thick layering of repair and improvement projects of dubious quality. We walk back towards the front door and enter the living room, which is long and narrow. Centered on the wall furthest from where we stop to talk and closest to the front door is a table flanked by two chairs. These, Peggy explains, are too far from the main conversation area in the room, but nonetheless she imagines that with the right furnishing, this could be a nice place for people to sit and talk when they

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have friends over. Still, she acknowledges that this area, despite how it is furnished, will mostly be "something nice to look at," rather than a place to sit. Occupying the middle of the living room is an impressively large television and a collection of related video equipment, including a cable box and a Wii game console. Across from the TV is a couch. Peggy also expresses displeasure with this couch, a generic beige hand-me-down, and on my second visit, she proudly announces that they have just purchased another one, which is being built for them as we speak. At the opposite end of the room from the symmetrical chair and table composition is another symmetrical arrangement. A fireplace, probably original to the house, but victim to a remodel somewhere between the 1950's and 1970's, is surrounded by red brick and flanked by two bookcases. Peggy pokes them to demonstrate her dissatisfaction with the quality of construction, which is quite poor; the material is flimsy, there are no backs, and they don't quite fit the space side-to-side. The chimney above the fireplace is covered with a thick layer of heavily textured plaster painted in a light brown shade, resembling a very unappetizing cake. Peggy singles this out as emblematic of her vision for the house: she can see the potential behind all of the layers that need to be stripped away. In this room, she also hates the ceiling fans, one at each end, because she perceives that their style — frosted glass, bleached wood,

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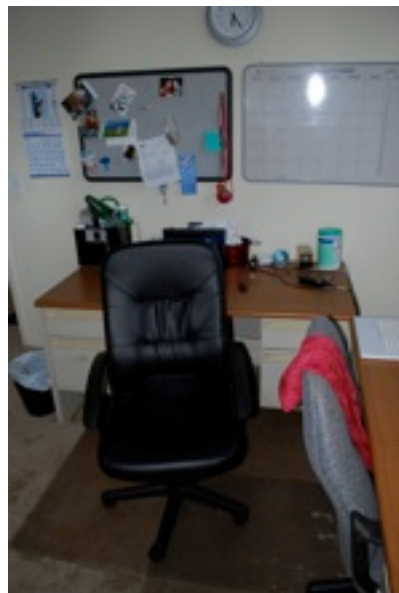


brass trim — does not go with the aesthetic of the house, which she describes as "Craftsman." Plans for this room involve removing the texture, installing well-constructed bookshelves with molding, and replacing the ceiling fans with more appropriate fixtures.

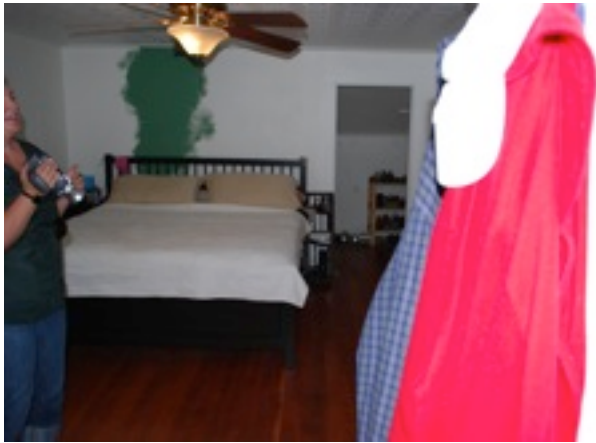
Peg explains that she'd like to replace the furniture. "It's all IKEA, uncomfortable, but we're putting all our money into the plumbing. This house also has enough space for a Christmas tree, which their last house, an attached rowhouse, did not. "We're not religious at all, but it's still exciting to have enough space to have a Christmas tree." It will go in an empty corner of the living room.



We continue through the living room and go through a door into what was originally intended as a small bedroom. Though they express considerable excitement to finally live in a house where they can spread out, Al and Peggy are frustrated by the number of bedrooms — 6 — that the house contains. The size and shape of a number of the bedrooms does not fit with the ways they envision using the space. This room is small, about 9' x 10', and currently contains an unused, inherited desk, and a Foosball and air hockey table. Peggy wants to put the desk and game tables elsewhere and line the walls with shelves for bottles of wine. This way, the room could be used for entertaining small groups of friends, though Al does not seem to agree with this vision of the room. He likes the access to the game tables.



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After a quick tour through the bathroom — "everything in here needs to be changed," says Peggy. The walls in this room are caked with another texture under a thick layer of glossy paint. Peg was home today to meet a plumber to discuss changes in the bathroom.

Peg's office, as she says, "is the one place in the house that's really mine." She works from home a couple of days a week — she is a footwear developer — and does her "chores" in here, by which she means paying bills and filing. Due to its location on the sunny side of the house, it is quite warm in this room. This does not seem to bother her, but Al is visibly uncomfortable from the heat. This is one of the reasons she ended up with this room, which is furnished with two large desks at a right angle to one another and a crammed bookcase on an opposite wall. A wall of closets contains Peggy's craft stuff and the couple's considerable collection of board games. "We're board game geeks," says Peggy in a confessional tone. Board games play a role in their regular socializing as well as with annual parties they have in conjunction with Christmas, Halloween, New Year's, and the Super Bowl.

A low bookshelf in the office is crammed with evidence of their ambitions for the house. One shelf overflows with titles such as *Family Handyman's Guide to Trim*. "Our plan is to do as much as possible ourselves," says Al. "Except for the plumbing.



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We're hiring out the plumbing," says Peg, "and the electrical."

Upstairs, two identical bedrooms are tucked under the eaves. Al and Peggy occupy one on the southern side of the house. A king-size bed is positioned with its foot to the door; this is a provisional location; it does not quite fit, but it is the only place it will fit in the room until they close off a closet on an adjacent wall. Two dog beds sit along one wall. A window air conditioner sits in newly installed windows. They found this room unbearably hot and noisy, a problem that became a major motivating factor for the replacement of windows in the entire house. There is a large walk-in closet at the back of each bedroom, but these are cramped slightly by their placement under the sloping roof. Therefore Al uses the other bedroom as an extension of his closet. His casual clothes are stored in their bedroom, and his work clothes are in the bedroom next door, an arrangement which also lets him get ready for work in the morning without disturbing Peggy, who tends to wake up later. Converting the closet in the master bedroom to a bathroom is in the plans, but as this project will involve the addition of considerable plumbing and raising the roofline, Al and Peggy think that it will be a project for three or four years in the future. They started off thinking this would be a quick, slapdash project, but because of the permitting process they've decided to "really do what we want."



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They have replaced the old wood windows in the upper two levels of the house with new insulated vinyl units. This was done with the secondary goal of improving energy efficiency; the primary problem was that many of the windows had been painted shut, and some of them were screwed shut. This was the case in the bedroom. With the old single-glazed window, which was hard to open, the room got very warm in the summer, and it also let in a lot of sound from outdoors.

We go back down the stairs to the dining room. They're talking about "popping this wall out," to expose the staircase and perhaps build a staircase

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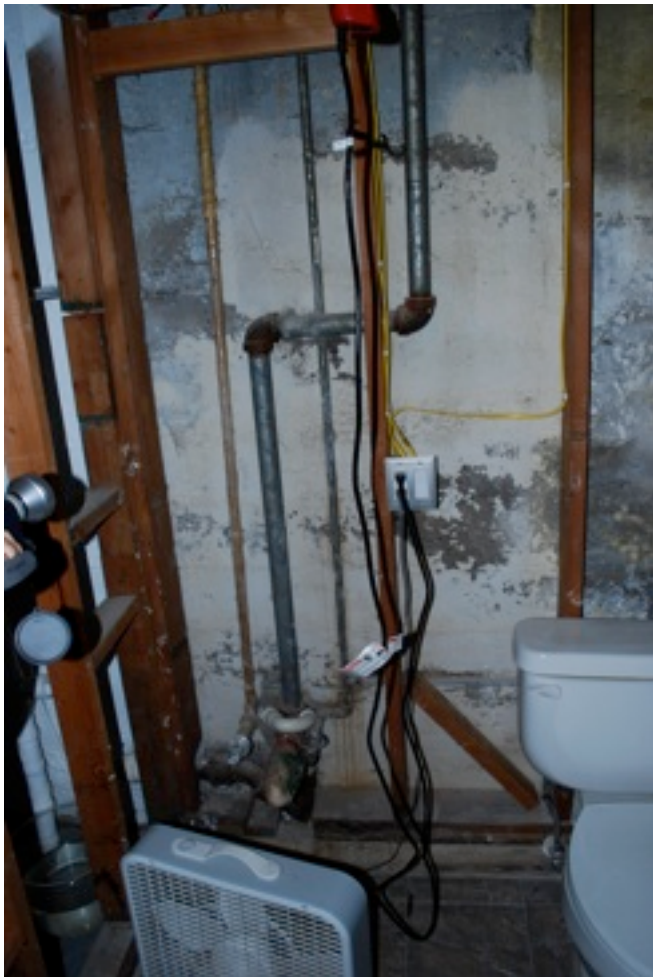
underneath it. A breakfast nook, which may once have been a back porch, extends off the back side of the kitchen. Al and Peggy have lined this space with shelving to hold their collection of kitchen gadgets. It is clear that at least one of them enjoys to cook and bake; a seagreen KitchenAid blender has a prominent position on the chrome Metrowire shelving, the same type of stuff you'd see in a commercial kitchen. They perceive the kitchen to be original to the house, but it was apparent to me that it was likely remodeled in the 1950's (the cabinets are made of plywood, which was not available on the mass market until after World War II). Although not all of the drawers open and close correctly, they have shifted their plans, which called for a complete replacement, to an idea where they envision saving the original cabinets. They like some of the quirky features. Al slides open a drawer to show me a built-in breadbox. This decision also seems to have some relationship to the window replacement described earlier. They replaced the house's original wood windows with vinyl windows, which are much more energy efficient, will not need painting, and are also easier to operate. Against a wall leans the removed window sashes. Al and Peggy plan to turn these into some sort of decorative feature. They perceived the removal of the windows as removing some of the charm and character that had attracted them to the house in the first place, and

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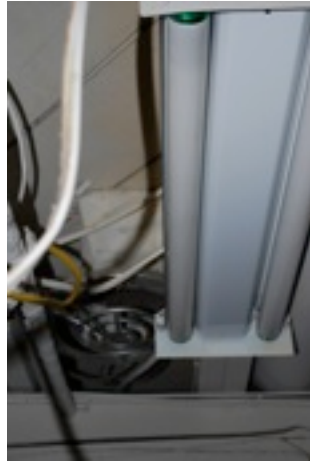
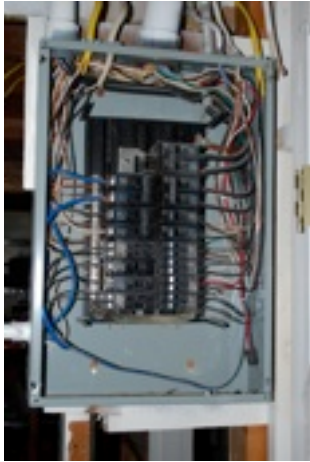
holding onto the sashes is a way to do that.

The house did not come with any appliances aside from a dishwasher, and it was broken. Their plans to remodel the kitchen influenced their consumption decisions for appliances; rather than going to a big box store and buying new appliances – which they plan to do when they remodel the kitchen – Al and Peggy turned to Craigslist, assembling a set of stainless steel appliances which match remarkably well. I learn when I lean against the dishwasher and accidentally turn it on that all of the "new" appliances have some sort of functional quirk or shortcoming, which Al and Peggy associate with the provenance of the object ("it had to be that cheap and on Craigslist for a reason!") rather than with the quality of a brand. Of these, only the dishwasher, has so far warranted repair. Peg says "it doesn't really matter because we'll get all new appliances when we remodel. Al and Peg are perfectly happy to live with the rest of their quirky appliances until they remodel the kitchen.



The driving factor behind their planned kitchen renovation is the large collection of kitchen gadgets that support Peg's cooking hobby. This is supplemented by her familial ties – she grew up on a farm, and her parents give her grass-fed beef on a regular basis, so she doesn't have to buy it at the store. This explains the large chest freezer in the breakfast room – "the beef doesn't come a steak at a time."

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I notice that a portion of the backsplash is missing; this had been wired incorrectly and was caught by the house inspector, which made it a major priority for repair. Brand new electrical wire is strung between two exposed junction boxes with outlets. Al's father, who has the skills, tools, and time to contribute to the house, has helped them with this project and a number of others around the house, especially those having to do with the myriad of electrical problems that the home inspector identified when they purchased the house.

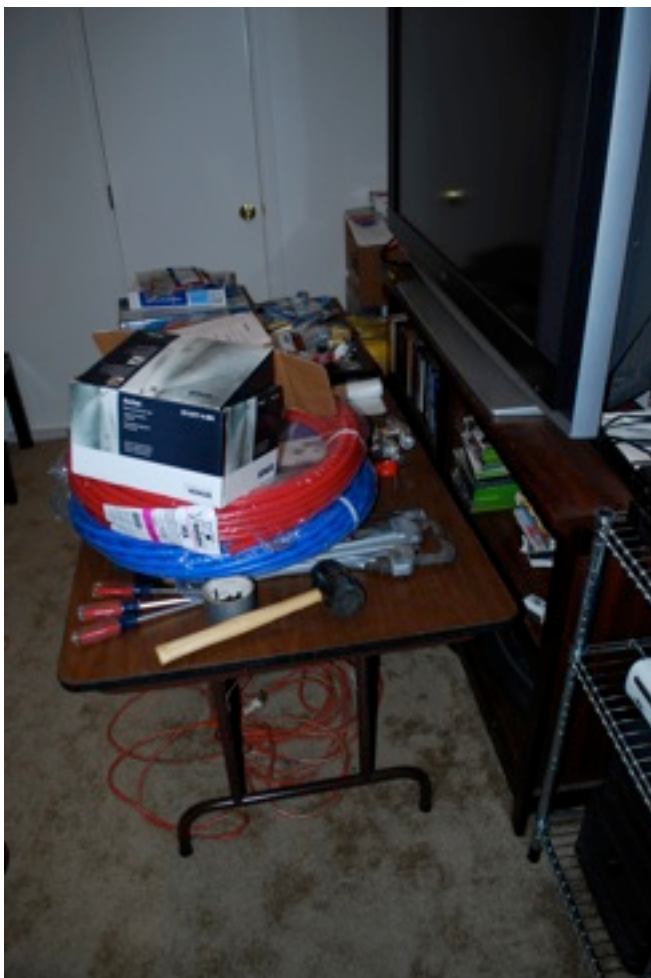
We head downstairs from the kitchen through a stairwell that Peg



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says that she really likes. It's fairly roomy and lined with painted wood paneling, a feature that both Al and Peg see as contributing to the house's character because it is part of the original house rather than the "Home Depot shit" that especially raises Al's ire. This space is necessary because the main floor of the house is raised about half a level about the ground, so this space also provides access to the backyard. Slip-on shoes are stashed in the corner and two dog ball launchers hang from the handrail. The floor is a porcelain tile, brown in color, that would hide a lot of dirt. I suspect that another reason this space is valued is because it helps keep things that "belong" outside (dirt) from penetrating too far into the living space of the house.



Maintaining a separation between inside and outside is important to Al and Peg. After realizing that water and moisture were seeping through the wall, Al has been methodically removing the paint from the exterior concrete basement wall in the laundry room and the adjacent bathroom space. Al's been spending a considerable amount of time — two full days — using a Dremel and a wire brush mounted to a drill to remove paint and plaster on the concrete wall in the laundry room. For Al, this project is labor-intensive but strangely satisfying.

"So we don't have a garage, so all of Al's stuff is piled up in the furnace room." This is the contents of the garage from their former house. "My

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family was handy, so every year my brother and I would get tools at Christmas." Not only does Al have a large collection of tools, but his father comes over to help with the house on a regular basis. Al and Peg appreciate the results, but they are not always in agreement. "It's three determined adults, all with their own agenda," says Al.

On the whole, they like the basement the least. In part this is because of the disorder resulting from a water leak in the basement bathroom and its subsequent demolition. As Peg puts it, before the basement "was three separate rooms, and now it's just one big mess. This was a functioning exercise room, but now it's holding all of the bathroom stuff, and then we had to clear out the closet with our camping stuff, so now that's piled in the middle here."

This room encapsulates all the things that Al and Peg don't like about the house. First it's been built poorly, with what they describe as "Home Depot grade" materials, and it's not to code. Furthermore it reminds them of the house's history; they attribute this room, like the texture on the bathroom walls upstairs, to "the halfway house people."

We head to the other bedroom in the basement. "This is Derek's mancave, with his big TV and Xbox and my wine collection that I want to put upstairs," explains Peg. The room is dominated by an enormous flat screen television and a table of tools displaced from the bathroom flood and



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demolition. I ask what's through a door in the corner, which, if my sense of space is correct, should lead into a space under the front porch.

"Should we show him?" asks Peg in a tone of voice that is only half-joking. Al opens the door to expose a crawlspace-like area with dirt walls and a jumble of stuff on the floor. The previous residents of the house, they explained, used this hidden space to grow pot. The house was foreclosed upon, which is why Al and Peg were able to buy it even though they were not able to sell the townhouse, which is now rented out. This less-than-sunny history haunts the house. Peg, who often works from home, worries about the kind of person who might turn up on the doorstep. They are both concerned about the report of a foundation specialist, who explained to them that the unauthorized excavation might cause the house to settle unevenly. Repairing this problem means removing the improvised concrete block retaining walls. Al's preliminary inspection revealed a considerable stash of syringes. It's dark behind the walls, but he uses the flash on the camera to show me the problem. He's not sure exactly how he will do this project because, as he explains, "I have this insane phobia of needles."

"I'm not really scared normally, but when Al's not here and when there's someone driving up and down the street, I wonder if they're going to knock on my door and ask me for

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something. This was the house where they were selling drugs," says Peg.

Al continues, "one of the guys they took out of here they threw in the state pen in Salem."



We head upstairs and out to the back yard. The house sits on a triple lot enclosed by a brand new fence. This is not quite enough enclosure for Peg, who says "I'd like to line everything with bamboo. I like the greenery, and the privacy aspect." She's already planted a garden and they are debating about a fireplace or some kind of enclosure for the patio.

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The style of the house contributes to their affection for it, but again seems to demand investment. Peg says, "I want to change the siding, because I think the metal siding really takes a lot of character away from the house." The fact that the house is a freestanding structure also matters for reasons that are both symbolic and practical. As Peg says, "this house feels like a home. With the townhouse, we felt like it was just a step up from apartment living. We had two dogs and three cats. It wasn't enough room, without a yard for the dogs it was a lot of walks."



Cozy

Like the first time we met, there's a lot of laughing and joking when we do the cognitive mapping exercise on my second visit a few weeks later. Despite the banter, Al and Peg are remarkably fast with the drawing exercise, exhibiting none of the worry about proper scale or representation that many of the other participants have worried about. As a result, we've only been at the mapping exercise for about twenty minutes when I steer the discussion towards coziness and ask them to mark spots on the map where they feel relaxed or cozy.

Al immediately puts a large X on the map in the area he has labeled "TV room." This corresponds to the room in the basement that contains his TV and video game console. Peg laughs and agrees, but says that the living room is also cozy. Al agrees.

This is a bit odd, because the two rooms contain essentially the same objects. Both have upholstered couches (actually a matching loveseat and sofa.) Both have flat screen TVs connected to cable television and video game consoles. Both have coffee tables located in front of the couch. The difference is that for Al the TV room is cozy *because* it has a TV, while for Peg the living room is cozy *despite* the presence of a TV. This is made clear when Peg comments, "Yesterday, we had a really good deep talk and it happened in here. If we're in the living room the TV is on." The location of Al's TV room also makes it feel more



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cozy for him alone; it is a dead-end room that does not intersect with Peg's regular traffic pattern. As a result when he is in this room he is likely to be undisturbed. Seen from this point of view it becomes clear why the pot room is so problematic — indeed, it is problematic enough that neither Al nor Peg drew it on the cognitive map until I asked them to indicate spaces associated with conflict or tension. (It is represented by the small red X near the TV room.) If, following Miller (1998), a home can be understood to be haunted by its former occupants, the memory of this room's illicit use — and the transport of its contents back and forth through what is now Al's TV room — can be thought of as an intrusion.



Next up for discussion is the future game room, or wine room. There is disagreement here. Al thinks a game room built around the foosball table would be perfectly cozy. Peg disagrees. Her vision of coziness for this space is a wine tasting room lined with fine bottles, but Al dismisses this idea as an economic possibility. "The only way we can do that is with \$2 bottles of wine," he says. Peg laughs and says that's not what she had in mind.

Interestingly one of the things that makes this house cozy is its potential. "There are little things I want to do in every room," says Peg. One gets the sense that coziness is lurking underneath everywhere in this house, as though it were an innate quality of the house that has been hidden under a disguise of inopportune remodels,

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and that it will somehow spring out on its own accord if it is just given the opportunity. This is most clear in Al and Peg's revulsion of the heavy texture above the fireplace, and in Al's meticulous removal and patching of the faulty and shoddily patched concrete foundation wall in the laundry room. Their discussions of future projects oscillate between a desire to completely erase all previous evidence of occupation (such as in the bathroom) with a sense that some of the house's "character" should be preserved (such as the well-constructed kitchen cabinets and window frames that are waiting by the fireplace to be turned into a decorative feature.)

I ask Al and Peg where they are cozy together in the house, and they agree on the living room and bedroom; Peg qualifies this by saying that she'll feel a lot more comfortable in the living room once the new couch arrives. As established above, Al feels cozy on his own in his TV room in the basement, and I thought that Peg might feel a similar sense in her office, which is like Al's office in that it is a dead-end room under her control. But she does not feel this room is cozy when she's on her own; instead the living room fulfills this function for her. The office, she explains, is where she works, and it's a place where she is very "productive" and "focused," which is a good feeling, but not necessarily "comfy."

I ask Peg to photograph some of these spaces for me, and as we start to

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walk around the house she says, "So, ever since I was a kid, comfortable for me means that people when they walk into the house don't feel uncomfortable, like, they don't feel overwhelmed with my furniture, my pets, or anything like that. It's not one aesthetic thing, it's the whole flow of it. That means nice furniture, but not so nice that people don't want to sit on it."

"I'd love to have some nice sitting chairs that could go along that wall, because I think it would be a nice place to sit and chat. I'm really excited to redo this, because I think it could be adding so much. The fireplace can be such a warm inviting place, and the way that our living room is set up, you just come in and talk and sit near the fire, it would be warm and cozy in the winter."

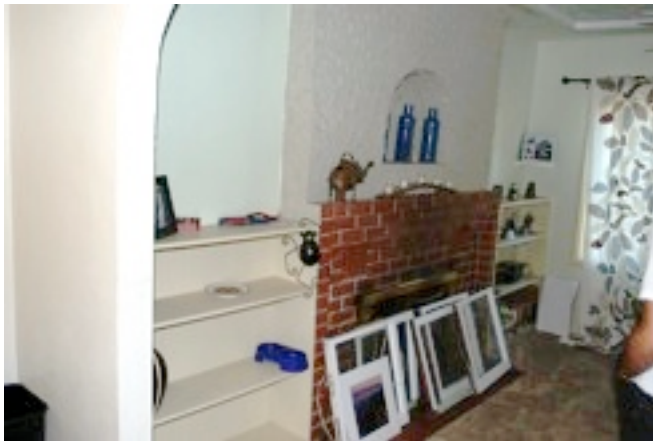
Al directs our attention to the dining room as another site of coziness, if they could get better chairs and figure out how to deal with a problematic gift. Their old rectangular table was the ideal size and shape for the room and also accommodated their large dinner and board game parties. The old chairs were problematic, though; they were a budget purchase after Al and Peg's wedding and were "cheap" and "falling apart." Upon hearing this Peg's grandmother gave them Peg's great grandfather's dining room table and chairs. "It's not what we want," says Peg, giggling, "but I don't know how to say no without offending anyone... right now we have it but I can't wait to find a way to not



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have it." The dark wood is too formal for their taste, and they find the large round table too large for the room, but not large enough to accommodate a large group playing a board game.

The dining room is also cozy by virtue of its proximity to the kitchen and the living room, but also by its separation from these spaces. The positive qualities of proximity are expressed by acoustics: being able to hear (and control the volume of) the television in the living room, being able to carry on a conversation when Peg is in the kitchen and Al is sitting with friends in the dining room. But these rooms are also far enough way that a sense of being alone can be maintained. "You can be in your own little pod," says Al," and Peg picks up here, to say "yes, and it's still perfectly comfortable."



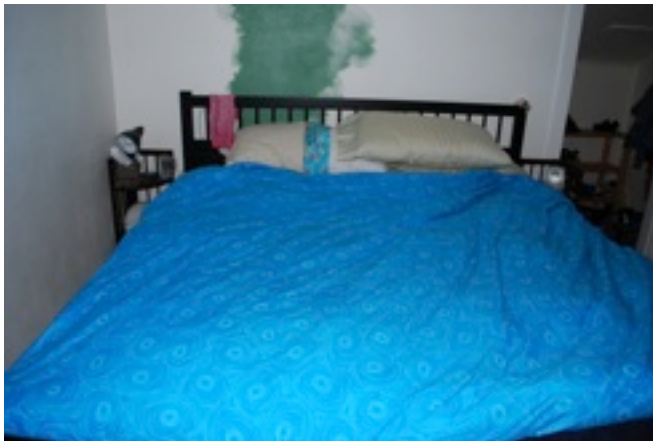
This explains Al's affection for one of the first parts of the house he mentioned during my first visit: the archway that separates the dining room from the living room.

Unfortunately the entirety of the arch was not captured in a photograph, but the image left shows a portion of it. Al and Peg both described as one of the parts of the house that had "character." Accordingly they want to remove the wall between the dining room and kitchen. We walk into kitchen itself, which Al says "could be cozy, especially if we're having a glass of wine while she's cooking. It's big enough in here that we're not on top of each other."

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We head downstairs to take a photograph of Al's TV room. The plumbing has been completed since my first visit. A leak in the closet is gone, and they now have an on-demand hot water heater. Peg is happy with it, but Al feels that the water doesn't get hot enough for washing the dishes. Peg points out that it's "set at 125 degrees, and for the record, that's scalding," but this doesn't seem to convince Al. Still, Al associates an element of psychological comfort with the water heater, though: "we don't have one that's all corroded and nasty anymore." Plus they have more space in the "furnace room slash garage," as Al puts it.

Before leaving, I hang out downstairs while Al and Peg go upstairs to tidy up and photograph one last cozy space: their bed.



Ann

Cognitive Map

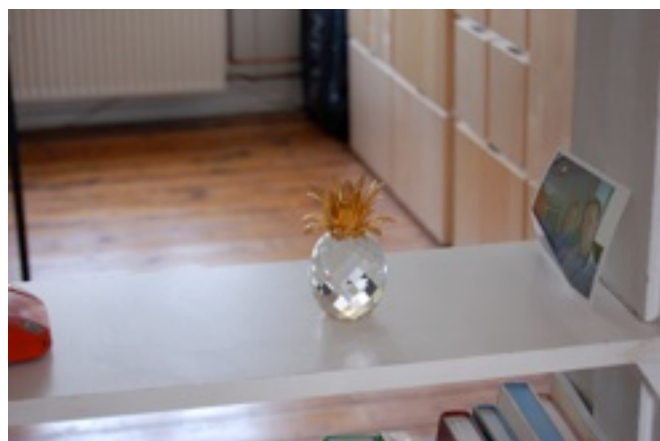


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køkken	kitchen
stue	living room
bibliotek	library
værksted	workshop
kontor	office
soveværelse	bedroom (literally "sleeping room")
badeværelse	bathroom
toilet	room with toilet
gang	hall
to be: skab	to be cabinet (mixed Danish/English in original)
nu: [participant name]s rum	now: Ann's space



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Tour

Ann is in the midst of a remodeling project at the time of our interview. She moved in about seven months before. This apartment now under construction was previously two small apartments, her boyfriend Mads's apartment, which was two rooms and a "hellhole" of a kitchen. The neighbor moved out, they bought the adjoining space, and they knocked out a wall and are in the process of remodeling. When they are done they will have added a much larger kitchen and bathroom to the apartment. The kitchen is finished, but the bathroom is still in the demolition phase. A makeshift shower has been set up in the kitchen.

Ann, who is finishing a degree in anthropology, seems less thrown off by intentional ambiguity of the house tour directions than most of the other participants. This can partially be attributed to her education, but it is also a process, I believe, of the house its contents still being somewhat foreign to her. Because the apartment has been under construction since she moved in she has only unpacked her clothes, so most of the objects around are her boyfriend's.

The idea that taste is oppositional is clearly illustrated in the first object Ann points out, a Swarovski crystal candle holder. This would never have been purchased on its own merits; instead it was given to Mads by his parents after they had sold the rest of their Swarovski collection at a flea

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market. It seemed at the time an appropriate gift because his company was pursuing a contract with Swarovski, so this bauble has the function of acting as a good luck charm. Ann also finds its presence a bit humorous because “it so clearly out of place in the apartment that there must be a story behind it.”

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We turn to the right and move on to the piece on the other side of the door, a grey stained wood bookshelf built by a Danish company called Montana. This is a classic object of Danish design. As Ann explains, “it’s not very original to have Montana bookcases.

It's what you buy when you achieve a certain status of living. It's a very grown-up way of living, but I think it's become a classic. But I kind of like that they're trashed. You can tell they're old because the drawers are really hard to get in and out," she says, demonstrating how the only way to get one drawer back in is to bang it repeatedly.

The bookshelves are further singularized through their history. Mads's father was a salesperson for the Montana company, so these are some of the first models that they made, and they were his before he gave them to Mads. Thus Ann remaps the symbolic status of the objects from a generic marker of Danish middle class identity to a carrier of a singular family story. She and Mads want to buy more, but they are quite expensive — a wallful of shelves can easily cost the equivalent of \$20,000 — a sum which Ann equates to the cost of adding a terrace to the apartment, now under consideration by the building's co-op board or *andelsforening*.

Our discussion of the expense of Montana leads Ann to mention "the only design object that we've bought for the apartment." We go back to the kitchen, where she points at the lamp, a Tolomeo Single Suspension Lamp, over the table. "I've been a student for many years now, and so most of my stuff is from IKEA. I have no problem with IKEA — I love IKEA... where would I be without it? But sometimes it's just also nice to be able to get that



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one extravagant, special design object.”

Ann describes her affection for this object in terms of function. The ceiling box for the electric wires did not end up centered over the table, which meant that a pendant lamp would have had to have “a wire going to a hook, and then going down, which would look kind of silly... then we found this lamp and it was just *so* functional. Of course the functionality was just the disguised excuse to buy a lamp that cost about 6000 kroner (\$1200.) Of course you can get lamps that are much more expensive than that.” Ann further justifies its extravagance by its

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status as a birthday gift; after they had found it and decided against it because of its expense, Mads gave it to Ann for her birthday.

Ann shows me the kitchen, which they built themselves using components from IKEA. The only thing that was here when they bought the apartment was a range. Ann readily acknowledges that it is done a style that is currently trendy. Many of her friends also have kitchens with shiny white doors — “ten years from now we’ll all be tired of them,” she says. This is her favorite room in the house, and she likes in particular the countertop, which is distinctive because it is two to three times thicker than a standard countertop. Ann explains that this is a newly introduced option at IKEA. She also likes the floor, which is painted in a vibrant glossy lime green. As she explains, “when the sun comes in here — and it does sometimes — the kitchen just explodes with color.”

She laughingly shows me the shower arrangement, which looks like it has been jerryrigged from a hula hoop, a plastic dropcloth, and a Rubbermaid storage container. Ann jokes about this as being extremely efficient, but she really hates it. “I’m a girl. I need to put conditioner in my hair, and I haven’t for six months, because the tub fills up by the time I’ve washed and rinsed my hair,” she says.

A small shelf next to the stove area holds a elephant-shaped watering can that was given to Ann by a childhood friend, and a vase that she picked up

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while doing fieldwork for her own research in Finland. It is a white glass vase designed by the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto and is very common in houses across Scandinavia. Ann purchased it because she observed a family using it as a sugar bowl, which “was a nice way to take it down a notch.” This is akin to Ann’s reasoning for liking the Montana bookshelves because they are “trashed.” It is a way of knocking some of the wind out of things that might otherwise betray too much attention to status.



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At this point I notice that the kitchen is absolutely pristine, and

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while this might be attributed to its newness, there is not so much as a smudge of grease or a fingerprint on any surface — and the stainless steel appliances, glossy white cabinets, and glass cooktop are all surfaces that are very difficult to keep up. I ask Ann how much she uses the kitchen and she blushes. “Now that you ask, I don’t use it that much, hardly at all, for cooking. But I like being in here because of the openness. I can sit here and talk to Mads.”

Upon further discussion, it turns out that my impression is wrong. The kitchen is both used on a daily basis and kept impeccably clean. Mads usually cooks because the demands of Ann’s part time job and student work means that she does not have a regular schedule, and it is important to Mads to eat a “proper” hot meal at a regular time, “no later than 6:30 or 7:00,” as Ann explains.

We leave the kitchen. Ann shows me a bathroom that was illegally installed by a previous owner. They are afraid of the legal ramifications if the shower were to leak into the apartment below, so they shower in the kitchen and use this space as a toilet and a closet.

Next up is a space Ann calls the “apartment shed.” I suggest the Danish translation of *værksted*, or workshop, and she lights up. “Yes, that’s exactly right.” But then her mood darkens. “I hate this room... all the buckets, the things in here remind me of how far we still have to go with all the projects... this room doesn’t



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look like anything; it's just storage and *værksted*. I cannot wait until the day we put all the stuff in the basement." They will then remove the ugly shelves, install Montana units, and restore a doorway that previously connected this room to the one next door.

We go to that room next. It is functioning as a storage room. The walls have a rough texture, like new plaster, and I ask about this. It turns out that this is another "improvement" from a previous tenant that Ann and Mads are in the process of undoing. Ann spend a month's worth of evenings and weekends to spackle the kitchen walls. She attributes her happiness with that room to the smoothness of the walls ("it came out really well.") "It's a lot of work to get rid of this texture," she says, "but I'll do it, I will."

Ann's role within the relationship is to maintain the sense of order and the aesthetic which she prefers. To illustrate this she picks up a cartoonish stuffed sunflower, flips it over, and switches it on. It begins wiggling vigorously and loudly playing an obnoxious version of the children's song "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." "Mads brought this home from a Christmas lunch at work," Ann says, "and this is the kind of thing that he can just leave around the house and forget about. I can't do that." Fortunately Mads doesn't offer much resistance when she decides to get rid of this sort of thing, although she does think it's funny because, as Ann relates, Mads also declared when they

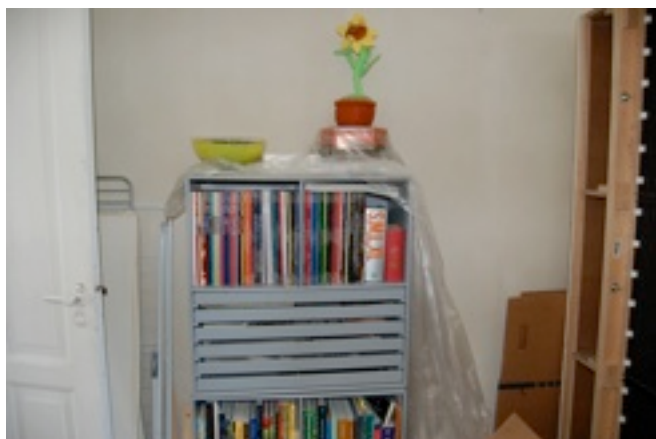


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moved in together that they should not have too many *nips*, or knick-knacks, in their apartment, citing the Swarovski candle holder as a prime example. “But what’s funny is that *he’s* the one who has all the knick-knacks,” Ann says. “I don’t have any!”

We walk down the hallway to the area that will become the renovated bathroom. It is easy to see the entire area because the wall separating the hall and bathroom has been stripped down to the studs. “Actually, I like this room better than the *værksted*,” says Ann, “because I fantasize about how nice it is going to be, and I can almost see it happening, and I know it will happen, even though it’s more trashed.”

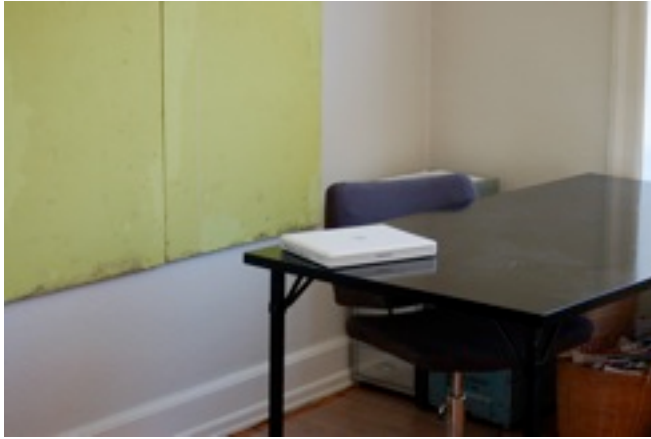
“Over by the window we’ll have a sink and a washing machine,” she says, drawing the words “washing machine” out for dramatic effect. They’ve been doing their laundry at Mads’ parents house, which is in a suburb about a half hour away by car. There will be a closet where there is now a door to the stairwell (there is another door to the same stairwell in the new kitchen), a large shower, and a toilet. The floor and shower will be tiled, and the rest of the room will be painted. The only work they will undertake is putting up *filt* (a wallpaper-like fiberglass reinforcement that helps keep plaster from cracking) and then painting. They started pulling up the old floor but stopped because it was hard work. “We’ll just pay someone else to do that for us,” says Ann. The trouble has been finding



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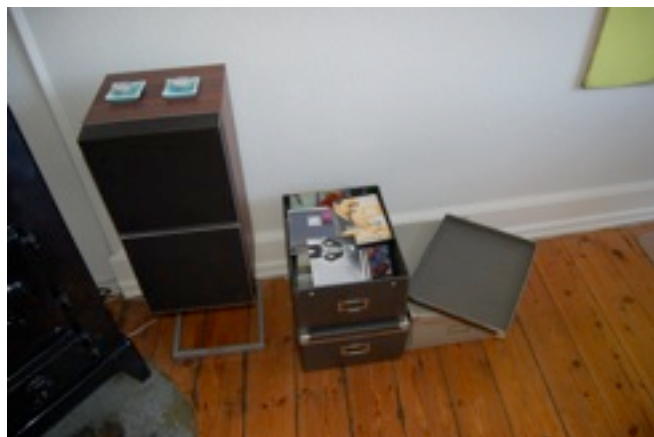
someone to do the work. Despite a process that Ann wonderfully describes as “heavy networking,” they have been unsuccessful in getting a contractor to sign a contract, much less return calls.

Across the hall is the office, which is labeled *kontor* in the map above. Ann has painted a rectangular piece of MDF in a glossy black, which matches the dining room table, “to contrast with all the white; I sometimes think there is too much white in a Danish home.” Like the Aalto vase sugar bowl, this is a subtle strategy of differentiation that simultaneously acknowledges and prevailing cultural meanings by inverting them.



In the corner is “Mads’s largest knick-knack,” by which Ann means not the collection of hifi equipment, but rather the coal stove the components are sitting on. It was the source of heat for the apartment until the cooperative association installed a central heating system. I open up the stove and Ann is grossed out by the spiderwebs inside. It turns out that she is looking for reasons to get rid of it, even though she likes the look of it — “it’s completely non-functional,” she says, “but it’s a big object that it’s turning out to be really difficult to keep clean.”

Boxes alongside the stove/hifi stand hold CDs. Ann recalls a discussion with Mads over whether they should buy a special cabinet to hold their collection, but that they had decided together that they thought purchasing a piece of furniture for the



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single purpose of holding CDs did not make sense, that it would be too “loud” for their aesthetic.

The office is also where Ann and Mads keep their clothes. They have two matching wardrobe units from IKEA. Mads had one in the basement when Ann moved in and the second was purchased to match. She’d rather have something that fit the space a bit better – by which she means that it would go all the way up to the ceiling – and something, despite her previous comments, that would be white instead of birch veneer, which she does not like. They have contemplated painting the offensive doors but decided against it, reasoning that it didn’t make sense to invest the labor in something that they were not planning on keeping for very long.



I did not notice a computer station in the office, so I ask Ann about this. Mads’s laptop, a PC, is in the bedroom, folded shut on a table next to the bed, and hers, a Mac, is in the *stue*. She retrieves it and sets it on the table. I ask Ann to show me where their internet connection comes into the apartment. This leads us to the bedroom, where she slides a jumble of wires out from underneath the bed. The area under the bed is used for storage of all sorts of other things – a cast-off desktop computer (“we really should throw that away, but who knows when that’s going to happen”), out of season clothes, and so forth.



The metal venetian blinds in this room are broken and they’ve been trying to find a suitable roller blind

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replacement, but Ann is having difficulty finding anything that is both white and untextured. This loops back to the labor that she has invested to make the kitchen walls white and smooth, a taste preference that is directly linked to the modernist aesthetic.

Interestingly the same aesthetic preference justifies a decision *not* to invest labor elsewhere in the apartment. “The wood floor, due to the budget of our project, we’ll not be able to do anything with that, but it’s actually OK. We both agreed that we like it, there’s so much history. You can see the burn marks from when that oven [coal stove] was in use, the sparks falling out. I like that they’re trashed. I like that when we have visitors over, girls wearing high heels, we don’t have to ask them to take their shoes off. I think that’s the most annoying thing, being asked to take your shoes off.” What seems at first to be simply a modernist affinity for honesty or integrity is, in fact, linked to a heightened awareness of contemporary fashion and identity. Shoes, especially heels, are important to Ann. As she explains, they are an integral part of the outfit; when she is a guest in someone else’s house and is asked to remove her shoes, she feels like she is being forced to remove part of her clothing.

We head back to the kitchen, where Ann, now quite comfortable in her role as narrator, shows off a newly acquired possession. It is a wood stand that holds two ceramic pots. Ann explains

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that it is made by the Danish company Trip Trap, which is best known for manufacturing expensive garden furniture of teak wood in a fairly conservative style. The wood is supposed to be left untreated and weather to a mellow grey. This object is a bit of a departure for the company, which has decided, likely following the recognition that a large number of Danes live in apartments with no access to a garden of their own, to extend its brand through introducing an assortment of garden-themed goods designed in a more modernistic idiom for use inside the home. Ann likes the “fun” design of this object; she’s planted basil in one pot and keeps sugar packets collected “from all over the world” in the other. “Here’s Sweet and Low from Chicago,” she says. This apparently insignificant plant stand is another example of how Ann tweaks what would otherwise be a recognizable Danish status symbol. She decided to oil the wood stand in order to keep it from going grey, as it would otherwise from from getting splashed and wiped down as part of routine kitchen cleaning. We are back to where we have begun and the first interview is over.



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Cozy

We took a break for lunch and returned to the second part of the research. As we come to the close of the cognitive mapping exercise Ann's relationship to middleclass Danishness again comes to the fore. We are sitting at the table in the kitchen and she is talking about why she finds it *hyggeligt*.

I mean in Denmark it's almost a joke, you know the concept of *køkkenalrum*, have you heard of that? Which is kind of, oh man if you talk about getting a *køkkenalrum* it's like you're really like old and very established, but there is a point to it, that this is kind of a *køkkenalrum* and actually the fact that you can hang out around this long table works really well.

Jonathan: So what would make something a *køkkenalrum*?

Ann: I think that what probably defines a *køkkenalrum* is that it's a place that's not only about cooking, it's a social room not

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only like in a functional space for preparing food but yeah a social room for being together with people while either eating or preparing food, and I don't know if that's, that's probably not particularly Danish even though I think us Danes, we like to think we are very you know preoccupied with food and sitting down and eating, I think you do that in many other cultures but it kind of yeah, it's probably an old sociological insight that food kind of binds people together and it's nice to have the right environment to do that, and I mean every time we have friends over, it always revolves around food, and actually Mads was very worried today that we didn't have anything to offer you, we only have coffee and we don't even have milk so I went down and bought some milk.



STEARIN LYS.
TIL AT SKABE HYGGE MED



"VÆRKSTEDET"
IKKE HYGGE LIGT

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Ann refers to the *køkkenalrum* rather than to the *sametalekøkken*, or “conversation kitchen.” When I ask her to differentiate between these two concepts, she Ann correctly surmises that *sametalekøkken* is a clever term invented by a Danish manufacturer of kitchen cabinets.

We get up to photograph the *hyggeligt* spaces she has identified.

After she takes a picture of the kitchen, I ask her about the candles sitting on the counter and relate another participants’ claim that “every Dane has a drawerful of candles.” Ann distinguishes between a space, an acceptable context to apply the concept of *hygge*, and an object, such as a candle, which cannot be considered inherently *hygge*. This difference is drawn out well by the caption on the photo she takes of the candles:

“Candles/for bringing about *hygge*.” Objects are simply a means to an end.

Hygge also has an oppositional quality, as other scholars have noted, and this is made clear in Ann’s other photographs. Although I have asked her to take photographs of the areas that she associates with *hygge*, Ann takes it upon herself to photograph two areas that are expressly not *hyggeligt*. The first such area is the *værksted*, the workroom that represents all the labor and effort that remains to be done before their renovation project will be completed. As others have noted, *hygge* is strongly associated with a feeling of being in the moment, so the effect of this room on Ann’s construal of time — it yanks her out of



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the moment quite rudely, by pulling her simultaneously backward into the unpleasant memory of hard work and propelling her forward into the certainty of future DIY projects. The second place is Ann's *værelse*, the space that will function as a living area adjacent to the kitchen, but now holds all of her stuff, most of it still in moving boxes. Part of the reason this space is not *hyggeligt* is because the boxes are, much like the objects in the *værksted*, reminders of work that remains to be done. But *hygge* does not tolerate disorder, either, and this room is cluttered and somewhat dusty.

In contrast to these rooms, and the most unequivocally *hygge* space in the house is the bed, a photograph of which she labels in Danish "the bed with a patchwork quilt and red lamp – *hyggeligt*." This was the first thing Ann thinks of when I ask her to take a photograph of the places she had labeled as *hygge* on her map. In describing the bed to me as she draws, Ann is quick to point out that it is has also been pressed into use as a couch because of the renovation. As she shaded in the rectangle she had drawn for the bed with a pink marker, Ann said, "this is probably where we spend most of our time," pausing with the realization that she had just said something a bit awkward. She continued, tongue in cheek, "and you should note that the bed is also a sofa, because we spend all of our time in bed, but this is like you know this is the sofa *and* where we sleep."

Pair 3: Status and Comfort

Compared to Ann, Al and Peg have different motivations for remodeling their home, but the rooms they identify as most important – the kitchen and bathroom – are the same. Different factors have constrained their decisions. For Al and Peg, comfort means having a home that others do not perceive as showy, fancy, or pretentious. This attitude is manifest in the ways they have arranged the spaces and the changes they would like to make, particularly by opening the dining room to the kitchen and living room. They are investing in changes that will remove any spatial trace of formality from their home. This desire is complicated by their interest in preserving the “character” of their home, which they associate with features such as the plaster arch between the living room and dining room, the symmetrical arrangement of the hearth at one end of the living room, the old wood window frames, and the quality of the wood kitchen cabinets.

Ann expressed nothing about the “character” of her apartment, but she did relate a similar feeling about the floors. It has long been fashionable in Danish apartments to have wood floors finished only with a thin coat of a whitish soapy wax, and while Ann’s new kitchen has this type of floor, the rest of the apartment has a less fashionable dark, glossy finish. They do not have the money to have the floor refinished, so Ann and her partner have convinced themselves to like this floor because of its “history.” This is a similar construct to “character,” but it indicates a different agentic relationship. For a house to have character indicates that it holds some sway over decisions – and thus Al and Peg have decided not to rip out the kitchen cabinets, as was their original plan, but rather to work with them as much as possible. By thinking of the floor as a carrier of history, Ann maintained a sense of control over the world of possibilities, forcing it to fit into a scheme of her preference.

Ann also deals with the issue of formality with an entirely different strategy than Al and Peg. Ann owns many significant symbols of Danish middle class life. Although she does not have the Piet Hein table central that Øllgaard claims is central to Danish identity (1999) she engages with the ideas that it carries, carefully subverting each one. Her decision to paint her table shiny black is the most obvious (and explicitly stated) strategy of subversion from the Danish tendency to paint everything white, but this strategy is also clear in her use of both the Aalto vase and the Trip Trap planter as a sugar bowl. Bourgeois icons both, they have been repurposed for a use that is ostensibly practical, but that relate part of two bourgeois practices: the connoisseurship of coffee and global travel. Ann got the idea to use the Aalto vase as a sugar bowl, after all, in Finland, and the Trip Trap planter holds packets of sweetener for all around the world. Ann emphasizes that the Montana shelving is not really hers, but rather a hand-me-down belonging to Mads. Furthermore, she demonstrates how rickety and old it is and keeps it out of the public areas of the house. What could be a potent symbol of aspirational class status is repurposed as simply a bookshelf, just as the designer vase becomes simply a place to put sugar.

Nonetheless, Ann displays the Aalto vase and the Trip Trap planter fairly prominently in her kitchen. For Peg, it is a chest freezer that takes the point of pride in the kitchen. Along with the open chrome racks holding baking equipment, the freezer, full of beef from her parents' ranch, is a way to represent Peg's unpretentious roots and sense of frugality for the same reasons it is important to her not to have a visible informal living room. The visible abundance of food would work to counter any potential uncomfortable feelings a hungry guest might have. The freezer says, "we have lots; you are welcome to as much as you would like." So whereas Ann embarks on a strategy of "taking it down a notch," Al and Peg's strategy is to take it up a notch, using apparently utilitarian objects to communicate a sense of comfort.

Pair 4: Chris and Ditte, Rebecca and Garth

The following discussion highlights how the feeling of engagement is cultivated through working on a house. Chris and Ditte live on a houseboat in Copenhagen harbor. When they bought the houseboat, which started life as a coal barge, the exterior shell had been completed but much of the interior remained to be built out. They've been working on the project for about two years. In this time Ditte has had a daughter and they have moved the boat from a harbor on the industrial fringes of Copenhagen to a canal quite close to the central district.

Rebecca and Garth live in a relatively small house that stands out for its strikingly contemporary design in a close-in neighborhood of turn of the century houses in Portland, Oregon. They have designed the house together and feel lucky that they have managed to get the house financed and built given that the US housing market started falling apart right about the time that they bought the lot. Most of the work on the house was done by contractors that Garth supervised, but they have undertaken some of the finish work themselves: tiling the bathroom, painting a complicated set of built-in bookshelves, and so on.

Chris and Ditte

Cognitive Map

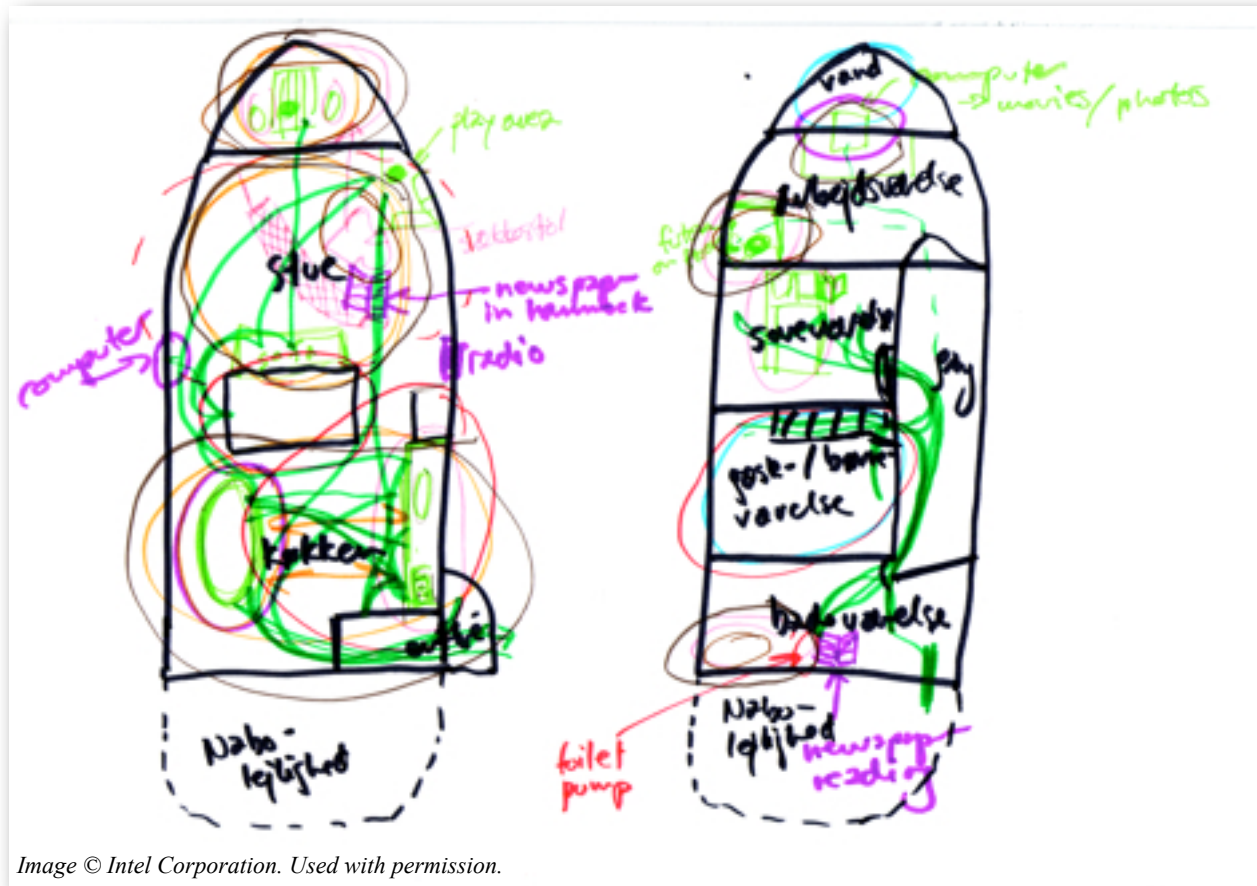


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- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
| vand | water [storage tanks] |
| stue | living room |
| køkken | kitchen |
| entré | entry |
| nabolejlighed | neighbor apartment |
| soveværelse | bedroom (literally "sleeping room") |
| badeværelse | bathroom |
| arbejdsværelse | office (literally "working room") |
| gang | hall |
| gæste-/børneværelse | guest- / children's room |
| sækkestol | beanbag |



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Tour

Chris and Ditte's house sits – or rather, floats – in Copenhagen harbor. In terms of absolute distance, it's very close to downtown Copenhagen. But it is difficult to figure out how to get there using public transportation. On my first visit, I take the subway and then walk for about 25 minutes in the rain. This experience inspires me to look at a map, and I notice a bridge across the harbor that would shorten my journey considerably. This route, however, means that I have to enter and walk through a newly constructed, American-style shopping mall, locate an obscure exit, and walk through another construction site to find the pedestrian bridge. It is a strange journey to an unusual home.

Chris and Ditte are a young couple with a daughter who has recently turned two. She's a little fussy and needs a slice of bread and milk before we start. Chris, who is American, speaks in English to their daughter, and Ditte speaks Danish, but she replies only in Danish, asking for tea, milk, and cheese. We chat a bit while she eats, and Chris says that they've just had their bicycle stolen. It's an expensive three-wheeled Christiania brand cycle with a cart in front that costs the equivalent of several thousand dollars, "as much as an old used car." It is a key part of how they transport groceries and their daughter so they will replace it immediately.

They bought the boat about two and a half years ago. At that point it

was moored in a harbor near the airport. They had lived in a very small apartment in the city and liked the opportunity to have a bit more space and a slightly “more remote, but still connected” location. The houseboat is separated into two apartments. Their apartment is about twice the size of the last apartment they occupied last. The other apartment, which they rent out, is about half the size of their space. Their tenants are friends who also have a 2-year old daughter, and Chris describes the arrangement as “a little bit like living in a cooperative, but you each have your own space.”

Chris and Ditte long wanted a houseboat, but gave up looking for one. They found this one through a friend of a friend. When they bought it, it was still a project, explains Ditte, laughing. “It took up a lot of our time,” she continued. “It still does,” says Chris. “I was pregnant when we bought the boat,” continued Ditte. “I spent my maternity in a construction site.” They finished the apartment section and the downstairs, with the work split between a contractor and their own labor, “because here in Denmark people think they can do a lot of things themselves.”

They had prior DIY⁵ experience in their apartment, where they installed a kitchen, a project that seemed large at the time but now looks small in comparison to what they have

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⁵ The Danish term for DIY is GDS, which stands for *gør det selv*, which literally translated, means “do it yourself.”

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achieved. Most of what they have done themselves is “to make the walls or surfaces the same.” Finding contractors willing to work on a houseboat is usually a bit of a challenge: the structure is different, metal, rather than wood, and there’s a different set of problems. At the moment they are considering replacing the window glass. They had a contractor out who could make new marine-grade glass panes to replace the badly etched ones now in the boat, but this means they must now find out how difficult it is to get the corroded screws out that now hold the window seals in place. Interestingly, the windows were not perceived as a problem before they moved into the city, but now the boat “looks worse with these funny looking cloudy windows.”

Even though it’s been at times “very tiring” they’ve had a great time working on their home. They feel like the space invites creativity; friends will come over and suggest things they might do to solve problems.

We start the tour. “So I just take pictures of whatever I like here, whatever makes this feel like home for me,” says Ditte, snapping a picture of plants on a windowsill.

She snaps a photograph of her daughter smiling satedly and turns the camera to a blackboard used as a shopping list of sorts. It is divided into two columns headed *materielt* (material) and *mentalt* (spiritual/emotional.) Material needs, explains Chris, are things to buy: big plants,



jars, beer. *Mentalt* needs are a bit harder to make out; the two I can read are “physical contact” and “vacation.”

Ditte says “I’m going to take a picture of something now that’s not so pretty, but still means a lot to me – the kitchen – we cook a lot.” The countertop is crowded, and a shelf above it – sort of an extended windowsill that is built into the curve of the boat’s hull – holds a futher jumble of kitchenware and plants. Tim interjects by saying “oh, you’ve got to get the KitchenAid,” and Ditte continues, “oh, yes, the KitchenAid. That’s important. I bake a lot of bread... several times a week.”

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Ditte continues with the camera into the living room, while Chris lags behind to entertain their daughter. “You’re going to have a lot of pictures of plants,” she says, “because I really like plants... it’s the weather and the climate here, you have to bring the outside in.” Perhaps in response to this, Chris continues to art direct Ditte’s shots. “Show him the hooks,” he says.



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There are several hooks — heavy jute ropes tied around the exposed wooden beams supporting the ceiling. Ditte unhooks a hammock from one of them and stretches it across the living



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room, flopping down in it. “This is an essential part of the house. I guess that was a big thing that we fell in love with when we bought the boat, she says, glancing over her shoulder and smiling at Chris. There’s another set of hooks. These are used for a swing for their daughter, who perks up and runs over to the swing excitedly.

“It’s good, you can see how we use things,” says Ditte. “We haven’t cleaned up much for you,” she continues. “It’s a little bit disorganized, which, unfortunately, is how we live.”

This direction of the conversation, I suspect, was prompted by our proximity to an area that appears to be used for sorting mail and paying bills. A large bin on the floor holds paper waiting to be recycled, which leads me to ask about how Chris and Ditte manage things like garbage and recycling. This, they explain, is part of the rent they pay for moorage from the apartment building outside.

We head outside, taking a step down before we reach the door to an area with children’s toys and a beanbag on one side and a piano on the other. Outside is a small deck, nearly level with the water, where some plants that got droopy during a recent trip away have been placed to recuperate. Below this decks are the water tanks. They have to be filled twice a week. This task involves hauling a hose across to the common garbage and recycling area of the apartment complex, hooking it up, and waiting until the tanks are full.

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Chris and Ditte switch tasks at this stage, with Chris claiming the camera and Ditte taking over childcare duties. Neither of them seem concerned in the slightest that their daughter is out on the deck, which is not completely enclosed by a railing. I learn later that this is because she has had swimming classes almost her entire life, and so they do not worry greatly about her falling in.

Chris takes a photo of the rope, explaining, “tying up the mooring lines, things like that, is sometimes a pain in the ass, but gives you a feeling of the, um, technical way, the physical way in which things hang together, which is fun.” This material awareness has led to a greater understanding of the social world around them, too: “neither one of us had much of a nautical background — neither one of us sailed, but now we know tugboat captains in Copenhagen harbor. It’s a different world.” says Chris.

Chris leans over the railing to take a picture of the floating platform that separates the houseboat from the edge of the canal. They use it for storage — “obviously this is important,” says Chris, “because we don’t have a basement or attic.”

“One of the things I really like about this boat is that there are so many recycled elements,” says Chris, gesturing to a door. He explains that this boat, which was previously used for hauling coal in eastern Europe, was bought by a ships’ carpenter, who cleaned up the steel hull and built the wood construction on top. He went

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around to shipyards and bought bits and pieces of old ships — such as the well-constructed wood and glass door we have walked through, or the brass porthole that Chris points out as he snaps a picture. Even the hull, to Chris, is recycled, because if the ships' carpenter had not bought the boat, it would have been scrapped.

We head back indoors, and Chris points out another recycled ship window. This one has been installed in the floor and provides a visual connection between upstairs and downstairs. This is unique and a marker of the specialness of the house — “you don't put a window in the floor into houses,” says Chris.

The woodburning stove — which is a classic Danish design object manufactured by Rais — is “a big thing in the winter,” says Chris, “it provides a natural place to gather around.”

The piano on the wall opposite their daughter's play nook does not get much use; it is an inheritance from Ditte's family. Still, Chris says “it's nice to have a piano. I'm glad we have a piano.” Above it on the windowsill sits a wireless modem and wireless router. I ask Chris about this and he explains that it was concealed at one point behind a structural beam, but that the reception was not very good, so he moved it to this place instead.

“In principle, I'd like to have a wireless home, where you don't have to see all the cables and connections to other things, but that's a little bit of a challenging thing.” They used to have



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an Airport Express to stream music to their stereo, but it burned out when they were having problems with the boat's electrical system.

We continue towards the stairs down, but Chris pauses to take a photograph of the laptop, saying, "now, being the man, it's my responsibility to photograph the technology."

Ditte, overhearing this from the kitchen, says, "I did take a picture of the computer!"

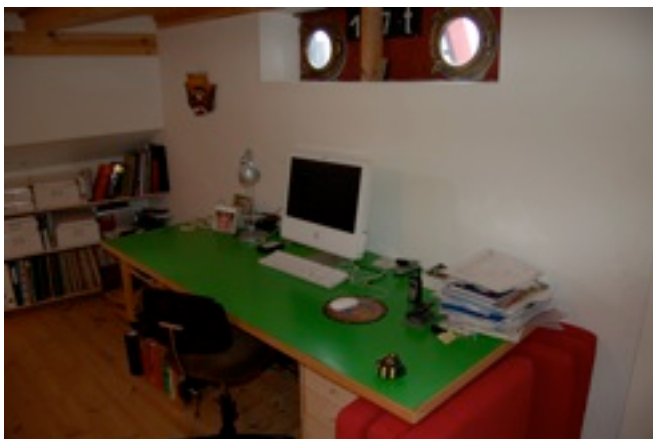
"You did?" Chris replies, somewhat surprised.

The video camera tape is running out and I sit at the table to change it. I ask about the plate holder that is hanging on the wall nearby. It is from Tibet – Chris bought it there disassembled and brought it back for use here. Other elements of their travels appear in the kitchen – Chris pulls a stacking stainless steel lunch pail Tiffin set over to the table to show me – but this is also a place where localness is represented through material.

The Tibetan plate rack has been domesticated by the addition of a Marimekko plate, another Royal Copenhagen teacup, and some small soup bowls that were a gift from Ditte's mother. Chris opens the dishwasher to show me the last remaining ceramic cup of a larger set purchased from a local potter; the matching ones have all broken. They like the shop where they come from because the potter works to order, and



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these cups were made especially for Chris and Ditte.

As we talk their daughter races by on a tricycle. “That’s one of the things we really like about this space,” says Ditte. “We like the big open space, so she can have the run of the house, and we want to keep it open, so we have a minimum of furniture in here.”

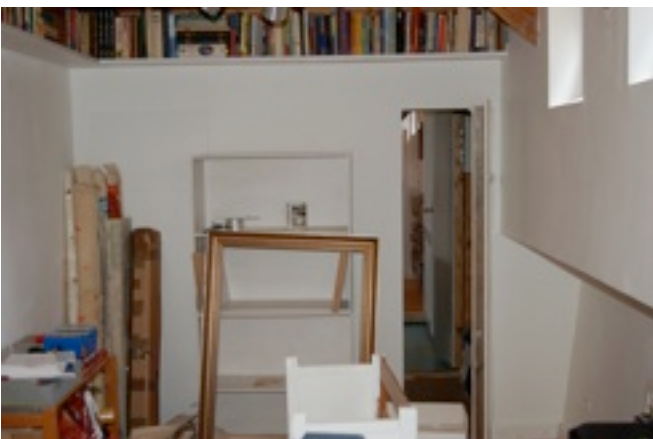
Chris and I head downstairs and leave Ditte and their daughter upstairs; it’s time for another snack. There are a lot of boxes and clutter around, Chris explains, because at the old location they had a shipping container to store tools and the like, and they do not have that here, so the room which is supposed to be the guest room is filled with tools and boxes. Chris shuts the door to that room and we move on to another room with bookshelves ringing the room. He built these himself and is proud of them; it was a challenge because “everything in a houseboat curves... when you do build things in you feel happy, because the furniture has character and follows the character of the boat. He also likes having books around “because we’re book people.” They are planning to do something similar upstairs.

The room we’re standing in is the office, though it’s one that’s multifunctional. They don’t have a TV, so they watch movies together on the TV and curl up together on a floor cushion in the corner. Sometimes their daughter will build a “cave” (*hule*) with the pillows and read books there while either Ditte or Chris work at the computer. “This is also the space

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where if one of us has guests over upstairs, the other one can come down here to be away, to read a book or something.”

When they bought the boat this room only had a floor; Chris and Ditte finished the walls and the floor. We head through a door to the right of the desk and Chris explains the water system to me. It is complicated, with two tanks, a series of pumps, and a ventilator fan running at all times to get rid of excess humidity so that the hull of the boat does not start to corrode. Tim shuts the door and shoves a Nokia cell phone manual, folded in half, under it to keep it shut.

White boxes from IKEA function as a filing cabinet of sorts, holding everything from important documents to extra electrical cords. Cast-off computer equipment too big to fit in a box is placed to the right of the boxes.

Ditte and their daughter come down to use the computer. Their daughter loves to look at photos of herself on the screen, calling out her name whenever she sees an image of herself. Ditte has made a slideshow expressly for this purpose. Their daughter watches with rapt attention.

We walk out of the office into the bedroom. Books are lined up on top of a metal beam. “A lot of the stuff in here is IKEA,” Chris says, knocking on a particleboard PAX wardrobe. “If we had time we would do more built-in stuff... but IKEA... in a pinch it works.”

Another participant told me that they thought of some items of

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furniture as permanent and others as temporary, and that IKEA was permissible for temporary stuff. I ask Chris if this resonates with him, and he replies, “yes, we also have that discussion ourselves, but with a sense of irony because we know for ourselves that the temporary things are going to be temporary for the next ten years.”

He continues, “any room I go into on this houseboat, I can immediately see the next ten projects that I want to do, but there just isn’t time to do them.”

We move on to the bathroom. It’s quite spacious, but it’s also the space on the boat that is most unlike its equivalent in a conventional house or apartment. The toilet is elevated up on a platform, giving it the awkward aspect of being on stage. This is necessary to accommodate the drain pipe and a pumping mechanism that connects to the septic tank behind the wall. The septic tank has to be emptied into the sewer through a hose once a week — a task that takes twenty minutes — and they share responsibility for this task with their tenants. Chris is philosophical about it, as he was when talking about the rope on the upper deck. “It a weird sense, maybe one day we’ll get tired of it, but we make rituals around it, open up a beer or something, so the twenty minutes that it takes to empty out the tank you sit up on the dockside and dangle your feet over the edge. Again it’s one of these reminders of the practical, physical things in life. One

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can spend one's working day doing all kinds of other things."

This is the same kind of pleasure Chris gets from working on the boat. "Nothing is level; level is not even possible, and maybe that's not so important," he says, gesturing towards one of the recycled porthole windows. "In some ways the problems are what's fun."



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We head back upstairs. Their daughter is seated at the table eating cheese and Ditte is busy getting lunch together. We chat a bit about the food she is putting on the — cheese and milk so far. I notice that both are

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marked prominently with the official mark for organic food in Denmark, a stylized red Ø (*økologisk* is the Danish word used to refer to organic food, though a more literal translation might be “ecological.”) It occurs to me that I have not seen any non-organic milk since I have been in Denmark in participants’ or friends’ home or in the grocery store.

They ask me what I’ve noticed in my research so far, and I mention that a lot of people will have pairs of things. “Yes,” Ditte says, laughing, “that’s very common. People will often have two of the same — two plants, especially. That’s something you have noticed, too,” she says, gesturing at Chris, “like at my sister’s, she has two plants that are the same, two candleholders... so that’s one of the things you’ve noticed here. I think I just saw it as natural until you pointed it out.”

After a moment, Ditte continued, “well, I think there’s a difference between Copenhagen and the smaller towns, especially in ecological consciousness. You will see a lot more tumble dryers, bigger cars, bigger fridges, when you get out of the city.”



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Hygge

I left a camera behind for Chris and Ditte to take photographs of things they find *hygge*. Of the nine photographs they took only one is reproduced here for reasons of privacy; all of the rest have images of their friends and their friend's children.

The image shown left, which is labeled in Danish "our tent hangs to dry after a bicycle trip," is representative of Chris and Ditte's way of thinking about *hygge*. For them, it is a concept that is strongly linked to an experience and only secondarily related to space.

The other photographs are:

1. Their neighbor reading to children on the beanbag chair in the corner of the *stue*;
2. Their child playing with the neighbor's child in the *legehjørne*;
3. A photograph of their daughter wearing a bicycle helmet in preparation for the bicycle camping trip;
4. Another photo of their daughter on her way to the playground;
5. A photo of another friend's child playing with their daughter that indicates the children are playing after they have eaten dinner with the adults;
6. Ditte reading to their daughter in the *legehjørne*;
7. Chris serving pancakes for breakfast; and
8. A shot through the floor window of Chris and their

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neighbor using the computer in the office.

All of these photographs have some indication of interaction with others. None of the photographs are pictures of space or, except for the tent, of objects; rather they are all images of people engaged in activity. I ask what they think of the idea that there are three distinct types of *hygge* associated with being alone, with one's lover, and with friends and family. This leads to a discussion of other activities in their home that are considered *hygge*. This discussion, perhaps because I have asked them to draw out their daily path through the house, is strongly linked to routine: listening to the radio in the morning, reading the newspaper in the hammock on weekends, cooking in the kitchen, using the laptop to play music, using the computer downstairs to watch a movie while they lounge together on the floor cushions. The bathtub is a place for family togetherness, and Chris draws on the map, explaining that the toilet is a place for alone-*hygge* in the form of newspaper reading.

This second set of activities that there is a spatial logic to associated with Chris and Ditte's construction of *hygge*. They have not labeled entire rooms or spaces as *hygge*; rather, it is usually a corner or a nook of a room that provides a place that privileges the perception of closeness. This can be achieved with others, as happens with the couch corner in the office, or alone, as happens with the hammock. *Hygge* has to be evoked in otherwise ordinary

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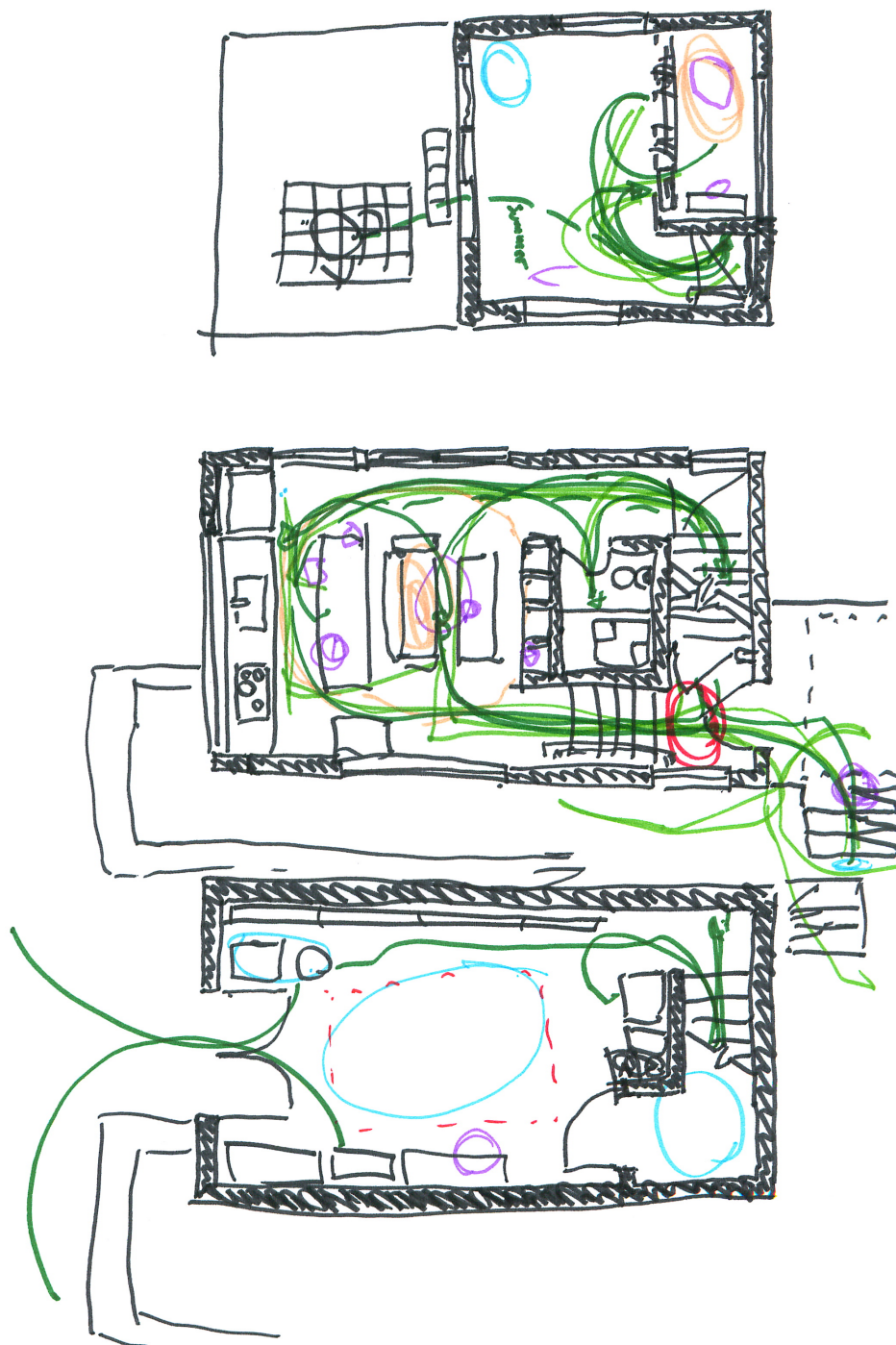
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space through a particular configuration of objects and body or bodies, but its status as a sort of special occasion requires that some work must be expended to achieve this state. This explains Chris and Ditte's enthusiastic use of the hooks in the *stue* and their preference to keep the room free of conventional furniture. Because it is kept empty it is easier and faster to adapt it to the situation at hand, by dragging floor cushions over to the wood stove, or by stringing up the hammock, or by turning up the radio and filling the room with nothing but sound. By being empty the room demands its occupants engage in configuring the space in a way that results in *hygge*.

Rebecca and Garth

Cognitive Map



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Tour

We start the tour on the first floor of their house at the table where we have gone over the permission documents. On Rebecca's suggestion we return to the front door. On account of the rain we start here rather than at the sidewalk. Rebecca and Garth are clearly used to giving tours of their house. Garth is a young architect and the house is meant as a portfolio piece, he explains. Since I've already been in the main floor of the house, we head into the basement.

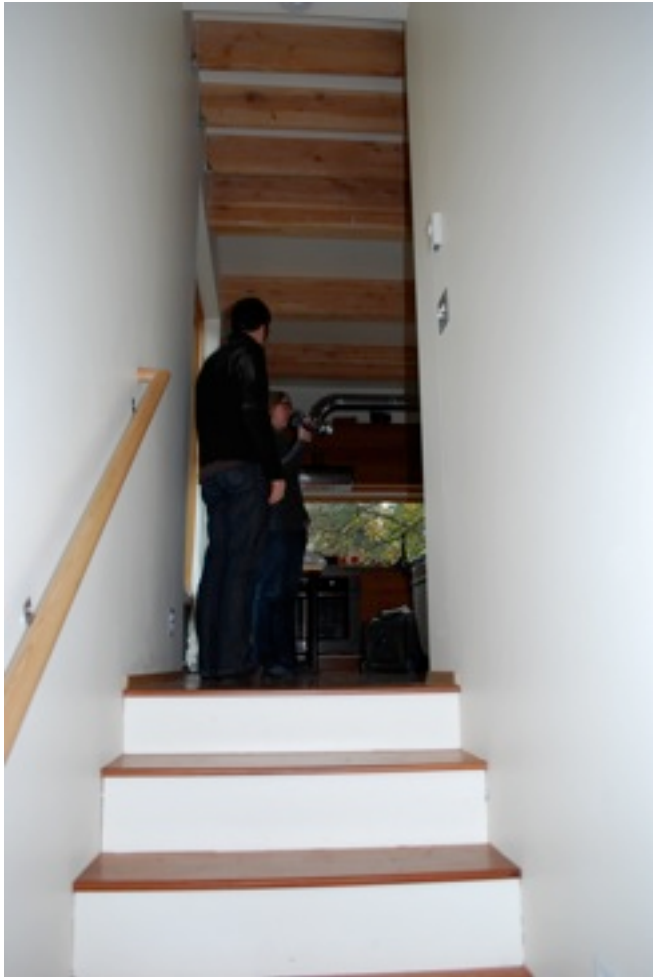


The space is about the size of a large single-car garage, and this is how it appears to be used. Shelves line one wall. There is a washing machine and dryer against another wall, with a heat recovery ventilator suspended above. Most of the stuff in this room — and there is a fair amount of it — is piled in the center of the room. Garth and Rebecca explain that they moved in earlier in the year and this room is full of tools, stuff they haven't yet unpacked, and things that they do not have room for in the rest of the house but have not yet decided what to do with.



A table used as a potting bench occupies one wall. Rebecca explains that gardening was one of the things that was exciting about home ownership. This is the first house they have owned and Rebecca took the opportunity to have a garden very seriously, taking a course from the county on vegetable gardening and planning for space to propagate seed

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— this basement and table area — and to store the harvest. After moving a vacuum cleaner out of the way we enter the space underneath the entry stairs. This space is accessed through an ordinary screen door, which leads to a space underneath the stairs with raw concrete walls and an exposed gravel floor. The screen door's location in a basement and the fact that it leads to an even more subterranean space makes it seem strangely out of place. We go through the door and down a few steps to a small, low-ceilinged area with some construction debris in the corner. It is cool and smells of new concrete. Matt and Rebecca show me where they plan to install shelves.

We head back upstairs from the basement and return to the space Rebecca and Matt call “the heart of their home.” This space would probably be labeled a “great room” on a commercial set of floor plans, but that description belies its diminutive size. It is about 16 feet square. A kitchen is installed against one wall. Floating in the center of the space is a long wood table with two matching IKEA chairs pulled up on one side, and the folding chair Rebecca retrieved from the basement when I arrived at one end. The table is pushed up to the back of a wool couch, which faces a gridded wall of bookshelves painted in white and dark grey. There is a stepstool and a small square wood table pushed up against one exterior wall.



Food is arrayed artfully on the kitchen counter. Rebecca explains that



she loves to cook, and the full spice rack and set of knives on prominent display on one wall are evidence of her passion. There is a strip window in the kitchen above a stretch of stainless steel countertop and the neighborhood houses — mostly Victorians painted in pastel hues — are visible out the window. The contrast between the interior style and the neighboring buildings is striking, and I ask about if they've had any interesting interactions with the neighbors.

Mostly they have been positive, Rebecca explains, as she swings the camera over to a sliding glass door that has been partially obscured with a



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sheet suspended by thumbtacks. A man is sitting on the porch of the 1920's bungalow next door. "That's Earl!" she says. He sits outside most of the year on the porch, reads the newspaper, and feeds the chickens owned by his next door neighbor. Though he has lived in the neighborhood longer than anyone else they've met, Earl has been the most supportive, surprisingly, welcoming their "very modern" building next door.

They like this neighborhood, a gentrifying area close in on Portland's east side relatively close to a Whole Foods and a street known for incubating up-and-coming restaurants. But they did not think they would be able to build here, mostly for practical considerations – the neighborhood is mostly built up and lots are expensive. They were able to buy this lot, which used to be the side yard for the house next door, because the owner had not completed the subdivision process when it was put on the market, and because they were the only interested buyer who was not a builder looking to make a quick profit.



The thumbtack falls out and the improvised drape falls to the floor. Garth is planning to sew new ones, Rebecca explains as she pins the sheet back to the door frame, but they have to do research and design first because they want ones that are capable of going up from the bottom and down from the top in order to preserve some privacy and admit light. The floor to ceiling windows are lovely to let in

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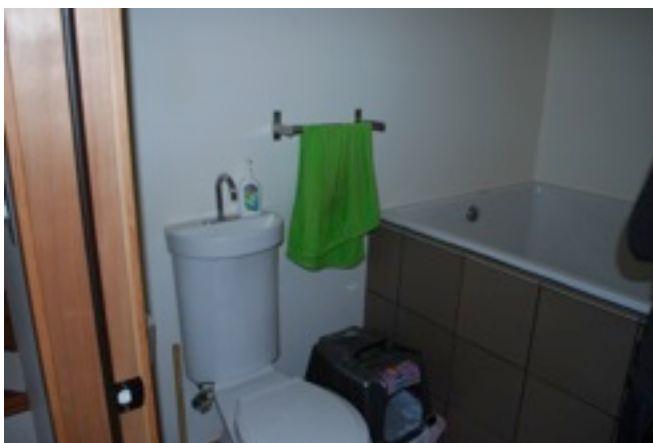


light, Rebecca explains, but, combined with the striking appearance of the exterior, they do make the house feel a bit like a fishbowl.

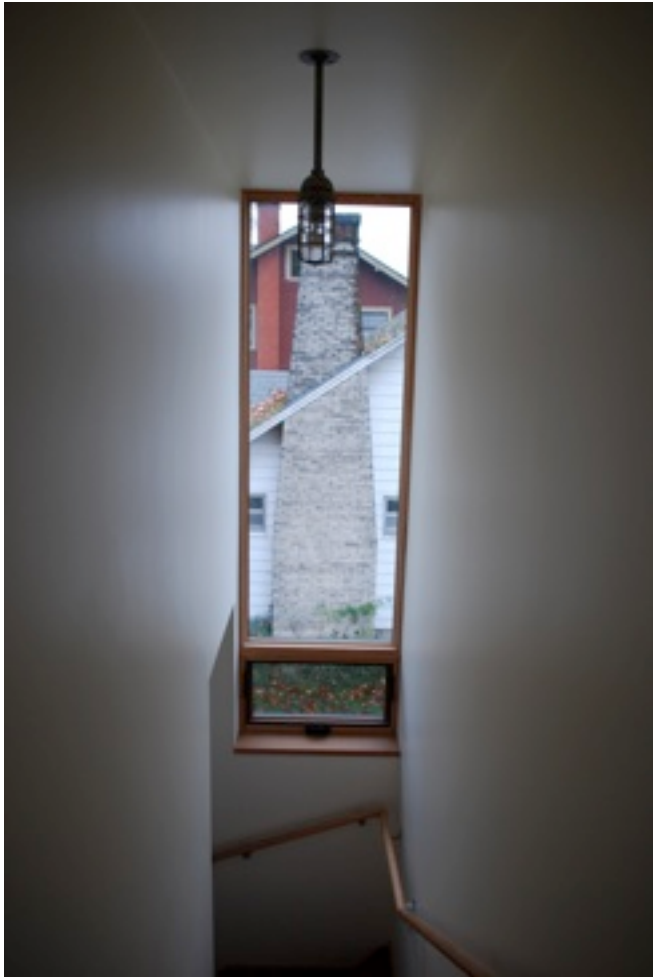
We continue down a narrow hall off one side of the bookcase and turn right to enter the bathroom. The room is dominated by a deep Japanese-style soaking tub. Rebecca explains that it was chosen because it was comfortable to soak in, but that it can also be used as a shower. Inset shelves — the negative space from the front of the bookshelf — hold toiletries and brightly colored folded towels.

A cat litter box and toilet occupy the rest of the space. It's the first time I've seen this particular toilet outside of the context of a trade show or retail showroom. It is a model with a sink mounted on top of the toilet tank. Flush the toilet and water runs through a faucet and into a small basin before it flows back into the toilet tank. It is a brilliant idea, but the water running into the toilet is cold, not hot. Rebecca and Garth are clearly proud of the toilet for its ability to demonstrate their environmental values, and, as if to reinforce this, there is no other sink in the bathroom, making it the only choice. I wonder to myself how guests, used to washing their hands in warm water, might react, and I wonder out loud where they brush their teeth and perform grooming tasks that require a mirror — there is not one in the bathroom.

"We have a sink upstairs for brushing our teeth and stuff," says Rebecca. We leave the bathroom and



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head up there, pausing for Garth to point out that the stairway spaces are the code minimum width of 36" in order to preserve volume elsewhere. We pause at the top of the stairs and Rebecca points out the view from a large window in the stairwell. The window is centered perfectly on the chimney of the house next door, framing it quite artistically. "We didn't plan that – it was a happy accident," she says.

The room at the top of the stairs is lined on one wall with clothes and the aforementioned sink, topped with a square mirror. The other walls of the room are lined with books and CDs. A small IKEA upholstered chair with metal arms sits in one corner. This area is still a work in progress, Garth and Rebecca explain, and it is about to change because Garth is moving his office back into their home because business is slow. A step up to a sliding glass door leads to a terrace partially enclosed by a sort of slatted wood trellis, a continuation of the house's exterior siding. "This really feels like a room," explains Rebecca, explaining that they frequently eat there in the summertime. This space extends over the living room and kitchen below and has a green roof. The plants look young, but they are beginning to take over the pea gravel-like growing medium. There's also a green roof up on top of a higher roof, but this one is difficult to access. They worry about the plants up there, which they suspect may not have gotten enough water over the summer.



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A metal construction ladder positioned in front of the hanging clothes provides access to a bed loft where Rebecca and Garth sleep. I crawl up the ladder and perch on the edge of the platform. Rebecca describes this space as “ship like,” which prompts me to ask if either she or Garth have read Susanka’s book *The Not So Big House*. The answer, surprisingly, is no, but that several people had asked them about it lately and that they had picked up a copy to read. I explain that Susanka wrote at length about her experience on a ship, which is what had prompted me to ask about it.



We head back downstairs and sit at the table for a while while Rebecca and Garth describe their experience building the house. Then we head back outside and continue the tour in the rain after pausing briefly in the entry. “Now that we’ve been through the house,” Garth says, “I can explain one of my favorite architecture moments in the house.” He points at a small slot of space recessed about a foot into the wall next to the stairs. Hooks are mounted underneath for jackets here and a shoe rack is also tucked into the recess. “This space came into being because of the design of the stairwells — this protrusion is the floor above, this line is the footer that you saw in the root cellar — this wasn’t designed, it just happened.” For Garth this is immediate visual evidence of the importance of conserving space, and that it is also functional because it renders a potentially messy collection



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of coats and shoes into a visually ordered and contained space.

We continue outside onto the porch, which was a late addition to the house. They had planned for the front door to face the street, which is required by Portland building code, but changed their minds when they couldn't figure out how to gracefully design a stair to meet the sidewalk grade. Putting the door on the side of the house solved the grade problem, but code then required the addition of the porch in lieu of a street-facing front door.

I notice that the porch is, in fact, detached from the house, a design decision that allows rain to fall between the porch and the front door. This seems strange, and I ask Garth about it. He wanted the form of the house to stand out on its own and felt that the porch should be detached. This way of thinking also influenced the design of the house's siding, which is a rain screen system that floats far enough off the structure of the house to allow utilities such as the electric supply and the downspouts to be concealed.



Rebecca points out that the siding is horizontally oriented wood, like all the other buildings on the street, but that the design of its installation sets it apart. It is made of 1 x 4 cedar boards attached to vertical battens with a gap of exactly one half inch between each board. The battens and sheathing material behind the siding are covered with a black waterproofing material. This system renders a perfectly planar

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surface, and the gaps give the siding the appearance of floating in place without any visible support. It also is extremely unforgiving of any variations in material size or slip-ups in labor, and as a result was more expensive to install than they had budgeted for. Still, they reason, it is a good choice because the wood, which they plan to leave untreated, will weather to a grey color, not need further maintenance, and according to their research should last for around 100 years.





Cozy

When I ask them to show me the places in their home they associate with coziness, Rebecca and Matt first indicate an object: the couch. They both spend time here, both alone and together, and its proximity to the wall heater has made it a favorite perch for their cat. Anticipating this, Rebecca and Garth chose upholstery in the same color as the cat's fur. The couch was purchased before the house was constructed, but after the plans were drawn. It is distinguished not only by its aesthetics — it is a midcentury piece by a well-known manufacturer — but also by its function. Despite its trim

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appearance, it unfolds into a sofa bed that accommodates two people.

Next, Rebecca draws an oval that encapsulates the couch and the table where we are sitting. “This entire area is cozy,” she says, explaining that the presence of books and the radio – usually turned on and tuned to NPR – makes it so. Rebecca and Matt ask if I am interested in lighting, and I explain that I am, but that it likely has not come up in interviews before because this is the first one I have done after dark. I have noticed that their house is brightly lit with cool light emanating from compact florescent lamps (CFLs) installed in industrial-type fixtures enclosed in glass overhead. Rebecca demonstrates the overcounter lights in the kitchen, which are low-energy LED fixtures that also emit a cool glow. They are small and evenly spaced and would resemble runway lighting when viewed from outside. At least one neighbor noticed the bluish glow at night and asked how they could live with such harsh light. To Rebecca and Garth, the neighbor’s apartment – and the apartment they lived in before – are “dim.” They wanted the quality of light in their new space to be “like sunshine all the time,” and they also says they are not that sensitive to light. If they can see, they are happy; they did not see the need for much mood lighting or variation in the house. The lights are either off or on.

This discussion, and the earlier mention of the radio, provokes Rebecca and Garth to ask if I heard “a



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guy on the Splendid Table” (a public radio show about cooking and food) talking about coziness and lighting. I laugh and explain that it was me they heard on the radio, and I explain a bit about Harald Wilhite’s research on the cultural perception of light from CFL bulbs: Norwegians found the bright light too cool and used them in bathrooms and utility spaces, while Japanese perceived the bright light and cheerful and warm and used them in dining rooms. They ask my opinion on the room we’re sitting in. I point out that it would look right at home in Denmark, and they take this as a compliment. I add that there would most likely be a pendant light over the table, either a fancy model with a built-in pulley, or a simple fixture with a hook mounted astride so that it can be hoisted out of the way if the table is relocated for a party. This idea seems to solve a problem for them and they discuss that it would be easy to change out the fixed light above the table.

The last cozy space is the bed loft. Rebecca points out that it is just the area encapsulated by the loft that she thinks is cozy and not the entire room. “Maybe when we get the right furniture for that space, like an armchair,” she speculates. But for now it is just the bed.



Pair 4 Summary: Creating *Hygge* and Homeyness

The amount of time, energy, and money that Rebecca and Garth and Chris and Ditte have invested in their homes is unusual. The experience of both couples shows a determination to create a domestic environment that reflects a desired mode of interaction with others and the establishment of parity with the self. Rebecca loved to cook and shares an interest in strengthening local economies with Garth, and their house is designed to reflect this. The way they define local, however, is markedly different: it includes not only their vision of growing fruits and vegetables on their own lot and shopping at the farmer's market, but local also includes buying olive oil imported from Italy from a guy with a shop a mile and a half away. Likewise, their house is not made from strictly local materials; a primary component in the SIPS system they used is plastic foam. The panels were cut to size in a factory four hours north and put together on site in a few days, sparing Rebecca and Matt a large bill for labor, but eliminating a fair amount of local work.

Likewise, Chris and Ditte find their floating home to be homey precisely because of its history of ferrying coal between points unknown in Eastern Europe. It is also, by definition, a home that is a bit unrooted; as Chris and Ditte explained, moorage rights are never totally secure, and it is a near certainty that they will have to relocate the houseboat in the future. This adds to its appeal because it bridges them to a different local network of tugboat operators and glass installers – one that they would not otherwise experience, or even realize the existence of.

Strangely enough, it seems that people relate homeyness to being on a boat. This is a central metaphor of Susanka's book, as discussed later. Indeed, Garth and Rebecca frequently referred to the vertical spatial organization of their home as a being like a "ship" or "ship's cabin," even though they had not read Susanka's book. Looking out the horizontal strip windows in the bed area does feel more than a little bit like looking out the windows of a ship, especially on a rainy day in Portland. But beneath the spatial arrangement lies a deeper metaphor. Interestingly, the feeling of understanding the "technical way that things hang together" that Ditte and, especially, Chris, described as the central challenge and attraction to their houseboat project appears to be the same force driving Garth and Rebecca. But instead of understanding bilge pumps and complex curves, Garth and Rebecca focused on the technical challenges of ecoroofs, energy recovery ventilators, and local horticulture – Rebecca never had a garden before. In McCracken's terms, these are all elements that are simultaneously engaging and situating. It is hard, after all, to ignore a burgeoning garden (or bilge tank), especially when it's placed adjacent to the entry of your house. These are also situating activities, in that gardening, cooking, and canning or sitting with the bilge hose and beer becomes part of regular practice. This strategy seems to be opposite from that of Poul and Karin and Matt and Dora: rather than making decisions intended to ensure that the house does not intrude on the ebb and flow of everyday life with an extraordinary demand for maintenance or upkeep, the households in this pair have

made decisions that insure that the houses demand, even require, the weekly or even daily engagement of their occupants. This may be a function of age; both Poul and Karin and Dora and Matt expressed concern over their future physical capabilities, but it seems more likely to be a function of identity. Rebecca and Garth and Chris and Ditte are younger and in a phase of life where meaning and identity are in greater flux, and so they are using their homes as ways to reshape and reinforce their identities in a way that is not necessary for the retired couples.

Hygge in Bo Bedre

Below I show how the concept of *hygge* appears to have transformed into its own opposite through an analysis of forty years of the Danish home as shown in the Danish magazine *Bo Bedre*. The name of *Bo Bedre* can be understood two ways. If the verb *bo*, which means “to live” or “to dwell” is seen as a gerund, then *Bo Bedre* can be translated as “Better Living.” But *bo* is also the imperative form of the verb; understood this way, the title is the much more commanding “Live Better.” Which way it is understood depends on the audience; readers under forty consistently told me they dislike the magazine for what they see as a dictatorial tone and “uncreative” or “grandmotherly” content, though they read it on visits back home just the same.

From an outsiders’ point of view, Danish material culture is representative of what observers like to call “good” design, by which they usually to mean design with a modernist bent (Swann 1995). *Bo Bedre* accounts for the cultural significance of Danish design, exemplified by the prevalence in Danish homes and offices of the combination of the so-called “superelliptical” table designed by Piet Hein with multiples of the Ant chair designed by Arne Jacobsen. The anthropologist Gertrud Øllgaard has documented the role of *Bo Bedre* in promoting this combination as particularly representative of Danishness, in particular the value of egalitarianism (Øllgaard 1999). Perhaps this is why that after more than fifty years after its introduction, *Bo Bedre* is still the most widely read home magazine in Denmark, and why the Danish Design Center celebrated the magazine’s 50th anniversary with a museum exhibit of home interiors drawn from historical issues. Just over 10% of the total population of Denmark reads the magazine each month, and readership is split fairly evenly between men and women.

Bo Bedre is an ideal source for study for other reasons. First, it is accessible: the Royal Library in Copenhagen has issues of *Bo Bedre* dating to 1961. Second, *Bo Bedre* is the most widely read home design magazine in Denmark. Even at a time where print media circulation is declining precipitously, Index Danmark/Gallup poll statistics indicate that *Bo Bedre* is read by 596,000 people per month, a figure that represents just over 10% of Denmark’s total population. According to Bonnier Publications, which publishes *Bo Bedre*, women account for 58% of the magazine’s readers. Given that 56% of the Danish population consists of women (Danmarks Statistik), this figure should not be taken to indicate that reading the magazine or caring about the home is a gendered subject. This stands in contrast to the women-centered audience of most home magazines in the US, such as the discontinued *Domino*, the magazine most similar to *Bo Bedre* (Green, 2009). Third, the content of *Bo Bedre* makes it possible to see how ideas and symbolic meanings are translated into space. Unlike most home magazines in the US, the content of *Bo Bedre* ranges from the technical details of construction to the most abstract ideas behind design trends. Most significantly for this project, *Bo Bedre* runs a regular question and answer feature called *Bolig & Indretning*, in which readers receive expert help from *Bo Bedre* with the rearrangement of a problematic interior space. Before-and-after floorplans are a regular part of the feature, as is the concept of *hygge*. For example, a

recent feature showed how to rearrange a small combined living and dining room to make a place for a home office while keeping a feeling of *hygge* in the space.

Applying Practice Theory to the study of *Bo Bedre*

As noted in the literature review section, practice theory is a line of sociological inquiry that seeks, in part, to address the problems raised by the division between structure and agency. While identity and symbolic value, which fall into the image category above, are clearly important meanings carried by *Bo Bedre*, understanding *hygge* as a practice requires we pay equal attention to skills and stuff. So rather than only thinking of the contents of the magazine in symbolic terms – as exemplary of good taste or as evidence of the success of a campaign to market Danish design – the contents of the homes shown in *Bo Bedre* might better be thought of as resources for reconfiguring relationships as the cultural meanings constitutive of *hygge* shifted over time. Therefore, rather than focusing on the symbolic value of the objects represented in *Bo Bedre* to individuals (the approach taken by many following the lead of Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981), a practice theoretical analysis would focus instead on how 1) designed objects mediate social relationships, 2) people use designed objects, and 3) designed objects enroll people in particular types of social relationships.

This generates a messy and confusing web of relationships, especially when compared to linear models of the design process. But defining emotion as part of a system of practice can help make the analysis more manageable. Practice can be analyzed using the following three categories as a heuristic device. The categories are: 1) image and meaning, including those communicated at the level of culture; 2) skills and habits, including those embodied by the individual, and 3) technology and material, which can also be thought of as “stuff” (see figure 1 in literature review.)

Three Regimes of *Hygge*

In the case of *hygge*, the study of *Bo Bedre* showed that three distinct sets of relationships between images and meanings, skills and habit, and technologies and materials emerged over time. *Hygge* changed through the widespread use and adoption of new materials, habits, and meanings. Because of its wide readership, *Bo Bedre* was an important channel for transmitting these ideas. Likewise, because it acts on people, including designers, the concept of *hygge* itself changed these materials, habits, and meanings.

To explain these shifts in the relationship between *hygge* and the designed objects and spaces represented in *Bo Bedre*, I draw on the concept of the regime, an idea introduced to design studies by Shove and fellow sociologist Martin Hand. Following Rip and Kemp (1998), they claim that regimes can be thought of as “a rule-set or grammar that is embedded in practices, products, and procedures and in ways of

defining and handling problems" (2004). Upon further reflection and analysis, three regimes of *hygge* clearly stand out in *Bo Bedre*.

In the 1960's and 1970's, *hygge* was identified closely with the concept of collective, national identity and the aesthetic of *funkis*, or functionalism. In the 1980's, *hygge* became aligned with the concept of *gammeldags* (olden times) nostalgia and a corresponding aesthetic of antiques, particularly those from the Danish Golden Age. And, finally, in the 1990's and the early 2000's, *hygge* became identified with a concept of self-indulgence and with a correspondingly broad aesthetic category of luxury. To summarize, *hygge* shifted from a concept aligned with collectivist ideals to a near opposite: a feeling associated with ideals of self-indulgence and status. Remarkably, despite the volatility of its meaning, the word has not fallen out of favor: it is still omnipresent in popular media and conversation. Today, it appears individuals invoke the three regimes of *hygge* outlined above at different times. This explains how a unified concept can encompass meanings which are near opposites, and why designers must consider what Harvey Molotch refers to as the "lash-up" between ideas and things (2003) as an ongoing process that takes place in the realm of consumer culture rather than a one-time event that happens in the design studio.

Collective/Functional *Hygge*

In this regime of *hygge*, which was prevalent in *Bo Bedre* through the 1960's and 1970's, the concept is associated with establishing a collective identity, with establishing a comfortable setting for social gatherings, and with do-it-yourself (*gør det selv*) projects. This particular regime of *hygge* encompasses emotions including comfort communicated through touch; the experience of warmth; closeness; and feelings of equality.

For example, a 1976 article explains how to make a sofa (figure 2). This piece, even though it is a relatively straightforward set of instructions, actually reflects changes in the physical fabric and material setting of Denmark and in the practice of *hygge*. Compared



Figure 2. "Alle tiders sofa" ("A sofa for all occasions") *Bo Bedre*, November 1976. Instructions for generating *hygge* from the creation and use of an object.

to the rest of Western Europe, Denmark modernized relatively late. The new apartment buildings and single-family houses built in suburban locations were not only larger, but they also had altogether different configurations of interior spaces than the urban apartments had been home to most Danes. Furniture, as Friedman Hansen points out, had been lightweight and moveable out of necessity because living rooms often doubled as bedrooms. Artificial light and central heating allowed buildings to increase the amount of space between the exterior wall and the central hallway without becoming prohibitively expensive, and the new suburban apartment blocks had the type of modernist design that is still recognizable: simple, rectangular forms containing long lines of seemingly identical apartments (figure 3).



Figure 3. "Her bor vi" ("We live here.") *Bo Bedre*, August 1976. Communicating feelings of anomie and uncertainty through the representation of modernist architecture.

Judging from the journalism of the time, there was a decidedly emotional reaction to these new buildings, the spaces they contained, and the suburban places they defined. *Bo Bedre* ran a piece by Jan Gehl, who has since become extremely influential in the world of urban planning, claiming that the sleepy suburbs simply needed time to awaken and become lively. Other articles chronicled the efforts of residents in the new developments to overturn aesthetic regulations – such as prohibitions against modifying the exterior of apartment doors or hallway surfaces – as victories against

Table 1. Three Regimes of *Hygge*

	1960's-1970's	1980's	1990's-2000's
<i>Aesthetic</i>	<i>Funkis</i> (functionalism)	Antiques	Luxury
<i>Associated Meaning</i>	Collective/national identity as characterized by <i>Familien Danmark</i> (akin to "Mr. and Mrs. America")	<i>Gammeldags</i> ("olden days") Nostalgia	Self-indulgence Status differentiation

what was represented as sterile and stultifying environments. A remarkable article documented the complete transformation of a typical new apartment, its deep living room described as “a worm,” through the creation of clearly defined spaces for eating and entertaining and the softening of the concrete walls and floor with upholstery and decorations. In this case, *hygge* functioned as what McCracken calls a “modernity corrector,” or a way of neutralizing the discordant and otherwise uncontrollable aspects of life so that the home can be comfortable and domestic (1989).

The emotional components of *hygge* were useful here in creating a sense of continuity in the transition from to inhabiting modernist spaces. As Friedman Hansen points out, historicity is an important component of *hygge*. Practices are used to evoke emotion. Rituals surrounding the celebration of Christmas, and in particular dining rituals, are often referred to as the epitome of *hygge*. When *Bo Bedre* showed the *hygge* transformation of the modernist apartment, representations of practice were important ways to communicate and restore emotion. Rather than an alien, sterile, and overly controlled environment, a modernist space was represented as compatible with cherished rituals (figure 4.)

With this setting in mind, the sofa article *Bo Bedre* ran in 1976 can be seen as one way that the sofa was domesticated and made Danish — and therefore *hygge*. Significant here is that the article is a DIY piece on how to construct a sofa; it does not instruct the reader about how to choose a sofa from the marketplace. The project itself is presented as a collective effort, and the article suggests asking friends who are good at carpentry and sewing to help with parts of the project. In this way, it is not only the use of the finished sofa that can be considered *hygge*: through the instructions to ask others for help, the finished sofa becomes imbued with the memories of its creation. In both the article about the apartment and the article about the sofa, language is also invoked to create a feeling of shared identity: both articles, like many others in this period, invoke a collective “we” (*vi*). Emotions here are tied together to a complex bundle of things, habits, and materials, including the transition to a new and starkly different style of housing, a move toward informality, and the emergence of DIY culture in Denmark. *Hygge* was a way to tie these ideas together and to make sense of a new way of ordering space and practice. In this regime, the emotional components of *hygge* were experienced collectively, and in particular through the sensation of touch and the feeling of emotional and physical warmth.

Familial/ Antique Hygge

The second regime of *hygge* is antique *hygge*. This signifies a shift to *hygge* as an emotion associated with the symbolic properties of antiques, the idea of tradition, and a family-centered construction of identity. The shift to this regime of *hygge* appears to have taken place in the late 1970’s, and by the early 1980’s, it was in full swing. This regime coincides with a generational change — the children of the baby boomers who moved to the new suburbs had attained some wealth, perhaps gotten married, and were

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starting to have children themselves. Some moved back to the cities and closer-in, older suburbs from the newer modernist suburbs. During this time, dual-income households became increasingly common in Denmark. Practices changed to reflect the time demands of balancing work and family life, and so did the concept of *hygge*. In particular, *hygge* became more closely aligned with feelings of pride, status, and achievement.



Figure 4. *Hygge* used to “repair” the modernist setting: the dining area arranged for everyday use, left, and for special occasions, right. *Bo Bedre* created a feeling of familiarity in new surroundings through representations of practice. “*Her bor vi*” (“We live here.”) *Bo Bedre*, August 1976.

Nostalgic *hygge* also aligned the concept of national identity with familial identity. In this regime of *hygge*, antiques and “antique style” replaced the earlier collective, egalitarian ideal with one that made it possible to render status differentials as both natural and extending back in time by providing a family lineage. Through a question and answer section dedicated to the identification of old furniture and housewares, *Bo Bedre* provided antiques with a provenance that connected them to particular moments of Danish history. This occurred regularly through naming – a chair, for example, might be identified as a remnant of the Danish golden age. Adding a neoclassical “Christian VIII” chair to one’s home added a corresponding set of meanings, including, under this regime, the meanings imparted by *hygge*. In this system of meaning, an individual or family could express familial status, lineage, good taste, and *hygge* – and impact emotions such as awe, pride, and nostalgia – through particular choices of furniture and through the rearrangement of the home’s interior spaces.

In this regime of *hygge*, spaces and objects communicated familial meanings. Accordingly, many articles focus on the reconfiguration of space to create places for the family to be together while food is prepared. *Bo Bedre* presents these changes as filling the needs of the “modern” family for a “modern” kitchen: walls come down, spaces are combined, and children are given their own areas to work on homework while parents work on the meal. This marks an important difference in that the experience of *hygge* is now associated with the repeated and



Figure 5. Making room for *hygge* in the kitchen by removing walls. *Bo Bedre*, July 1981.

ongoing performance of labor, whereas in the earlier collective regime *hygge* was achieved through relaxation and togetherness and labor was associated primarily with setting the scene for *hygge*.

This contradiction was resolved by positioning the modern kitchen as a site for *hygge*. To achieve this, ironically, there had to be a visual tie to the old “*ikke spor hyggeligt*” (not at all *hygge*) kitchen. Therefore, the “modern” kitchen is a setting that looks very familiar: an older, grander, and somewhat idealized kitchen that is completely different in appearance from the functionalist kitchens of the modernist era. Materials do some of the work; new floor tiles are laid in a familiar pattern, cabinetry with paneled doors is built to match – or appear to match – existing cupboards, while much space, both in the magazine and in the kitchens, is devoted to storage and management of an ever-expanding repertoire of cooking equipment and appliances. Divisions are not completely eliminated in the newly “modern,” egalitarian kitchen, but they are reconfigured along different bases, and the result is that the kitchen becomes a site of *hygge*. This is achieved in a number of ways. First, *hygge* functions to allow the representation of egalitarianism by eliminating – or claiming to eliminate – divisions, both in space and between people (Trolle Linnet 2010). In the 1981 and 1986 issues of *Bo Bedre*, the newly *hygge* kitchen appears in number of articles and advertisements – SieMatic claims its are the world’s most *hygge* kitchens – as a place to experience togetherness, where design can negotiate the status differential between parents and children by providing a place for both to “work” concurrently. Whereas the regime of collective *hygge* discussed above primarily took place with guests and friends in the living room, the kitchen found a new emotional resonance as the center of family life. A new regime of *hygge* emerged from these spaces, one centered on the image of family togetherness through time.

Antiques and things which are new but appear to be antiques, such as paneled kitchen cabinet doors, take on a new importance in this regime of *hygge*. While they rarely appeared in earlier issues of *Bo Bedre*, antique objects and antique buildings became a central focus during this regime of *hygge*. In particular, representations of Danish farmhouses, or *bondehuse*, become much more common. The farmhouses were associated with an existing practice of retiring to a summerhouse in the country, whereas in the earlier regime the summerhouse was an extremely minimal shack-like dwelling, rarely with running water, drawing on the metaphor of a tent. But the new converted farmhouses associated with antique *hygge* require a much higher investment of labor and capital. Ideally, they bear the marks of handcraft: out of square, hand plastered walls; rough tile floors; thatch roofs, but they also have all of the modern conveniences of houses in the city.

One 1981 article, titled “*De realiserede drømmen om det lille hus på landet*” (“They realized the dream of a little house in the country”), chronicles the purchase and renovation of a house originally constructed in 1780. The house has been renovated to include all of the conveniences expected of a house in 1980’s Denmark, such as a

“modern kitchen” similar to the one described above. But certain features have been retained with no attempt to camouflage age or wear, such as the rough ceiling joists in the kitchen. The dream of a little house in the country is not a dream about going back to the simple pleasures of an older way of life; it is about fully incorporating objects that communicate status with contemporary practices.

In this regime of *hygge*, antiques become a way to accommodate a need for ties to the past while also accommodating contemporary practice. *Hygge* here holds past and present together by legitimating changes in practice. It is more *hygge* to work “together” as a family (even if “together” means mom is cooking, dad is on his laptop, and their child is practicing multiplication tables) and to eat together in the kitchen than it is to be served by a cook, maid, or by the family’s mother. But newness – modernity itself – is not considered *hygge*. Therefore, these new, modern practices must be rendered familiar. This can be accomplished by the use of antiques, by a setting with an antique or traditional theme, but most importantly it is achieved by something usually considered outside the realm of design: the repetition of everyday events such as cooking and eating. Yet the importance of the cultural practice of *hygge* requires that a symbolic link going backwards in time must also be maintained in order for new practices to feel comfortable.



Figure 6. Farmhouse as object of desire. The text at the bottom reads "Farmhouses for sale/The best and most idyllic you've ever seen." *Bo Bedre*, cover February 1981.

Individualist/Luxury Hygge

The February 1991 issue of *Bo Bedre* celebrated the 30th anniversary of the publication. It is different from the issues to this point in look and feel because it is printed on heavier, glossy paper, and because it is a “double issue” with about twice the number of pages as usual. The extra pages are dedicated to a retrospective of *Bo Bedre*’s 30 years, to a presentation of classic Danish design products related to the home, and to a striking number of full-page advertisements. The advertisements are also different from previous years: whereas nearly all *Bo Bedre* ads in the 1970’s and early 1980’s were for items for use in the home – coffeemakers, furniture, carpet, and so forth – a significant number of ads are for internationally-known luxury brand products that are not directly associated with the home, such as Cartier watches and Mercedes-Benz automobiles.

Here, *hygge* shifted again. This time, it shifted away from an image of identity predicated on collectivist or familial values to one that was thoroughly individualist. Articles present homes as representations of individual identity. Designed objects are valued for their originality and uniqueness, and the names of designers become ever more prominently featured and attached to objects. Whereas in the collective/functional regime of *hygge*, *Bo Bedre* might have identified only “a chair” or “a set of Danish chairs,” and in the familial/nostalgic regime, *Bo Bedre* might have identified “Arne Jacobsen’s Egg chair” or a “set of Ant chairs,” in the individualist/luxury regime, *Bo Bedre* would identify a chair as “an Arne Jacobsen.” Objects functioned stand-ins for the meanings of designer names, making it possible to an individual to create a quite stimulating “conversation” between famous designers simply by creating a collection of designer furniture in the living room. Perhaps no article made the individualist claim more clearly than the July 2001 piece “*Dit hjem matcher dit ego*” (“your home matches



Figure 7. Luxury *hygge*. A model luxuriates in a iconic chair designed by Danish architect Arne Jacobsen. The chair has been covered with fur. *Bo Bedre*, cover February 1991.

your ego.”) Overall, more and more articles in *Bo Bedre* featured the homes and apartments of individuals, which reflected a demographic shift towards living alone.

In this regime *hygge* became primarily associated with feelings of indulgence, escape, and luxury. *Hygge* becomes associated with places that are represented as fantasies or escapes, and in this case nostalgia is invoked not to provide status, but rather as an imagined perfect past. *Bo Bedre* is the purveyor of these dreams. Using specific techniques of photographic representation (Lovell 2001), *Bo Bedre* created the visual equivalent of a dream world in the magazine (cf Gachot 1999), which, by this point, was printed with high-quality photographs on thick, glossy paper. A striking number of these representations feature spaces that appear to be for the use of a solitary person: often, it is the visual device of one chair set near a fireplace, although some images do show a single person inhabiting a space. In this regime, the ideal form of *hygge* is one that is experienced alone.

Overlapping Regimes

Although they appear to have developed in sequential order, these three regimes of *hygge* are not mutually exclusive. Previous regimes coexist with the current regime of individualist/luxury *hygge* quite happily. For example, Kwik, a kitchen remodeling company in Denmark, trademarked the term “*samtalekøkken*,” or “conversational kitchen.” It was heavily advertised in *Bo Bedre* and the word has since worked its way into colloquial Danish. The *samtalekøkken* builds on the symbolic importance of the kitchen in the in the familial/antique regime and adds in ideas about friendly conviviality and egalitarian modes of socialization. Kwik’s marketing and editorial mentions in *Bo Bedre* wrap these ideas together with the idea that a kitchen is a forum for the performance of individuality, meaning that the *samtalekøkken* integrates elements of all three regimes of *hygge*. *Hygge* is transformed, once again, through this combination, into a function all its own; *Bo Bedre* captions an image of the *samtalekøkken*, noting that it works both for cooking and for *hygge*. The ethnographic research detailed in previous section and research conducted separately by Danish researcher Trolle Linnet (2010) suggests that individuals use *hygge* in different and sometimes conflicting ways at different times for different purposes.

Homeyness in *Sunset*

The following analysis of *Sunset* magazine supports the idea that McCracken's schema of homeyness is analogous to the concept of coziness, and illuminates why the concept of homeyness is increasingly allied with the marketplace narrative of sustainability.

I analyzed articles that appeared in the print version of *Sunset* and included the word "cozy" or "coziness" from 2003-2010. *Sunset* divides its content into four main categories: Food and Wine; Garden; Home; and Travel. The terms "cozy" and "coziness" generated 146 articles across these four categories. One term or the other appears most frequently (91 times) in travel articles (cozy bed and breakfasts, cozy hotel rooms, and so forth.) Next in the frequency count is 22 mentions in the garden category, followed by 16 mentions in food and wine, and a mere 15 mentions in the home category. A search for articles with the terms "homey" and "homeyness" returns an additional 36 articles, of which 21 are in the travel category and the remaining 15 belong to food and wine. Oddly, no articles in the home or garden categories use the words "homey" or "homeyness." I speculate on the reason for this later in this section.

To better understand the data, I coded each article using McCracken's eight principles of homeyness: authentic, diminutive, embracing, engaging, informal, mnemonic, situating, and variable. Of these eight principles, I found that articles in *Sunset* are most often associated with the authentic, embracing, diminutive, and situating properties. The variable, informal, and engaging properties are invoked about half as often, with the mnemonic property the least often invoked. Because of the limited sample size of the data set, I did not attempt a statistically driven content analysis. Nor did I compare articles that used the term "cozy" or "coziness" to other content in *Sunset*; this task, complicated somewhat by the difference between *Sunset*'s regional editions, will be the subject of future research, which also will allow for the collection and coding of enough additional data to allow for a statistically driven semantic analysis of content.

Nonetheless, my analysis verifies McCracken's framework and establishes that the idea of homeyness appears to be interchangeable with coziness in some contexts. I discuss below McCracken's principles in the order they were most often invoked in *Sunset*.

Embracing



"The structure is organized as a series of nested boxes: Outermost is the overhung roof and a stone porch, then the square main floor with a living/dining area and kitchen, and finally the smaller square upper floor with the master bedroom and bath."

Page title: "Walden, CO: Rocky Mountain High."

Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/home/room-ideas/walden-co-00400000011717/>



"Calvo's garden is divided into many rooms, some big enough to be shared by the family, others cozy enough for a tête-à-tête or solitary retreat. But Calvo isn't quite satisfied. "I've got a few more improvements in mind," she says, smiling."

Page title: "What else makes a garden magical?"

Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/garden/landscaping-design/what-else-makes-garden-magical-00400000022138/>

The embracing quality of homeyness, which refers to the layers of material and meaning that envelop the occupant of a homey place, was the quality most evident in the data from *Sunset*. Note the perfect parity between the above image of a house in the mountains where "the structure is organized as a series of nested boxes" and McCracken's finding that "the surfaces of the homey environment exhibit a pattern of descending enclosure. Each surface is enclosed by a greater surface and in turn encloses a lesser one. This hierarchical chain of enclosure creates the embrace of the homey environment" (McCracken 2005, 29).

Articles describing renovations that use the word "cozy" or "coziness" often mention the construction or reinforcement of an enclosing element, such as a perimeter wall in a garden. A statement such as "first, they removed an old wood fence and built a stucco-on-cinderblock wall around the yard," which appears in the text used to describe

the garden courtyard in Albuquerque illustrated in the following section, is a typical statement.⁶

Other articles focus on creating a strong sense of enclosure in a small yard, a practical problem faced by many readers of *Sunset* who try to reconcile the magazine's message about indoor-outdoor living with the reality of neighbors just a few feet away. In this category, advice about plants and shrubs is mixed with abstract design strategies said to increase the use of space, such as in this text:

Privacy on a small city lot is an all-too-elusive concept. But in a neighborhood of compact lots, this San Jose backyard – which sits right up against two-story houses – includes a pergola-sheltered hot tub for long, slow soaks behind a curtain of vines.

Landscape designer Cathy Drees managed to create a tranquil outdoor room thanks to a sophisticated color palette, a screen of greenery around the perimeter, and a few artfully chosen accents.

Drees's first step was to heighten the garden's sense of enclosure. Along the fence, she planted an evergreen screen of *Tristaniopsis laurina* 'Elegant' and *Thuja occidentalis* 'Emerald', both of which grow tall but not wide.

...

To make the yard appear larger, she set the bench and pergola at angles to the house. A recirculating fountain in a rock-filled channel marks the transition between the two areas.

To further enhance the illusion of space, Drees layered the plantings – short ones in front, taller ones behind.⁷

⁶ <http://www.sunset.com/garden/landscaping-design/cozy-courtyard-albuquerque-00400000021663/>

⁷ <http://www.sunset.com/garden/landscaping-design/create-hidden-retreat-00400000011539/>



"The French serve blanquette de veau with almost anything that captures the good sauce, such as rice, mashed potatoes, or pasta. They might draw the line at soft polenta, but I don't."

Page title: "Cozy blanquette." Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/food-wine/techniques/cozy-blanquette-00400000018367/>



"Our favorite way to make cozy winter foods is by braising—slowly cooking meats or vegetables in liquid until they're very tender. But since long cooking requires regular attention, it's not a great solution for busy cooks. Happily, slow-cookers are back in vogue, many with handy programmable features."

Page title: "Slow and easy." Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/food-wine/techniques/slow-easy-00400000012180/>

The ability of the embracing principle of homeyness to envelop and accommodate other aspects of homeyness becomes especially visible when *Sunset* describes food. It is perhaps not surprising that a stuffed chili would be described as cozy by virtue of its embrace of filling, but *Sunset* suggests that this dish can become even more cozy with a fried outer layer of batter.⁸ Likewise, pasta swathed in sauce is also often described as cozy.⁹ So are foods that have warm spices, are cooked in liquid, are easy to prepare, and are considered, as discussed in a subsequent section, informal. With this in mind it would not be much of a stretch to declare the slow cooker the official appliance of homeyness. As apparent in the description of the veal dish above, the embracing principle is often wrapped up not only with the physical qualities of a warm sauce, but

⁸ <http://www.sunset.com/food-wine/techniques/big-cheese-chile-rellenos-00400000015765/>

⁹ <http://www.sunset.com/food-wine/healthy/quick-light-healthy-00400000017923/>

also given further meaning through an allegiance with authenticity and informality, which are discussed in the following sections.

Authentic



"Looking for guidance, the couple enrolled in a course offered by the University of New Mexico titled "Master Planning for the Residential Landscape." Coincidentally, they wound up hiring the instructor, landscape architect Alana Markle, now with the Albuquerque BioPark." Page title: "A cozy courtyard in Albuquerque." Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/garden/landscaping-design/cozy-courtyard-albuquerque-00400000021663/>



"Overway... removed various non-Neutra-designed elements that had been added over the years, such as wall-to-wall carpeting and dated-looking tiles.... The most dramatic change came in the living room, where, after extensive research, he installed a stainless steel fireplace modeled on a design from Neutra's Nesbitt House in Southern California. 'There was no fireplace in our unit or the one downstairs, and the toughest part was cutting a hole in the floor,' says Overway. 'But we took care not to move any structural members, so the units could be restored to their original shape.'" Page title: "Neutra revisited." Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/home/room-ideas/neutra-revisited-00400000011873/>

The authentic property of homeyness is expressed in two ways in Sunset. First is through a concept than can be labeled material fit (Sandberg 2007). Material fit is an idea with overtones of modernism, and it holds that the interior or private areas in a space should be a reflection of the exterior appearance of the building. Material fit holds, for example, that a craftsman bungalow should have paneled cabinets, simple trim, and wood floors, not shag carpet and shiny furniture. Sunset often extends this idea of material fit to the social background of the person. In this case the decor choices of renovated Victorian that is somewhat ornate for Sunset is seen to fit the French

nationality of the owner of a house. Likewise this sense of fit is presented as enhancing the authenticity of an article on a renovated house by Richard Neutra that an architect purchased from the original owner in San Francisco's Marina district. The second way of communicating authenticity is referring to the natural environment of a place. For example, the text accompanying the image shown above, which illustrated an article titled "Cozy Courtyard in Albuquerque," goes to length to describe how the plantings ("aspens, desert willows, honey locusts, and piñons") are well fit for the high desert landscape.



"Take Peter, for instance, and his buddy Bronwyn — culinary enthusiasts both. As house guests one afternoon, they announced they were going to cook lamb shanks, and who knows how to do that better than Australians?"

Page title: "Lamb from Down Under." Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/food-wine/fast-fresh/lamb-from-down-under-00400000015157/>



"Memories of his mother's cooking inspired Eligio Hernandez to re-create the cozy chicken dishes that he ate growing up in the state of Veracruz in Mexico in his new home in Campbell, California."

Page title: "3 Mexican classics made easy." Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/food-wine/fast-fresh/mexican-classics-made-easy-00400000012831/print-index.html>

Again, the theme of authenticity is most clear in articles about food. These articles engage authenticity by equating the people of a region and a food type. For example, a recipe for lamb is told as a story about stereotypically relaxed New Zealanders who napped while roasting lamb in the oven, and a Californian cook's recipes are presented as inspired by the memories of his mother's cooking in his childhood home of Mexico. Here, the authentic attribute of homeyness is imbued by the national identity of individuals.

Diminutive



“A cozy lounge reminiscent of a martini bar was Pasadena homeowner Carolyn Powers's wish.... To achieve her dream of a glamorous hideaway, Powers turned to designer Jennifer Charleston, who began by extending the fireplace 6 feet along the wall and adding a mantel and storage cubby for firewood. Charleston also divided the room with a sheer curtain, hung from a recessed track, that tucks into a slit in the wall when not in use. The fireplace now works as the unifying factor for the multifunctional space.”

Page title: “Chic fireplace update.” Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/home/decorating/chic-fireplace-update-00400000012176/>



“The tiny footprint of Cynthia Warren's Oakland bungalow, a modest 926 square feet, doesn't bother her one bit. ‘I didn't want a bigger space,’ she says. ‘This house feels cozy, and it had everything on my list — wood floors, a fireplace, and a gas stove.’”
Page title: “Decorate with your favorite things.”
Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/home/decorating/decorate-with-your-favorite-things-00400000011739/>

Interestingly, *Sunset* rarely uses the word “cozy” to describe interior spaces of small dimensions. The image above right is an exception and it is notable that text puts the word into the mouth of the homeowner represented in the photograph, rather than in the official editorial voice of the magazine. When it is used in this way, “cozy” is most

often used in association with garden projects that are represented as being newly completed and are often conversions of hitherto unused areas: neglected side yards, forgotten driveways, and the like. Size is typically communicated through the text using words such as “modest” or by communicating size in absolute terms of dimensions or square feet. When this is the case — as it is with one courtyard patio — smallness is communicated through function point is made by stressing how many functions the homeowners wanted to cram into that space, such as “a fireplace, seating area, spa, outdoor kitchen, and wood-fired oven — all of which had to fit in a space only 20 feet long by 20 feet wide.”¹⁰ Sometimes these diminutive spaces outside of the main living area of the house are structures unto themselves, but more often they are presented as extensions of the interior domestic realm of the home.

None of the articles I coded as related to the diminutive property have to do with food, and while it is possible to imagine diminutive food — small cookies, cherry tomatoes, sliders, and so forth — most of the mentions of “cozy” or “homey” food and wine have nothing to do with smallness. Instead “big flavor” or “boldness” is a mark of coziness. Therefore the diminutive category seems to apply only to space, and preferably to outdoor spaces. I believe this is because rendering the outdoor diminutive is a way of domesticating a big, slightly dangerous concept — nature — into one that is much more comfortable to inhabit because it is smaller, and, as noted above, enclosed.



“A hundred years ago in Tucson's Presidio neighborhood, it was common to smell mesquite smoke wafting over a courtyard wall on winter evenings.

This outdoor living nook was designed as a modern version of that classic barrio garden, complete with a mesquite-burning fireplace.”

Note the allusions to the authentic and mnemonic qualities of homeyness, as well as the representation of an embracing and situating scent.

Page title: “Cozy, curvy patio.” Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/home/outdoor-living/cozy-curvy-patio-00400000011653/>

¹⁰ <http://www.sunset.com/home/outdoor-living/cozy-curvy-patio-00400000011653/>

Variable



“‘The rusted steel gives the garden a warm, cozy feel,’ remarked a juror. ‘It’s not at all cold or industrial-looking.’”

Page title: “Steeled to perfection.” Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/garden/landscaping-design/steeled-to-perfection-00400000020030/>



“Inside this 1,650-square-foot home in Cave Creek, Arizona, the main gathering place combines a compact kitchen, dining area, and high-ceilinged living room. The space is an eclectic composition of materials: Modern stainless steel and minimalist cabinetry play off the vibrant hue of Venetian plaster and the earthiness of a long stone wall.”
Page title: “Cave Creek, AZ: Up close with nature.”
Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/home/room-ideas/cave-creek-az-00400000011733/>

Variability is not as frequently mentioned in *Sunset* as the preceding symbolic elements of homeyness, but it is present, and often wrapped up with the notion of balance. Variability can be expressed through differences in symbolic meaning (a garden which has a blend of “Asian and tropical” themes¹¹, for example) or through contrasting material qualities such as pattern and texture. The modernist house pictured in the following section is described as having “rugged sandblasted block walls and rich wood beams and window frames” which “contrast with a smooth glass coffee table upholstered seating colorful bolster pillows and a soft wavy-patterned rug

¹¹ <http://www.sunset.com/garden/landscaping-design/designing-perfect-covered-patio-00400000015442/>

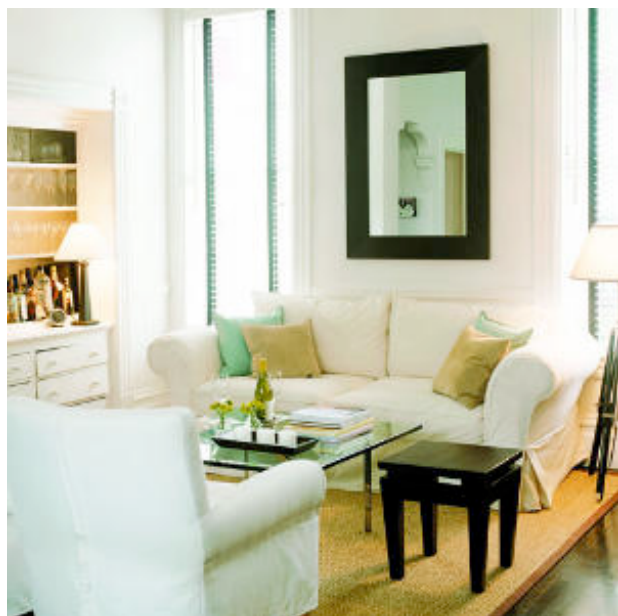
underfoot.”¹² A brief description of this house is followed by seven “Lessons for Keeping Modern Style Cozy.” Most of the seven points stress variability in one way or another:

1. Use texture and pattern,
2. Don't hide your stuff,
3. Light rooms with table lamps,
4. Mix in woods,
5. Let the sun shine,
6. Add humor, and
7. Connect indoors and outdoors.

Regarding the last point, establishing a connection between the indoors and outdoors, it should be noted that this has long been a primary concern not only of *Sunset*, but of modernist architecture. *Sunset*, however, always took pains to adapt modernist architecture to popular taste, most notably by championing the designs of Cliff May and other architects of ranch houses (see Gregory 2008). The careful attention paid by *Sunset's* editorial staff to respecting the taste of their readers, however, means that there is an ongoing recognition that many readers associate modern style with a lack of comfort and warmth. Accordingly, variations in the feel and appearance of surfaces and objects, the variations in meaning communicated by “books, stacks of magazines, photos, and fun objects,” pools of light in darkness, the authenticity of wood, a “a main design feature” of “the 1950s aesthetic,” the variation introduced by natural light, the punctuation of a ostensibly uniform style by “lighthearted” things, and experiencing the difference between inside and outside are all ways of maintaining homeyness in an aesthetic constellation that many find “icy,” if not Scandinavian.

¹² <http://www.sunset.com/home/decorating/cool-house-warm-look-00400000011797/>

Informal



“With everything out in the open, it’s accessible and easy. I like the purity and the clean look,” she says. ‘Even pots and pans can be artistic in shape.’ The screened-in porch — formerly a laundry area — is home to a stainless steel worktable for gardening and pet chores, and transforms into a bar when hosting guests.

Nunn loves the original concrete sink in the corner: ‘It’s old and funky and practical. I can wash paintbrushes in it or hook up a hose for gardening.’”

Page title: “A Victorian transformation.” Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/home/before-after/a-victorian-transformation-00400000011859/>



“Although both Costa and Germani are fans of the midcentury-modern look, their house is neither minimalist nor sterile. In fact, it’s downright cozy, both indoors and out. ‘We didn’t want a museum or a showcase,’ Germani says. ‘We wanted a place where you could sit down comfortably and have a cup of coffee.’

Page title: “Cool house, warm look.” Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/home/outdoor-living/cozy-garden-shelter-00400000011862/>

Informality is so much a part of the mythic world of meaning that operates in *Sunset* that it is usually only mentioned when the visual content of an image might send a conflicting message. Authenticity and informality are frequently alloyed together in order to downplay objects that would otherwise carry too strong of a status message. For example, the New Zealander’s lamb dish mentioned in the section on authenticity is described as “an elegant meal with minimal work.” As part of the mythic West *Sunset* creates, informality is often presented as a quality integral to ways of living. An article on the owners of Niman Ranch, for example, explains that “since they live on a working

ranch, their parties are always relaxed and casual,” informal qualities that are further reinforced because they take place in “a simple two-bedroom house” built by Bill Niman in the 1970’s. In the world represented in *Sunset*, informality is primarily communicated through the representation of ways of eating, entertaining, and being at home. Connecting these representations to the informal property loops this property back again to the authentic and situating properties of homeyness.

Engaging

Niman’s house, introduced in the preceding section, which can already be understood to be informal, authentic, and situating, is also made homey because it is engaging by virtue of its diminutive size:

...because the house is compact, [Niman’s parties are] also intimate. The breakfast nook doubles as a dining room, so the adults assembled for the day's party... seem like a large group. But no one at the table would trade the cozy feeling and peaceful view of West Marin hills for extra elbow room.¹³

¹³ <http://www.sunset.com/food-wine/holidays-occasions/dinner-at-ranch-00400000012086/>



"Architect Kurt Melander devised an ingenious solution: He opened up the wall between the two spaces and installed curtains as dividers to screen the kitchen when necessary....The island is Barden's favorite aspect of the design. "When cooking, it lets me face the room," he says. "It pulls me into the conversation and allows guests to be involved in what I'm doing."

Page title: "Curtained kitchen." Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/home/architecture-design/curtained-kitchen-design-00400000014802/>



"Replacing the old layout with the new nook created a lively spot for various activities — family meals, homework, and craft projects. 'From here, we have a good view into the new family room and out to the backyard, which makes it easy to keep an eye on our three kids,' says Warren, the architect who designed the remodel."

Page title: "Room for the family." Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/home/before-after/room-for-family-00400000012384/>

Spaces associated with engagement in *Sunset* are apparent because photographs of these types of spaces often include people. Engagement, which McCracken describes as a process that draws a person in and invites interaction between people is typically described in *Sunset* as a matter of design. Opening the kitchen to adjacent rooms or reconfiguring the kitchen to accommodate an expansion in the scope of activities that can take place in the kitchen are ways to increase engagement and, thus, homeyness.

Variability, diminutiveness, and the embracing quality are often closely associated with engagement in *Sunset*. This association is often achieved by subdividing larger spaces so that the environment may be shaped like a stage set to match up with a particular mode of engagement. For example, when the curtains in the kitchen pictured

above left are opened, the kitchen is configured in a way that perfectly suits the homeowner, who “dreams of being a TV chef.” But when a formal meal is served and the curtains are closed, the mess of the kitchen (and the evidence of work that goes into food) is concealed from view. In fact, there are two curtains: one translucent and white, and the other rust-colored and heavy, for nights when the owners “want to hunker down and get cozy.” This aspect of engagement is facilitated by the embracing property. Outside of the kitchen, other spaces may be subdivided into a variety of smaller rooms to facilitate interactions among small or large groups. For example, the garden shown in the section above on the embracing property “is divided into many rooms, some big enough to be shared by the family, others cozy enough for a tête-à-tête or solitary retreat.”¹⁴

One way of representing engagement shown in *Sunset* is through spaces that are designed for the use of one or two people, such as the arrangement of chairs in the garden shown on this page. This type of space invites engagement, but it also provides an opportunity to *imagine* engagement when it is not possible to interact with others or focus alone on an enjoyable hobby. A similar phenomenon is going on with the window seats and the hearth arrangements in *The Not So Big House*, discussed in a later section.



“Any view worth framing needs a focal point — something that draws your attention and brings order to the overall picture. An outdoor conversation area was the perfect solution for Cindy Combs’s small-space garden in Seattle. Combs gave it a focal point by adding an engaging architectural backdrop, painting her wooden chairs a vivid purple, and surrounding the scene with lush foliage and flowers.

The lattice screen — dressed in squares instead of the typical diamond pattern — features a large garden porthole that frames the view from inside the home..”

Page title: “Retreat for two.” Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/garden/landscaping-design/retreat-for-two-00400000018187/>

¹⁴ <http://www.sunset.com/garden/landscaping-design/what-else-makes-garden-magical-00400000022138/>

Mnemonic

Of the eight elements of homeyness McCracken describes, the mnemonic is the most elusive in *Sunset*. The reason why is well illuminated by a passage of text from the article on the garden pictured in the first section above on the embracing quality. The text reads: “the patina of age adds charm to a garden. And it's the most difficult element to achieve in the West, where everything looks like it was just taken out of its wrapper five minutes ago.”¹⁵ Findlay's book *Magic Lands* lends additional depth to this insight: the place of history and memory in the forward-looking West is liminal at best. With the difficulty of convincingly simulating age, *Sunset* seems happy to settle for a way of communicating age through nostalgia that is not unlike the strategies Findlay describes as play in Disneyland, which “belonged as much to” Los Angeles, the “city of the future as it did to small towns of the past” (Findlay 1992, 95).

A additional difficulty of portraying the mnemonic property of homeyness through a media outlet such as *Sunset* is that the types of memories McCracken describes as being particularly homey, such as memories communicated through family photographs, are necessarily particular to an individual or family and thus difficult to reproduce in a mass media outlet. As the first example illustrated in this section shows, backstory takes up too much space, and too much backstory can backfire if it makes a reader feel out of touch with the magazine (one without grandparents on The Continent might be left cold by the text of this article, for



“Nostalgia plays a major role in Fauveau's decorating choices. In the living room, the pair of white leather sofas (which she scored at an online auction site for \$500) brought back happy associations from childhood. ‘My parents had the same ones in brown when I was growing up — these are like albino versions,’ she says. In the kitchen, the island is a nod to her memories of the ‘gigantic marble table for pastries’ at her grandparents' hotel and restaurant in the south of France. And in the dining room, Fauveau covered the chartreuse walls with row upon row of family photos in mismatched gold frames. ‘Mark and I both live far away from our families, so it's important to us to have pictures of them all around the house,’ she explains.”

Page title: “Victorian secrets.” Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/home/decorating/victorian-secrets-00400000011748/>

¹⁵ <http://www.sunset.com/garden/landscaping-design/what-else-makes-garden-magical-00400000022138/>

example.) Two ways of dealing with this problem exist. The first is to create a myth of a prototypical *Sunset* family. In this strategy the magazine's articles, recipes, and so forth can be seen as allegorical extensions of this imagined family's activity. This way of creating an in group or sense of community has been picked up by other media outlets such as news stations (Baym 2000) and home design blogs (Arsel and Bean 2010). Following Diane Harris's argument about whiteness in architectural representation (2007), one consequence of this strategy is that it becomes difficult to adequately represent the contemporary diversity of cultural practices, religions, and genders, and this balancing act is made even more difficult by the broad readership of *Sunset*, which, unlike magazines with a niche readership, cuts across lines of income and class.

The second strategy is to create a kind of fairy tale world where the objects themselves become ways to tell a story. It is this strategy that is more common in *Sunset*. This strategy, which hollows out representations of people by turning them into providers of a service (hosts, butchers, bakers, farmers, and so on), may be familiar to readers of *Martha Stewart Living* magazine. As Ted Gochot explains, "the real characters are things, like food. And it is at their level that the real 'human' drama is played out" (Gochot 1999, 48). Gochot tells how *Living* concocted a storyline wherein a morality play is acted out, for example, within the world of brown-colored foods. The most common in *Living*, Gochot claims, is the Cinderella tale. In this particular case, the story goes like this:

An everyday food – bland, nondescript, forgettable, possibly even Bad – such as, during the Brown Period, the doughnut – is rescued from the ashes (or, as in this case, the grip of jokes about the police) and transformed into a nuanced, lovely, and interesting food – a fascinating character, a princess. The complement to this type of story also occurs, but somewhat less frequently. In it, a highbrow dish becomes... accessible, homey, something easily within the reader's grasp. It may seem overambitious to suggest, but these explorations of food are, again, in their way also tales about remaking the context of society. They're not quite saturnalias, but, as I've called them, tea parties on the ceiling (like the scene in *Mary Poppins* that knocks her charges out of the limits of their worldview), experiments in a topsy-turvy world. The article about doughnuts, focusing, for example, on the way the glaze crackles or coconut sits the edge of a

homemade donut, takes the lowbrow pastry and convincingly asks, What could be better than this? (Gachot 49)

Gochot goes on to show how the mode of food photography and styling particular to Martha Stewart – the pin-prick focus and blown-out backgrounds that are now familiar elements of food photography¹⁶ – give the images of food the allegorical qualities of certain genres of painting. Oddly enough in the particular sample of data I took from *Sunset* is an article about doughnuts that perfectly illustrates how Gochot's argument applies in the context of *Sunset*.

Sunset ran a recipe with article suggesting that its readers exhume the Halloween tradition of making doughnuts (spelled this way instead of the arguably more modern, and therefore Western, "donut") For proof of this tradition, *Sunset* looked to itself, which, given its wide influence, seems reasonable enough. As the article explains: "Throughout the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, *Sunset* paired doughnuts with Halloween. Everything from after-school doughnut parties to 'frying tables' at evening events and the gentle reminder, 'Don't forget the doughnuts,' for a Halloween brunch menu appeared in our pages." Thus authenticity and homeyness is attached not only to the tradition of making donuts, but also to the influence *Sunset* exerted over domestic life, and thus nostalgia displaces memory as a signifier of the mnemonic property in *Sunset*.



"The Hallowe'en season brings to mind witches and jack o' lanterns, crunchy apples and tasty hot doughnuts,' wrote *Sunset* back in October of 1963. Witches, yes. Jack-o'-lanterns, okay. Apples, sure. But doughnuts?

Throughout the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, *Sunset* paired doughnuts with Halloween. Everything from after-school doughnut parties to 'frying tables' at evening events and the gentle reminder, 'Don't forget the doughnuts,' for a Halloween brunch menu appeared in our pages."

Page title: "Rediscover Halloween doughnuts."
Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/food-wine/holidays-occasions/rediscover-halloween-doughnuts-00400000018176/>

¹⁶ See also Margaretta Lovell, "Food Photography and Inverted Narratives of Desire."



"What makes a dish a classic? Longevity in a certain cuisine is one mark. France's coq au vin for instance, qualifies — it has the power to evoke years of tradition. But the most enduring dishes evoke not only earlier days but also nostalgia for those times (high marks again for coq au vin).."
Page title: "Quick, light & healthy: Cozy classics updated and lightened for weeknight suppers"
Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/food-wine/healthy/quick-light-healthy-00400000017923/>

Situating



"The backyard is for dining and entertaining. The living area features an L-shaped wooden bench designed by Cletta that appears to float atop concrete. At night, when a fire glows nearby, this is a cozy spot. King palms edge the dining area." Page title: "Small yet abundant garden." Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/garden/landscaping-design/small-yet-abundant-garden-00400000013976/>



"The little shed in her backyard in Bellevue, Washington, became a quiet, healing room where she recovered from breast cancer." Page title: "Cozy garden shelter." Image and text: <http://www.sunset.com/home/outdoor-living/cozy-garden-shelter-00400000011862/>

The situating property of homeyness is perhaps the most difficult to describe, as it is the one that works to associate the individual with all the other properties. Through this process the individual is transformed into what McCracken calls a "homey creature" who "appears to take on the properties of the surrounding space and objects" (1989, 38.) In general, the situating property of homeyness is communicated through associating the attributes of individuals with the spaces they occupy. This is accomplished through rhetorical and semiotic means. For example, an example in the previous section shows Cynthia Warren, the owner of the "modest" Oakland bungalow wearing a fuchsia top that matches the color of the breakfast nook where she is sitting.

These spaces can be created or reworked by the individuals themselves, but DIY is not a necessary component; the patio design and the garden shed illustrated above were designed and built by professionals. But there must be some sort of personal connection. In the case of the patio, this is established by a short story about how the

designer “had just returned from Costa Rica when he took on the project. Impressions from his trip, along with the couple's heritages (Rechtszaid is from Buenos Aires, Quintana from Mexico City), determined the garden's tropical theme.”¹⁷ Also communicated here, of course, is the property of authenticity, but allying the designer’s inspiration with the owners’ ethnic heritage and the “theme” of the garden turns the garden into an extension of self (Belk 1985). This is further extended through practice; the garden has been planted with plants that yield ingredients needed for that most homey of dishes, “stuffed chiles with walnut sauce” using “many ingredients plucked straight from the garden.”¹⁸

The garden shed – which is really more of a standalone study, complete with “rigid insulation, double-glazed windows, a standing metal-seam roof, and a thermostat-controlled heater” that “keep it dry and comfortable throughout the year” – is described as a “true refuge” for its owner, Sheila McConnell, “where she recovered from breast cancer.” The exceptional qualities of this place and the need for withdrawal as part of the healing process are highlighted by the only quote from McConnell: “out here I don't get caught up in the pace of life.” The garden was designed and built by her stepson, a narrative element which is used to establish a familial, and therefore situating, relationship between the space and its owner. The connection between the restorative qualities of nature, the garden, the healing process, McConnell’s familial relationships, and McConnell herself all work together as part of the situating qualities of this particular shed.

The way *Sunset* represents the shed’s location in the photograph shows another pattern related to the situating property of homeyness. Many of the places *Sunset* describes as cozy are located at a physical remove from the main home structure. The shed is typical of this, as is the patio created by a Seattle couple and described by *Sunset* as though it were a clearing in the forest primeval. “Unlike most patios, which are connected to the house, theirs is located down a winding path, in an area surrounded by lush shrubs, perennials, and annuals. It's a destination with all the ambience of a campfire in the woods, only guests gather around a cozy table instead of a firepit.”¹⁹ Another example of this pattern is “an outdoor room” built at the back of a sloped backyard, which is accessed by steps set into the newly landscaped hillside garden. This scheme is described by its designer as a way to create a “destination at the end of an adventure” and by *Sunset* as a place for the couple that owns the house “to relax and enjoy views across the garden below.”²⁰

¹⁷ <http://www.sunset.com/garden/landscaping-design/small-yet-abundant-garden-00400000013976/>

¹⁸ <http://www.sunset.com/garden/landscaping-design/small-yet-abundant-garden-00400000013976/>

¹⁹ <http://www.sunset.com/garden/landscaping-design/place-gathering-friends-00400000016604/>

²⁰ <http://www.sunset.com/garden/landscaping-design/hillside-hideaway-00400000019737/>

Another space which *Sunset* also describes as a “retreat” and rhetorically equates with the identity of its occupants is a family room located in a separate structure in another Seattle family’s backyard.²¹ It is carefully designed and decorated to disguise its newness. There is an element of allegorical enchantment to these spaces – the Seattle couple’s somewhat remote patio that has “the ambience of a campfire in the woods,” or this family room folly that is described as akin to a “tree house.”

This sense of enchantment has a long tradition. The tagline for *Sunset* is “how to live in the West,” and, as Findlay shows, the Western landscape has long been linked to a belief in an environment that has been made more special through human consideration (1993). This allies with the myth of Eldorado – part and parcel of the content of *Sunset* since its early days as a broadside for the Southern Pacific Transportation Company intended to combat the myth of the wild west to lure tourists and sell land owned by the railroad.



“It’s a cozy space, not a formal room. The denlike spaces are the rooms people gravitate to.”
 Page title: “Outdoor family room.” Image and text:
<http://www.sunset.com/home/outdoor-living/backyard-shed-family-room-00400000012267/>

²¹ <http://www.sunset.com/home/outdoor-living/backyard-shed-family-room-00400000012267/>

Findings: The Not So Big House

Sarah Susanka is an architect and popular author. She launched a successful media career on the strength of her first book, *The Not So Big House*, which was released in hardcover in 1998 and thereafter in paperback. Susanka followed the success of this book with a number of spin-off books and one DVD. They are:

- *Creating the Not So Big House: Insights and Ideas for the New American Home* (2000)
- *Not So Big Solutions For Your Home* (2002)
- *Home By Design: Transforming Your House Into Home* (2004)
- *Inside the Not So Big House: Discovering the Details that Bring a Home to Life* (2005)
- *Outside the Not So Big House: Creating the Landscape of Home* (2006)
- *The Not So Big Life: Making Room for What Really Matters* (2007)
- *The Not So Big House: A Blueprint for the Way We Really Live – 10th Anniversary Edition* (2008)
- *The Not So Big House: Home By Design DVD* (2008)
- *Not So Big Remodeling: Tailoring Your Home for the Way You Really Live* (2009)
- *More Not So Big Solutions for Your Home* (2010)

Susanka's continuing success in the marketplace likely lies in the application of a single resonant idea (the "Not So Big" brand) to subject areas from residential design and remodeling to lifestyle. *The Not So Big Life* offers a set of instructions for transforming one's home and self in parallel. Her books offer the conceptual materials needed for identity projects along with a set of instructions for effecting transformations in the material world. The identity project, which Susanka identifies as living a more meaningful, connected life, is therefore closely connected with material objects in ways that are simultaneously symbolic and instrumental (cf Arsel and Bean 2010). While these connections are made most explicitly in *The Not So Big Life*, I will focus on Susanka's bestselling first book, *The Not So Big House*, because the ideas she presented there are in the widest popular circulation.

The Not So Big House: An Overview

The Not So Big House is divided into six chapters:

1. "Bigger Isn't Better,"
2. "Rethinking the House,"
3. "Making Not So Big Work,"
4. "Lifestyles of the Not So Rich and Famous,"
5. "Dreams, Details, and Dollars," and
6. "The House of the Future."

These chapters are briefly summarized below.

The first chapter, "Bigger Isn't Better," is prefaced by a dedication ("to our grandchildren") and a brief acknowledgement. In the acknowledgement, Susanka thanks her colleagues, explains Christopher Alexander's influence on architectural education, mentions the architects Frank Lloyd Wright, Greene and Greene, and Le

Corbusier, and describes the houses and chapels of E. Fay Jones as having a “beauty that radiates from within.”

In the first chapter Susanka sets up the idea that the home is inextricably linked with the self, an idea that has been presented in the academic literature by Clare Cooper Marcus (1995) and Toby Israel (2003). The self Susanka describes is one that values future generations, the idea of beauty, and, as evident in her description of Jones’s work, the idea of interiority (Trolle Linnet 2010). *Bigger Isn’t Better* goes on to explicate the need for and genesis of the “Not So Big” brand. She also makes an explicit connection between the state of the housing market – where she claims that contemporary Americans are forced to choose mass-produced houses devoid of detail – to the value Arts & Crafts proponents John Ruskin and William Morris attached to the work of the craftsman. In a section titled “Built to Last,” Susanka encourages the reader to think of beauty as a mark of craft, and as an actor itself. She writes:

Beauty, more often than not, comes from careful crafting. And when a well-crafted object ages, no matter what it is, society almost always helps it to age well. Just look at the buildings our culture has chosen to preserve – all of them were well designed. Owner after owner of such homes has recognized the treasure inherited and cared for them lovingly...What I am proposing in this book is that our house can express our personalities, that they can be designed to accommodate our changing lifestyles, and that they can be built for future generations (Susanka 1998, 27).

Susanka’s book also communicates skills for becoming a more reflective and knowing user of the material world. For example, a sidebar in this first chapter offers normative instruction in how the reader can become more aware of the impact of scale on the perception of space. Susanka suggests that the reader measure smaller spaces that are particularly comfortable, and to include the ceiling height. With this lesson out of the way, the rest of the book can take the assumption that the reader is fluent in the perception of space – or at least appreciates that architects are.

In the second chapter, which is titled “Rethinking The House,” Susanka asserts that contemporary patterns of sociality do not fit the material arrangement of conventional expectations of a house. Continuing the house-as-individual theme, she writes, “today’s houses still wear the architectural equivalent of a hoopskirt, even if the accessories seem more contemporary” (31). She goes on to discuss, diagram, and show in photographs a number of spatial strategies, such as the use of alcoves to allow distinct uses to overlap in less square footage. Another key idea in this section is the separation of public areas

of the house from private ones. Susanka claims that a major flaw of many new houses is that they do not have adequate acoustic separation. Noise from electronic equipment (televisions, video games, and so on) echoes through the entire house, leaving nowhere quiet enough to escape for quiet reflection or contemplation; clearly the book was written before the advent of laptop computers, iPads, and YouTube-capable mobile phones. As a solution to this problem, Susanka outlines a concept that she calls the "Away Room." This is a space that is acoustically separated but visually connected to other public areas of the house. She suggests glass French doors to achieve this purpose. The Away Room can function in two ways: it can be the place where noise-producing activities (video games, television) are isolated, or it can be a place to get away from the noise and activity of other household members. Home offices are treated in parallel to the "Away Room," with Susanka weighing in on the pros and cons of various location strategies (in an alcove in the master bedroom, in a guest bedroom, in a separate wing of the house.) To make the point that separation is a binary condition and, the section continues with a discussion on the value of a screened porch versus a sunroom. The sunporch is valued because it puts the user in closer contact with sun, light, and air than a sunroom, which could ostensibly be used year round, but, because of the expanses of glass, has simultaneously not enough and too much separation. The closing section of the chapter, headed "A Place of One's Own," explains the value of a space that is just big enough for one person to comfortably inhabit. She describes her own space, an attic room with sloped ceilings and a small window, as "a true expression of my inner self: a place where I find inspiration, clarity, and focus" (59). The schema here is understanding the house as a set of binary relationships. This is not unlike Bourdieu's seminal study of the Berber house (1973). Here the relationships that matter are between inside and outside, which are made parallel to public and private, which are linked once again to both public and private identity and individual and family identity. In this process the house that Susanka idealizes is one that helps to liberate the individual from constraints of society while at the same time allowing sufficient separation and isolation for the development of a rich inner life. She speculates that the size of houses may be a reflection of a misunderstanding of how to achieve the spatial separation that allows different identity projects to coexist under one roof. This explains why "most people start with a desire for more space than their budgets allow" (12-13) and explains her observation that "in most very large homes, a substantial percentage of space is rarely used" (15). To build on Susanka's metaphor, the house continues to function as clothing. In her ideal vision, no longer is the house a hoopskirt, but perhaps a sensible shirt and jeans – the kind of unpretentious, functional clothing that nonetheless can carry ideological messages about style and fashion.

The third chapter, "Making Not So Big Work," focuses on normative solutions and strategies for achieving a closer fit between domestic practice and the space of the home. Here Susanka hones in on the role of built-ins and clever planning to allow spaces to serve two functions. The use of space in Japanese homes, where futons are

rolled up and stored in closets during the day, serves as an example for how making a space serve more than one purpose can reduce the overall size of a house. Susanka also argues for a “control center” with a phone and perhaps a computer (again, this is a place where the first edition of the book shows its age) where everything that comes into the house can be sorted and dealt with, helping to control the spread of clutter into other rooms of the house. This chapter also deals explicitly with the problematic role of the television in middle class American life. Susanka discusses how to use built-ins to fit a bulky tube television with its role in the home. Either it should be enshrined as a central element of the main living space (“the real hearth of the home”) or concealed as an undesirable element that must be contained and concealed (for those who wish to “avoid the blank face of the television staring at us at all times”) (73, 75). Further discussion centers on architectural strategies that can be employed to create the illusion of space in a small home, a concession to the idea that an ideal home should feel expansive and not constraining. Strategies discussed include creating providing plenty of daylight and using window placement to allow daylight to bounce deep into the house. Another strategy is creating diagonal views through space, a technique familiar to fans of Frank Lloyd Wright houses and midcentury ranch houses. Yet another strategy linked directly to Wright is the importance of variations in ceiling height. Susanka argues for generous and multi-purpose circulation spaces, arguing that wider hallways and stairs make a small house feel bigger, and defends the oft-maligned pocket door, stating that newer models are sturdy and save space. This is a fine-grained engagement with the material aspects of home that links abstract spatial strategies (for example, using circulation space for other purposes to reduce square footage) with a concrete discussion of building materials (in this example, using pocket doors.)

The fourth chapter, “Lifestyles of the Not So Rich and Famous,” makes the case for *The Not So Big House* by showing four architect-designed houses that follow the principles outlined in the first three chapters. The houses have clearly distinct architectural styles and are readily identifiable as new, although none adhere to the architectural principles of high modernism. The first is a small house of 800 square feet designed by an architect for himself. Every room, even the bathroom, is bedecked in wood paneling. It is clearly an homage to Frank Lloyd Wright, and in particular the details of his Usonian house designs. Next follows a considerably larger house with contemporary Prairie Style details; it also has a wealth of interior wood trim. The third house is a postmodern version of a Tudor with details that vaguely reference the work of early Arts & Crafts architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh. A subsection headed “Designing for Kids” articulates two strategies: one, making spaces that are vertically scaled to the size of children, such as low-ceiling loft areas and areas underneath stairs; and two, a “loop,” the allowance for a circular flow in the main level floor plan where children can run through adjacent rooms in an endless loop to burn off energy. The fourth example is an architect-designed house in a Swedish modern style and then later expanded for an empty nester couple.

Chapter five, “Dreams, Details, and Dollars,” is intended to explain the basic economics of homebuilding to a lay audience. Susanka explains that three variables – cost, quality, and quantity – are interrelated such that an increase in one factor requires a decrease in at least one other. To prove the point, she shows three houses constructed at increasing cost, described as “economical,” “the middle ground,” and “the high end.” With this narrative structure, she visually illustrates the increasing costs related not to size, but rather to complexity of form, amount of trim, and quality of materials. Again, abstract spatial strategies that might seem to be the result of taste or aesthetic preference are linked to concrete effects. A cube, she points out, is less expensive to construct than a rambling house with several wings, because more space is enclosed with less surface area. But the level of detail work Susanka calls for in the previous chapter has an undeniable cost, and even the “economical” house would likely cost a production builder more if only because the detailing is different than the usual – and there is also more trim and a number of apparently simple details that actually require very tight tolerances in every stage of construction, another factor that increases cost. Anticipating this argument, Susanka argues for thinking in terms of value, rather than cost, pointing out that a “very expensive” remodel which cost \$500 per square foot in 1997 dollars doubled the appraised value of the house in question.

The last chapter, titled “The House of the Future,” is perhaps the most likely to be skipped over by a reader eager to improve the quality of a new house. It is the most interesting, however, from an academic perspective, because it is where Susanka’s agenda and worldview is laid out most clearly. This is made clear in the opening spread of the chapter. It begins, provocatively, with a full-page photograph of a house that looks decidedly unfuturistic: a pitched roof affair with an eyebrow dormer, wood and shingle siding, Craftsman-style detailing, and an idyllic setting overlooking a pond (is it Walden?). Across the spread is the title and an epigram attributed to Gandhi: “We must be the change we wish to see in the world.” I suspect it is not a coincidence that this was also the mission statement chosen by the the founder of the green building business where I worked before returning to graduate school. The idea that change can be manifest through the material seems to have a distinct appeal to people who see their identity and their impact on the world as closely tied to the concept of home. Therefore, Susanka presents her Not So Big philosophy as a way to build houses that will survive the test of time, and so the Not So Big house is allied with the warm domesticity and tiny scale of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Usonian houses, which had hallways as narrow as 2’ 6”, and opposed to familiar Modernist visions of the future: Mies van der Rohe’s glass house, Le Corbusier’s Unité d’Habitation, even the oddly charming Palladian sphere of Claud-Nicolas Ledoux. The reader is presented with a brief history of houses of the future – a 1960’s concrete and spray foam job right out of the Jetsons, a geodesic dome that “doesn’t look like home to most of us” (176). The “beautiful idea” of a house made of glass or the “revolutionary form” of the Villa Savoye are presented as opposed to the “average homeowner, who sought a more familiar pattern of living” (181). Here

lies a contradiction. Susanka is arguing for a different, yet familiar, way of planning space and conceptualizing of the home. In the introduction to the book, after all, she declares that “it’s time for a different kind of house.... A house with a floorplan inspired by our informal lifestyle instead of the way our grandparents lived” (5). But at the end of the book, Susanka is careful to portray the “Not So Big” way as occupying a middle ground between the extremes of the unabated market and prior movements which attempted to link shifts in domestic practice with a wholly new domestic aesthetic. After sections discussing ways the construction process is changing to reduce waste – through panelization, using recycled materials, and increasing energy efficiency – she loops back to the idea that a home must be permanent and lasting, both in materials and in image. She invokes the idea of archetypes, explicitly linking children’s drawings of home to the familiar image of a home with a gabled roof and a chimney.

Mentions of cozy or “coziness” in the Not So Big House (1998 first ed.)

In Main Text

“What is your favorite place in your home? Is it a comfortable chair near the fireplace where you can enjoy a glass of wine and unwind after a day of work? Mine is a little book nook, a place just big enough for one that’s carved into a corner of the living area. This place offers a cozy spot to read and a place to watch what’s going on in the rest of the house.” (33)

“You can even go so far as to offer a place to sit in the kitchen, by adding a hearth and a small cozy area where a few people can gather out of the traffic pattern of food preparation (see the photo on the facing page). This kind of space appeals to even the most citified folks, who long for the look and feel of the farmhouse kitchen. The image of this place, where bread bakes in an open hearth and sunlight streams in the windows, has captured our imaginations. The scale of this area is important to its success. It should be big enough for only a couple of easy chairs—the addition of just a few unnecessary feet destroys its coziness.” (41, opposite photo of a stone hearth)

“The away room can have several functions: It can be both the cozy and slightly more formal entertainment space where you can sit with other adults, and it can become a quiet place where adults can retreat to read or to work in the evenings.” (47)

“There’s a big difference between being alone and feeling lonely—and nothing accentuates loneliness more than broad, open expanses of space. Smaller, more cozy places evoke a sense of security and introspection.” (108)

Mentions of cozy or “coziness” in the Not So Big House (1998 first ed.)
Photo Captions
on picture of stone fireplace, symmetrical arrangement, beams: “This room was designed to be a total expression of comfort, exemplified by the cozy scale, built-ins, and arched ceiling.” (15)
on another picture of hearth with beam overhead: “Instead of thinking of a house as a series of rooms, think of it as a sequence of places. One favorite place is a cozy spot by the hearth.” (32)
“This big room feels more cozy because the larger space is divided into smaller areas by the scale and placement of the fireplace.” (76 – oppositional in quality, fireplace AGAIN)
Other Content
“Here are some words that help identify the quality of space: cozy, elegant, introverted, light-filled, spare, exciting, dramatic, sumptuous, homey, classic, masculine, welcoming, private, modest, impressive, delicate, friendly.” (Callout box, 23)
“In the dramatic living room shown in the photo at left a lowered soffit creates pocket of coziness within a soaring space.” (Sidebar, 78)

Critiques of *The Not So Big House*

For obvious reasons, architects and developers who make their money designing “So Big” houses do not care for Susanka’s popularity in the market. John Henry, an architect of this type, wrote a searing critique attacking several points of the “Not So Big” argument. Mr. Henry’s prominence may be debatable, but Google has turned him into a prominent foe of Susanka by ranking prominently a lengthy web page that Henry put up in response to Susanka’s book. First, the logical problems with Henry’s argument: aside from an undated “epilogue” and a self-authored comment added in 2007, Henry does not appear to have significantly revised his thinking since writing the page in 2001. He cites an online poll conducted sometime before his writing that found that 59% of SUV owners would not shift to a sub-compact car regardless of the price of gas, but does not mention recent market trends that indicate Americans are shifting away from SUVs to smaller cars. Likewise, Henry has not update the page to reflect that in 2009, American houses got smaller for the first time since 1945, although this change is probably more due to the limited availability of capital for building than it is to any sweeping cultural shift. And even architects who like Susanka’s ideas appear to resent

clients who come into a design firm with an agenda. “I want to hide under my desk when a client walks in packing her books,” ceded one architect who was inspired to contribute a defense of Susanka’s ideas on Henry’s page.

But Henry does make some convincing arguments against Susanka’s approach. Among other things, his tract questions the core assertion that “Not So Big” design elements generally require a client to eliminate a third of the square footage, claiming that this is an overly optimistic assessment of the equation. Here, though, the taste critique in Susanka’s book is flipped around: what is so bad, Henry asks, about homes that are designed to impress? Formal living and dining rooms, he points out, are not only used by some for living, dining, and to make an impression on guests, but are useful to buffer more private areas of the house from public view. Furthermore, he points out, people move so often that it does not make sense for the home itself to become a vessel of identity. In a line of argument that recalls Belk’s seminal argument that we are the sum of what we own (1988), Henry claims that meaning for most Americans lies not in our homes, but in our furniture and other moveable possessions. Following this line of reasoning, Henry claims that the reason we are holding on to more and more stuff is because it cements identity in a world that is always shifting. Moving from a big house to a bigger one allows us to transport our extended selves from one place to the next without the painful process of identity transformation that goes along with getting rid of possessions. Indeed, though Henry does not cite it, this assertion is backed up by academic research (Marcoux 2001, Gregson 2007). Henry concludes his tract against the “Not So Big” philosophy by tying the bigger-is-better idea to quintessential ideas of American identity and exceptionalism. Americans want bigger houses, he argues, because of the legacy of manifest destiny and because we “crave the freedom of larger rooms.” A follow-up at the bottom of the page refers to well-publicized academic behavioral research conducted in 2010 that finds a relationship between higher ceilings and the concept of free-ranging thought, which Henry characterizes as “freedom.”

Who Reads *The Not So Big House*?

The Not So Big House is equal parts taste critique and normative manual. It is a screed against the perceived anonymity of the products offered by the housing market. Susanka describes the houses built by homebuilders as “massive storage containers for people” which do not reflect the values or the personality of their occupants (9, 5). Implicit in this point of view, of course, is the idea that the arrangement and appearance, both internal and external, of a home *should* reflect the identities of its occupants. While Susanka’s book is obviously meant to appeal to a middle-class market of people primarily interested in constructing or remodeling a single-family house, this cultural norm should not be unilaterally equated with a drive for differentiation or individuality. Most people in industrialized countries such as the US and UK live in a house with a form that has been chosen for them by the housing market (Shove 1999).

In other cultures where single-family houses are also the norm, aesthetic decisions may be driven by a desire to express sameness (Henning 2005). Susanka's "Not So Big" idea is resonant with a cultural segment that both values individuality and looks to space for markers of social difference.

Despite the enormous popular success of Susanka's nine best-selling books, little academic research has focused on the influence or genealogy of Susanka's ideas. A few other dissertations and masters' theses focusing on the theme of home do cite Susanka, usually in an uncritical mode. These authors tend to cite her book as an example of a normative way to improve the quality of residential design. Others call for more research on the intersection on the kinds of cultural shifts it would take in order for smaller houses to become a market norm. While some see this as a possibility, even an eventuality (Wilson and Boehland 2005), voices outside academia are more likely to claim that the continuing increase in the size of the American house is inevitable and unstoppable due to market forces (Rice 2010).

One reason Susanka's ideas may not be studied more seriously is because of the explicit association between "Not So Big" ideas and the persona of Christopher Alexander. In *The Not So Big House*, Susanka traces back the genealogy of her own ideas through the work of Christopher Alexander and the others who collaborated with him on the hugely influential book *The Pattern Language*. When I asked Susanka about Alexander's influence on her ideas and her work, she told me that he was hugely influential. She went back to architecture school in 1983, first at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo. Susanka lived in a co-op with two students who had been at Berkeley and who had worked with Alexander on *The Pattern Language*. One of them, Guillermo Aricreta (sp?), she remembered, "had that stuff pumping through his veins." She described making "a pilgrimage" to meet Alexander, who gave her a Xeroxed manuscript of the book — it was not yet in print. The experience influenced her enough to transfer to University of Oregon, where Alexander's ideas were more central to the curriculum. Susanka has also played a role in communicating Alexander's ideas outside the world of professional architects. She recalled coauthoring an article for *Fine Homebuilding* magazine which described the process of working with patterns.

"Not So Big" Meaning and Modern Subjectivity

In a section of the book that shows off houses that use "Not So Big" principles, Susanka shows a 2,100 square foot house she designed for budget-conscious clients in the real estate industry. An exterior photograph of the house, which pays homage to Frank Lloyd Wright and Prairie Style architecture, is the only shot in the book that includes the neighboring houses: three vaguely Colonial or French houses with steep roof pitches and other design features that stress the vertical dimension. In other words, these are precisely the "So Big" house that Susanka rails against. Yet no mention of these houses or their negative qualities is made in either the text. Nor are these houses mentioned in the caption on the photograph. It discusses the design strategy for the

“Not So Big” example, which was to keep the exterior shape simple and easy to build in order to allow more of the budget to be spent on interior details. Rather than drawing out an explicit contrast, Susanka implies that by this point in the book, the reader should be indoctrinated enough to stand out from the others who are “Not So Good” at perceiving space.

Perhaps this goes unstated out of a desire to not be confrontational or offend readers who may have recently invested a good portion of money and identity into the kind of house Susanka opposes. Indeed, in radio interviews and in the preface to her book, Susanka is careful not to cast herself as a ideologue, always meekly pointing out that she is not claiming the Not So Big House is for everyone. In the book, she carefully negotiates a parallel process of othering. The other is invoked in her characterization of the typical American homebuyer as somewhat naïve when it comes to questions of the perception of space. This is a tricky line to hold for Susanka, as this naïve person, of course, could also be seen as the audience for her book. Therefore, this naïve group is positioned, using a number of rhetorical and visual strategies, as the other, the outsider, and the unenlightened. According to Chris Cullens, achieving enlightenment through the domestic is a compelling idea in popular representations of the home.

Indeed, at one end of the spectrum, the current ideology of shelter overlaps with the New Age cult of daily life mindfulness, which also encourages making home, garden, table, and body alike a temple consecrated to the simple pleasures of moment-by-moment experience... Titles that can now be found in bookstore interior design and architecture sections include *A Home for the Soul*, *The Temple in the House*, and *In a Spiritual Style: The Home as Sanctuary*. More generally, the spiritual vector gets invoked in assumptions about the sensory intensification and heightened domestic awareness to be achieved through creating an environment whose pared-down austerity enforces extensive contemplation and appreciation of every single select, rigorously chosen element in it. (Cullens 1999, 219)

The above gives some context for the marketplace trends that were the context for Susanka’s book. The late 1990’s and early 2000’s were also a time when Feng Shui became newly trendy. The work of design was no longer only about expressing good taste, but instead about creating an aligned expression of selfhood through domestic space. Cullens explains this as a “foundational assumption about domestic space as

both material producer and metaphor of individuality" (212) but it is perhaps more clearly expressed by Susanka in the third chapter of her book:

The house has changed Bob and Dianne's lives. After a year spent in their Not So Big House, designed to express their personalities and accommodate their needs, they decided to make this second home their primary residence. They still commute to the city for work, but they've completely downscaled and now stay in a small apartment while they wait for the weekend. Their retreat has become their home; and this is where their hearts are. (Susanka 1998, 113)

Key to understanding the idea of recreating identity through domestic space in the context of an increasingly chaotic, layered, and complex world, Cullens argues, is the idea that a home should be a carefully curated selection of materials. Deciding what is kept out of (or purged from) the home is of paramount importance. "Clutter" and "messiness" are associated with disorder and unchecked consumer culture, elements that must be kept out of the house.

Whereas formerly, material possessions, lovingly accumulated and arrayed, offered a comforting buffer against "the world of material cares," in the modernist vision it is precisely the weight and world of materiality itself that constitutes the encroaching force, the exteriority that threatens to take over and disarrange interior order. And this aspect of modernist residential ideology is currently very visible. What has returned to discipline the inhabitants of the Nineties, after the Sixties' cheerfully syncretic exoticism, Seventies' pop, and the neohistoricism of the Eighties, is the organization of space around the endlessly invoked principle of "editing," which is to say, paradoxically, exclusion. (Cullens 1999, 214)

Susanka's book, then, can be seen as a normative manual offering a sophisticated and high-level set of instructions for how to execute this principle of exclusion. Reduce the amount of square footage in a house and the amount of stuff it can contain is cut correspondingly. Susanka goes one step further by likening "So Big" houses to a pair of decidedly unlovable things: "a collection of massive storage containers for people..."

[with] the acoustics of a parking garage” (9). Her selection of negative examples familiar from the context of a shopping mall amplifies the implicit message about the dangers of consumption and the unrooted mobility of modern life.

But Cullens’s argument linking a pared-down, modern style with “the New Age cult of daily life mindfulness” (219) does not exactly mesh up with the interiors Susanka’s book features and with the homey, recognizable style that she explicitly advocates for in the final chapter of her book. Why does she make the selection of an recognizable Arts & Crafts aesthetic rather than one of, say, abstract modernism, or some radically new aesthetic? Answering this question helps shed more light on the audience most receptive to Susanka’s ideas.

In a seminal 2005 article, Colin Campbell identifies “the worlds of DIY and home modification and improvement, together with gardening, cooking and the building and maintaining of a ‘wardrobe’ of clothing” as a key site of a process he labels craft consumption. This process requires for the consumer to “be directly involved in both the design and the production of that which is to be consumed” (31). This is achieved by assembling an ensemble of products, which may be either standardized or mass produced items. There is also a nod to process and the implication of a Bourdieuvian *habitus* in Campbell’s description of “way” and “manner,” but his emphasis is clearly on the end result in a creation of a “style” (34). Craft consumers are usually middle-class and professional (37). Indeed, for a consumer to engage successfully in this process requires a

certain kind of cultural capital in order to envisage commodities as ‘raw materials’ that can be employed in the construction of composite ‘aesthetic entities’ and also to know what principles and values are relevant to the achievement of these larger constructions. In fact, craft consumers are likely to be people who do not merely possess just such cultural capital, but are also more concerned than most about the possible ‘alienating’ and homogenizing effects of mass consumption – something that helps to account for their enthusiasm for the craft option, since they are likely to view this as the appropriate way of successfully resisting such pressures (see Holt, 1997). (35-36)

The connection to Susanka’s book here is very clear. In the conclusion to his article, Campbell asks if craft consumption is something new, or if it can be linked back to movements which rejected “greed, envy, and status striving” by consciously turning to a sphere where “considerations of taste, beauty, authenticity, and personal

expressiveness” are foremost (38). This is, of course, a central theme of the Arts and Crafts movement and an implicit theme in Alexander’s work. This same meaning of beauty is communicated throughout *The Not So Big House* through references in image and text to the Arts and Crafts movement including John Ruskin and William Morris, Greene and Greene, Gustav Stickley, and Frank Lloyd Wright. These examples, however, are not meant to be appreciated as status symbols, but rather as authentic expressions of beauty and utility. Other examples of vernacular American architecture – farmhouses, foursquares, precut Sears kit houses – are used as examples in a way that might balance some of the prestige and status associated with the contemporary market success of the Arts and Crafts movement. Fueled, perhaps, by a highly successful museum exhibit, Arts and Crafts aesthetics became somewhat trendy at about the same time as Susanka’s book. The connection between authenticity and personal expressiveness, likewise, is woven through the book, but it is very clear in passages such as the following:

It’s as if visitors are presented with a stage set, while the people who live there spend their time backstage. We put all the resources necessary into creation of the living room for our guests while we do without new carpeting in the family room... A Not So Big House can be Not So Big because the ‘dinosaur’ rooms are replaced with spaces that reflect the way we eat and the way we live. The floorplan of the Not So Big House is a map, not a fossil, that reveals the lives of the people who live in it today. (30)

Is Homeyness “Not So Big?”

Whether or not there exists an *a priori* preference for houses with pointy roofs and puffs of smoke, there is a dominant visual theme in Susanka’s *The Not So Big House* for a particular style of architecture. This theme is a postmodern take on the already overlapping Shingle Style, Arts and Crafts, Prairie Style, Usonian, and Japanese aesthetics taught in the classic core studio courses of architectural education. Mixed with these references are a modern take on a French tudor, a Colonial house, a midwestern farmhouse, and other vernacular American house forms. There is a common palette of material and color to the houses in the book; wood floors and earth tones dominate. Full page photo spreads, of which there are many, tend to be shots of interiors; when exteriors are shown, the photograph takes up a relatively small portion of the page. From the viewpoint of the consumer to which the book is targeted, the range of houses presented might be understood as an argument that “Not So Big” ideas can be applied to any type of design, but those trained in architecture are likely to pick

up on an implicit taste critique here that explains why architects have not embraced her book despite its success in the marketplace.

The taste critique is that Susanka's book contends that a house can be both cozy — meaning that it reflects a preference for a particular type of identity and sociality — *and* also a work of architecture. Until the last chapter of the book, the connection to aesthetics is largely made through visual means, rather than by an explicit argument in the text. For example, when it comes to the explicit mention of the words “cozy” or “coziness,” which in total appear nine times in the text, in five cases are the image or description of a fireplace invoked. The text explains the cost of wood paneling, but the photographs carry the message about the warmth and comfort it provides a house. Even the last chapter is a negative argument about aesthetics. Susanka is explaining what the Not So Big House is not: it is not a work of high modernism, not a in a style of unrecognizable futurism, not underground or otherwise radically unconventional.

But it is precisely those examples that are celebrated by architects for their originality and artistic innovation. This divide, I believe, illuminates two very different ways of thinking of an ideal home, and it also sheds some light on why Susanka's approach appeals to a particular subset of the population, and annoys others. The first way of thinking posits home as a place of security, permanence, and investment that should be excluded from market-driven rationality. This is an approach very much in line with McCracken's discussion of homeyness, with a near-complete mapping of ideas from Susanka's book onto the eight principles of homeyness posited by McCracken. The parallels and splits are discussed below, with a discussion of the implications of this approach following.

The Diminutive Property

Aside from the obvious connection — strengthened by the linguistic device of “Not So Big” — many of the spatial strategies beyond a reduction in square footage function to make spaces feel smaller and more distinct from one another. This is the case with the Alexander-inspired alcoves and bay windows, the Frank Lloyd Wright style lowered ceilings and extensive use of soffits, and the various methods Susanka offers to break up a large space and make it feel smaller. Mirroring the final chapter of *The Not So Big House*, which positions Susanka's approach as one outside of Modernism by showing images of Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye and Unite d'Habitation alongside more contemporary approaches to architecture driven only by technology, McCracken also opposes the diminutive property to the “monumental and brutalist aspects of modern built form,” (McCracken 2005, 28).

In opposition to this alignment of ideas, Henry's critique, summarized above, positions smallness of house size as a physical and emotional restraint that limits the possibility for the desired type of sociality. A house that is too small requires its occupants to expend work curating possessions, finding ways to fit numerous and bulky meaning-carrying furniture and decorative objects into a limited amount of space,

and to make emotionally painful decisions about parting with possessions and therefore parts of identity (Belk 2010).

The Variable Property

McCracken writes that “variability makes things appear more contingent” and that “contingency makes things appear more individual and authentic.” Here are strong parallels to Susanka’s preference for less formal modes of organizing interior spaces and exterior forms. These are represented in the aesthetic choices implicit in the photographs presented alongside the text, many of which follow a picturesque or Arts-and-Crafts model, with a jumble of materials and forms, again echoing McCracken’s findings that his respondents preferred houses made of odd pieces of rubblestone assembled in a “higgledy-piggledy” fashion, rather than with rock cut into regular rectangular shapes (ibid., 28-29). Susanka expresses this in terms of balance. “To make any floorplan work, there has to be a balance between open spaces and closed, between public and private. Sometimes we feel like being with others, and other times we need solitude. A house should offer a hierarchy of spaces, each appropriate to its function and to our mood” (37).

The Embracing Property

Susanka’s book puts forward several strategies for creating an embracing home. First, against the modernist ideology of an open floor plan she recommends a separate space where acoustic quiet and social isolation are possible. This “Away Room,” as it is called, can take a range of forms, but its purpose is always to provide escape (Susanka 47). This is one of the few places in the book where coziness is explicitly mentioned, and it is linked not only to the embracing property, but also to the diminutive and variable properties, as this excerpt makes clear:

Because the away room is separated from the more open living spaces by French doors or by distance, it can have a different style from the rest of the house. In a light and airy interior, the away room can be a cozy and book-lined alternative. If the house is filled with dark woodwork, then the away room can be filled with light.

The proportions of the room are important, as are its furnishings. A smaller scale – such as 11 ft. by 12 ft. – creates a cozier space. If the chairs are formal and uncomfortable, that’s how you will feel. But if the away room is furnished with

soft easy chairs, wicker rockers, and old family photos, it will offer a comfortable place for living (Susanka 1998, 48).

On the other hand, it is perfectly reasonable that for some people, a primary role of the house is not a site of seclusion and identity formation, but rather a space for sociality and togetherness. This seems to be the case in at least some cultures where a common cultural identity is strongly instituted. In these cases, furniture is used not to embrace, but rather to communicate one's membership in larger society. There are material consequences in cultures where collective identity takes precedence over individual expression. Though issues of individuality are still important and represented through instituting difference, such as by changing the wood steel door of a Communist-era apartment block to an ornate one made of wood, the palette of physical materials and symbolic meanings used to create difference remains limited – that is, the doors communicating difference are relatively similar in style and all made of wood (CITE).

In the context of large American houses, there are three possibilities for engaging with the embracing property. The first is to incorporate these types of spaces within a larger floor plan: thus the proliferation of sitting rooms off of bedrooms, large master bathrooms with two toilets, both separated from bathing and grooming areas by doors, and the inclusion in some very large houses of both a “social kitchen” designed to engender social interactions through everyday use by the family and a separate catering kitchen used for formal social events. The second is to outsource these kinds of spaces to a second home, such as a city apartment or cottage in the country. And the third is to reject the embracing property all together. McCracken writes that the “encompassing powers of the homey environment are sometimes felt most acutely and consciously by those who wish least to feel their effect. Children who have recently moved away from home sometimes complain, on their return, of the ‘stifling’ and ‘infantilizing’ quality of the home and its ability to reduce them to old patterns of dependency” (McCracken 32). Individuals and families of individuals who fashion themselves as self-made, self-actualized people in the mode of Ayn Rand may not want an environment that is homey in this respect because they see any emotional attachment to objects and spaces as a subjugation of their own will to that of others.

The Engaging Property

McCracken writes that the engaging property draws one into a home. This an area where Susanka goes to great length to distinguish her approach from the dominant market approach. Thinking in terms of personality a builder house, with its vast, wide-open spaces designed to impress, is outward-directed, whereas The Not So Big House is

inward-directed²². The layers of isolation provided by the house itself and by the embracing property of spatial devices such as the “away room” facilitate a particular type of interaction focused that is focused and all-encompassing; the outer world is intentionally shut out.

The opposing view attempts to recreate the world within the house. Rather than eliminating signs of status, the home is seen as a way to cement status relationships, both within the household and to others who might visit. Rather than making a guest feel equal, an outward-directed house is designed to impress and intimidate.

The Mnemonic Property

McCracken’s mnemonic property refers to the abilities of homes and their contents as a material way of situating the occupants with respect to time. Family photos, antiques, and other “memorial objects” enforce the sense of the present by creating a cohesive and comprehensible narrative of the past. McCracken calls this process temporal emplacement, explaining that “the individual is now much more vividly ‘somewhere’ than before because the environment is much more vividly ‘sometime’ than before” (35).

Interestingly, other than a section showing that memorial objects can also be decorative, this property is not strongly expressed in Susanka’s book. This can be explained partly by the fact that the book is intended for an audience that is looking forward to a new construction project or renovation, a process that is unquestionably one of emplacement. But it is also reflective of an unstated view about clutter that is a key part of The Not So Big philosophy. A section in the last chapter of the book is headed “Simplify, simplify, simplify.” It makes reference to the voluntary simplicity movement, citing several widely read books such as Thomas Moore’s *The Care of the Soul*. But the irony is that the lifestyle choice of voluntary simplicity in the context of an complex consumer society requires a considerable investment of labor. It takes time and effort to purge belongings and there is an emotional cost to the divestment of belongings, even ones that are no longer wanted or needed (Belk 2010). Given this reality, a more convincing argument might be that a Not So Big House is charged with memory through the process of its creation. Every space and detail in a Not So Big House can be significant as a carrier of meaning.

The opposing view is made clear in Henry’s critique. Here, individuals make a clear split between objects, which are invested with meaning and are portable, and domestic spaces, which are simply shells or containers. Thus, a certain emptiness of meaning or interchangeability is, in fact, desirable, for sameness renders the house a neutral backdrop for the meanings carried by the goods it contains.

²² Paul Groth makes this contrast in a lecture for his courses on the American cultural landscape.

The Authentic Property

Using an image of a richly detailed stair hall with built-in bookshelves and a stained-glass window, Susanka points out that even a space as transitory and banal as a hallway can be made authentic through custom design. “In a Not So Big House, every space is considered to be an expression of the lives lived within” (photo caption, 13). But here it is the design of the space itself, and not objects within it, that matter. With the mantra of simplicity relegating objects to a position of diminished value, investing spaces with the memory of their creation, then, is a key part that the Not So Big House is seen as homey. Through this process, in McCracken’s terms, the spaces and objects in the house “reflect the particular details of personal lives” (35). In order not to wade too deeply into the study of authenticity, an academic area that has exploded since McCracken’s piece, I will define authenticity in his terms. “Homey things and spaces,” he writes, “help distinguish the home from the homes around it and things and its occupants from other people.” By creating difference from others, these processes become key to homeyness because they engage with the marketplace processes of materialism in a way that disarms the threat of an undistinguished, and therefore inauthentic, identity.

This explains why attempts to translate Not So Big principles into a home design marketable on a mass scale by production builders have not yet succeeded in the marketplace (Rice 2010). This process necessarily precludes the investment of individual meaning and thus the mass-produced Not So Big House loses a key element of homeyness, which is central to its meaning, not to mention its position as a brand.

In opposition to Susanka’s valorization of authenticity, many mass market homes celebrate the inauthentic and the fake. This is done because hewing to authenticity is constraining. “This is our Tuscan house – well, our Tuscan fantasy,” reported Carolyn, a Portland homeowner I interviewed. “Our first house was all Danish modern – the style of the house and all the furniture.” Carolyn’s husband was Danish. Together they had spent extensive time in Denmark, so, coupled with the popularity of the Danish modern style in the US through the 1960’s and 1970’s, it left them little room to explore new ideas. Therefore, their first house also offered few resources for learning, experimentation, or identity formation. The Tuscan style, which they dabbled with in their second house and then embraced wholeheartedly for their third, left them ample room for imagination and fantasy, which, in turn, allowed them to create a house that was authentically their own.

The Informal Property

McCracken writes that “homey homes and rooms appear deliberately to ‘lower the tone’ of human interaction” (36). Susanka addresses informality at length and explicitly. This accounts for Susanka’s choice of the hoopskirt metaphor mentioned above in addition to a number of strategies in the book. For example, she argues for building one beautiful entry to the house accessed by both the front door, where guests would arrive

for formal events, and by the garage door, where household members come and go on a daily basis. Eliminating spaces that serve formal symbolic functions is key to The Not So Big idea. For example, Susanka argues for the elimination of the formal dining room and living room, and questions what she sees as an unnecessary proliferation of expensive-to-construct bathrooms. Susanka writes, “if you eliminate unnecessary bathrooms, you’ll save money and space. Use the space for a place just for yourself; and put the money toward making the bathrooms you do build more beautiful” (55).

The opposite view puts a premium on formality. This is often framed in the terms of propriety, convenience, or economic value expressed as the builder or buyer’s foresight for future trends. This appears to be a driving force between the rapidly multiplying number of bathrooms and the amount of resources they consume (Shove 1999; Quitzau and Røpke 2009).

The Situating Property

When Susanka suggests eliminating an extra bathroom in order to make “a place just for yourself,” she is suggesting that a home be designed with the explicit intention that it can, in fact, house an individual’s self. Through homeyness, the individual, to use McCracken’s language,

ceases to be an observer, ceases to be a participant, and becomes finally simply a part of the surrounding homey environment.... Homey objects and their arrangement seek to make the individual a homologue of the environment, an integral part of the whole....these meanings then turn back upon the individual in such a way that he or she is claimed by them. Individuals create homey material culture and, eventually, homey material culture returns the favor. (37-38)

This transformation of market-driven individuals to what McCracken calls “homey creatures” is at the heart of Susanka’s Not So Big project. At the close of the book, she implores her readers to “look more closely at ourselves, at how we want to live, at what inspires us, and at what our planet needs to return to balance. If we can start reflecting these values in our houses, we will make a small but significant step in helping humanity achieve the extraordinary spirit that we are all born with” (194). This transformation of the self through space is the singular focus of Susanka’s more recent book *The Not So Big Life*, and when I spoke with Susanka she reinforced the idea that there is a circular relationship between the home and the individual, saying “our homes and our selves – really, they’re one and the same.”

The opposing view is that home should support the individual in a drive to increase production. The spatial implications of this point of view are not as clear, but one could

imagine that domestic spaces in this schema would be designed to allow the reproduction of managerial strategies in the home environment. There are some echoes of this in Susanka's work, but children are represented as needing places for imagination, escape, and play – places that should be integrated into the design of the entire house through the integration of spatial devices such as the “loop” and the away room. A managerial point of view would focus on spatial strategies to contain and direct the disorder of children away from the public parts of the household, such as mudrooms with separate cubbies, duplicate family room spaces, or separate play rooms.

Discussion

To make sense of the data, in this section I consider the home as a layering of perception, representation, and practice. In each of these categories I identify two elements that operate in the universe of meaning of which the home is part. The first category, perception, has to do with the ways individuals think of space. Many elements of perception are evident in the above findings section. One additional is presented here: engagement, which could be conceptualized on a scale of low to high, has to do with the ways people engage with space visually and bodily. Visual engagement refers to how much of the house is seen in the course of everyday practice. Bodily engagement refers to what degree the house requires physical activity. As explained in the following section, Rebecca and Matt's house is one that is highly engaging, both visually and bodily. Engagement relates not only to McCracken's homeyness, but also serves as a justification for the use of resources. A house that demands the right level of engagement — neither too much nor too little — is perceived as being an appropriate and socially justifiable size. Pairing is a phenomenon that justifies and naturalizes the display and arrangement of objects in the home in sets of two. It is prevalent in Denmark and has to do with making immaterial aspects of culture, such as the importance of egalitarianism, perceivable as a visual artifact in the material world.

Within the category of representation I identify three processes evident in the data: projective space and instrumentalization of the material. Projective space, which describes the tendency for people to crystalize desires through the purchase of material goods or the construction of space loaded with meaning. Projective space is the spatial analogue for behaviors such as buying expensive hiking boots or a \$5000 sewing machine. For example, one might add on to the house in order to have a little-used sewing room, or purchase a vacation home several states away, even though one's work schedule allows little time for recreation activities. Instrumentalization of the material, a concept introduced by Arsel and Bean (2011), goes one step beyond the concept of projective space to indicate the conscious use of material goods and spaces to effect a change in behavior or patterns of interaction. One might rearrange the living room furniture or buy a new couch or, as Al and Peg plan to do, remove a wall so that it's possible to see into the kitchen with the explicit intention of allowing conversations. Key is that the behavior is motivated primarily by an intention of realizing a difference in the social fabric of the home, rather than by symbolic concerns or general trends, though these do factor into the decision. The following section deals with a variation of this idea. When material objects are deployed in a way to constrain, rather than change, the behavior of others or one's future self. I call this process containment.

Instrumentalization of the material and containment are key in linking perception and representation to practice. Several shifts in practice are visible in my data, especially those related to gender, which is the focus of the sixth section below. Finally, I discuss the idea of script analysis, a practice theoretical orientation that helps to relate how

people integrate ideas from sources such as *Bo Bedre*, *Sunset*, and *The Not So Big House* into the material fabric of their home and into everyday practice, and how these ideas reflect and refract to change people themselves.

The final section shows the practice I identify as *modern homey*. This deals with the ways people are integrating the desire for a house that feels like home with the broader cultural interest in modernism. It is meant not as a rebuke of McCracken's claim that Scandinavian design is anathema to homeyness, but rather to illustrate the flexibility of the components of his theory and of people to map an identifiable constellation of meaning onto a divergent set of material objects.

Perception



Engagement

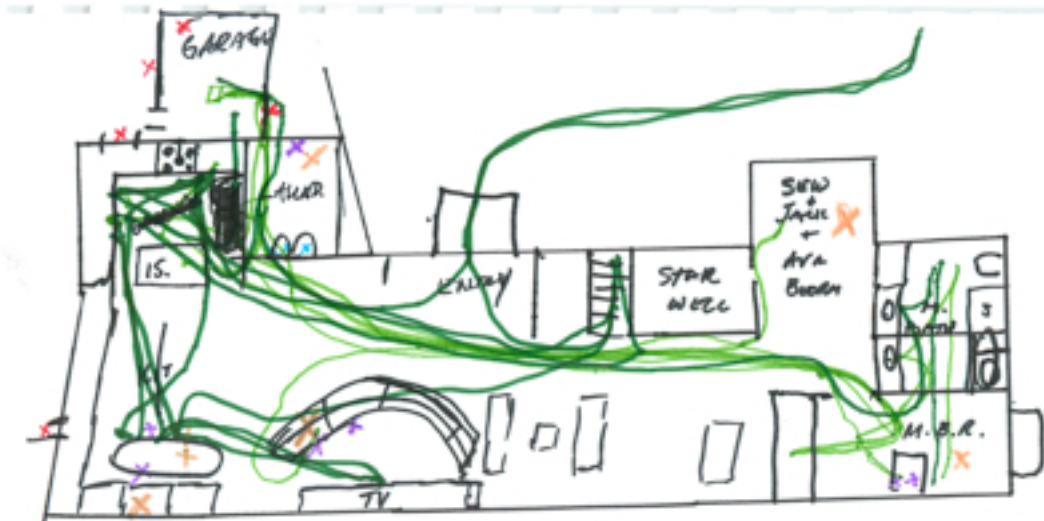
Regardless of the size of the house, there is a strong relationship between the amount of house that is visually perceived on an ongoing basis and a feeling of appropriate utility. Different participants expressed this in different ways.

Rebecca, whose house was the smallest standalone house in the American sample (only Rob's condo was smaller), said that she was concerned about the number of stairs and level changes in her house. The front door is about half a flight up from the sidewalk level, and the living room is another half a flight up from there. The area they use as a bedroom is a full flight of stairs above this area, and their bed occupies a loft accessed by a ladder. In the kitchen area, a long stretch of windows over the counter meant that upper cabinets are hard to reach, so going up and down a stepladder has become part of the cooking routine. Rebecca referred to having to go up and down stairs and ladders as a way that she came to feel "engaged" with the house and that her daily routines mean that she sees most of the house. She was not sure when they were planning the house if this would be something she would enjoy, but it has turned out that this is one of her favorite things about the new house.

Carolyn, whose house was considerably larger than Rebecca's, said that although the house was larger than they needed, that she did not feel that it was "extravagant." Carolyn's daily routines pull her through most of the main floor of the house. In fact, the first thing she does in the morning after visiting the bathroom is to walk through the house to the kitchen and then go out to the garage, where she keeps a stash of the Starbucks Frappuccino beverages she is



“addicted” to. This path means that she moves through the house in such a way that she sees almost every room. So why does Carolyn walk past the sizable refrigerator in the kitchen and instead goes to the garage to get her morning fix? Surely there would be room in the kitchen refrigerator for a six pack or two of Frappuccinos. She explains this strategy as a way to control her impulse for the addictive drink. But it is also an important way of feeling at home, an everyday practice akin to the tradition of circumnavigating a village to establish boundaries through ritual.



Indeed, Rebecca’s description and drawing of her routines in the house initially omits any reference to the basement space, which is functioning as a provisional repository for items they have yet to deal with since moving in about 6 months earlier. The basement was used occasionally in the summer for garden-related tasks, but now it is only used on an irregular basis when Rebecca and Matt move trash and recycling from the kitchen to the bins in the garage between weekly pickups, and on a regular basis once a week for laundry; the washer and dryer are located here. But, recalling the discussion on projective use, this space is incorporated into the idea of the house through the projective use of a space Rebecca and Matt intend to use as a root cellar. Rebecca imagines that they will keep things like “a bushel of apples” and extra produce here that will be used for preparing meals in fall and early winter. Because the root cellar will function as an extension of the kitchen, accessing it will mean traversing the main living area of the house, walking down half a flight of stairs, passing the front door, walking down another half flight of stairs, walking through one side of the basement, opening a door, and then walking down another half flight of stairs. The root cellar, even though it is not yet used, functions with the bed loft to bracket the space of the home and define its extents.

Pairing



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It became clear very early in the research that the dominant visual trope in Denmark is to organize things in pairs: two pictures, two candlesticks, two chairs. The most commonly paired objects are probably candleholders; if they are not the most common pair of item, then they seem to be because pairs of candleholders are frequently placed on windowsills where there are visible both from within the house and to passersby. This is a form of display that is so taken for granted that it is not discussed even in home design magazines that frequently feature such paired items. The sense among my younger participants when I asked them about pairs of candleholders was that this was an old-fashioned practice; pairs of candles in the window were something their parents did. But people still displayed other objects — toy cars, guitars, fruit, and so on — in pairs. A visual synopsis follows on the next several pages. I did not fully realize the dominance of pairing as a visual trope until I began to analyze the data by applying categories, when I noticed that it was apparent in every one of the Danish households I interviewed. As I show below, pairing is an essential component of *hygge*. It is a low-level way of establishing order because pairing helps make a place look lived in.

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DISCUSSION

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The anthropologist Pauline Garvey investigated the paired concepts of domesticity and privacy through an analysis of the use of windows in a small Norwegian town (2005), and it appears that some of the same phenomenon she identified are going on in the context of a larger Danish city. She notes that ethnic Norwegians tend to keep curtains open, even during long winter nights, because providing a limited degree of visual access to the interior of one's home is considered not only neighborly, but a proper way of performing identity. A typical window has drawn cloth curtains and some decorations or potted plants sitting in the window. A lamp may hang overhead, although this is considered somewhat old-fashioned. Although the curtains are open, the lamp and the decorations form a sort of buffer zone that protects the occupants from the passerby by providing something that is intended for others to look at. In contrast, Norwegian immigrants – the participants in Garvey's research were from Somalia – simply draw their curtains at night and do not invest time, energy, or money in creating a window display. As Garvey explains, these two ways of using windows indicate two different ideas of privacy, because for Norwegians “uncurtained windows appear more as a frame for the display of domestic ‘cosiness’, an interface with different planes of reception, and a form of social participation” (173).



While Norway and Denmark are different countries, the culture and language are similar enough that the sociologist Marianne Gullestad argues for a regional understanding of Scandianvianness (1992), and given the data of the current study, along with my own observations of many windows of the type Garvey describes in Denmark, I believe it is appropriate to extend Garvey's findings to the context of Denmark. With this understanding, pairing takes on a mediating function. One way it mediates is to provide a mechanism through which one's private identity and one's public appearance may be aligned. Just as Norwegian window displays are a way to acknowledge the public view of private identity, pairing considered as a dominant motif of decorative order is a way of exhibiting this practice through giving it a material form that then reflects back on identity.

This loop can happen, as was the case in Garvey's study, between a specific household and an amorphous social group such as "the community," but it can also take part between the individual members of a household. I saw ordinary objects enrolled in this function in a number of my interviews, but one case where this process was particularly clear was in Trine's apartment, which she shares with her boyfriend Mattias. Though neither Trine nor Mattias worked in the design field, their apartment showed a careful attention to detail and order that was the rule among the Danish



participants. They also, like most of the other Danish participants, did not have a closet in the bedroom, which is not particularly exceptional because closets are not standard in general in Denmark and certainly not in older apartments in Copenhagen. Thus clean clothes are generally kept in a tall wardrobe, often from IKEA, such as is found in Ann's apartment and in Chris and Ditte's houseboat. Dirty clothes are kept in a hamper, which is generally kept in the bedroom, or, when space allows, in the bathroom. Trine's bathroom, however, was too small for a hamper, and because both she and Mattias kept busy schedules, a lot of laundry piled up between visits to the machines in the basement of their building. The piles of dirty clothes became a practical and aesthetic problem in their bedroom, so they decided together to purchase something "big" to put the dirty clothes in. Instead of buying one hamper or multiples to sort laundry, they bought two: one for his clothes and one for hers. Having two hampers also gently solved a small problem in their relationship stemming from divergent practices about how to properly care for clothes. At the same time, that they chose two identical hampers – which are actually white painted metal cans from IKEA – is a perfect example of the Scandinavian concept Gullestad discusses at length and which she translates to English as *equality through sameness* (Gullestad 1992). The visual expression of equality through sameness appears to be pairing.



For those who are not native speakers of a Scandinavian language, there is a linguistic aspect related to pairing that strengthens the above argument. Like its English translation, a pair, *et par* is singular, rather than plural. Thus calling something a pair turns it from two separate things into one unified object. This is enhanced by a certain amount of linguistic flexibility afforded *et par*, especially when it is used to refer to time. In this case, *et par* can mean “a few.” *Et par* is also used quite frequently to indicate a degree of seriousness or permanence not communicated by “couple.” *Et par* is deeply rooted concept that indicates a unity and a primary way of ordering the material world.

Accordingly, the dominant way to deal with larger collections of objects is to break them into pairs or pairs of pairs. This pattern is apparent across all of the Danish participants, from those who were very invested in the design and decoration of their home to those, like Per, who professed to care little. Per’s collection of guitars – there were three on display when I was visiting – was broken up spatially, with two standing on one side of the room and one standing by itself on the other.

Pairing also works on a material level by subtly influencing interactions between individuals. For example, when two people of different height sit down on identical chairs, status differences are partially erased by virtue of the sameness of the object incorporated, even on a temporary basis, into the extended self (Belk, 1988). Furthermore, sitting in identical chairs manipulates the body into a position where differences in standing height matter little (Knudsen 1996).

Representation

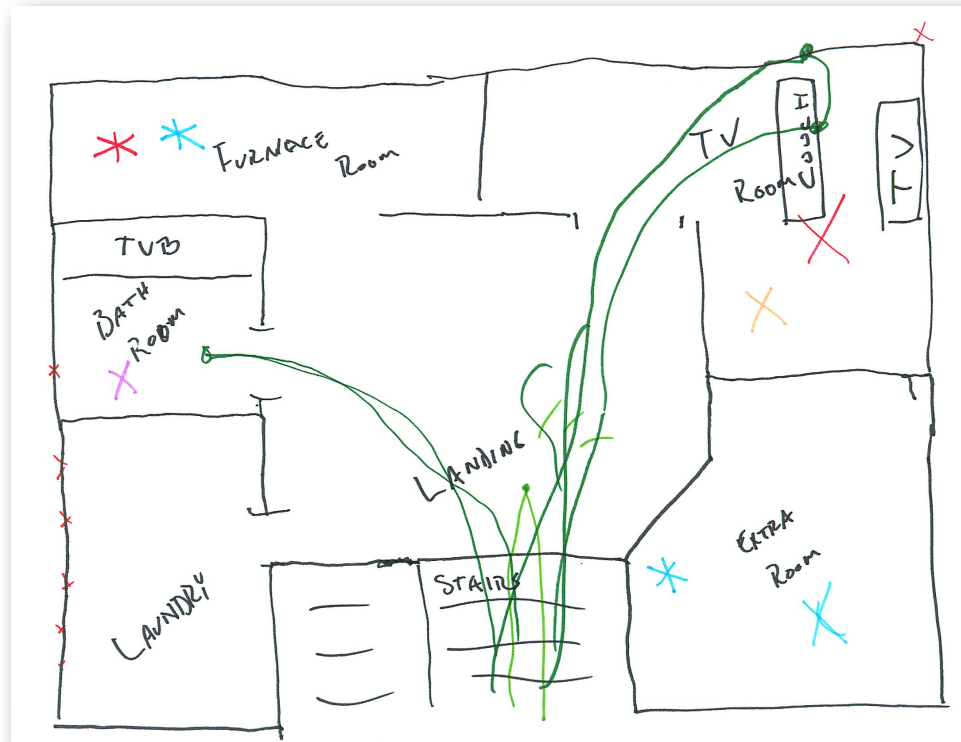
Projective Space



Image © Intel Corporation. Used with permission.
Summerhouse – looking into the living area
(stue) / the fig tree

One overarching pattern that emerged during my analysis of the Danish and American data had to do with how ways of thinking about time are related to domestic place. During the tours, and in particular when working through the cognitive mapping exercise, Danish participants typically talked about actual activities that take place in their home on a regular basis (having friends over for dinner, watching TV on Sunday nights) or activities that would soon take place in their home (Karin’s mention of having a contractor in to make her laundry room “nice.”) In contrast, American respondents tended to describe spaces in terms of abstract activities that were usually connected with the name of the room (eating in the dining room, cooking in the kitchen, playing video games in the “man cave.”) This can be explained if one understands that Danes tend to see the concept of home as consisting of a set of experiences – so rooms would be labeled, for example “Dorthe’s værelse” (private room), whereas the Americans see the concept of home as consisting of a set of spaces for activities – as evidenced with labels such as “TV room” or “sewing closet.” This concept seems to have spatial implications for the American sample because people are more likely to dedicate

individual rooms or spaces for a single purpose, whereas the strategy in Denmark was to configure a room (most often the *stue*) to accommodate a variety of uses. In the examples above, this is clearest in Chris and Ditte's decision to keep the main living space in their houseboat largely clear of furniture, and their delight in the overhead hooks for hanging the hammock and their child's swing because these physical features maintain the flexibility of the space.



Al and Peg, on the other hand, defined spaces in terms of discrete activities. They were having a light-hearted but nonetheless serious conflict over how to use one of the six former bedrooms in their newly acquired house. First, the idea that it was a *bedroom* and not just a generic space was highly salient. This can be contrasted to Denmark where apartments, especially, are sold by the gross number of rooms they contain in addition to bathrooms and kitchens. This, and the prevalence of an entry hall through which all rooms are accessed in most older Danish homes and apartments, means that there is a certain degree of interpretive flexibility afforded the occupants, who can decide through use which rooms are used as *stue*, a category that would roughly correspond to the concepts of living room, dining room, and family room, and which will be used as *værelse*, the comparatively more private spaces Americans would likely refer to as den, office, or bedroom (see also Friedman Hansen's note on *værelse* in the literature review above). Real estate listings do distinguish between *stue* and *værelse*, but

it should also be noted that there is no direct translation for bedroom. The closest translation is the compound word *soveplads*, which translates to “sleeping place.” *Plads* is not a word that is typically used to describe a room. So, if it were in Denmark, Al and Peg’s house would be conceived of as a house with two *stue* and six *værelse*, but instead Al and Peg see it as a house with six bedrooms even though the house was vacant when they first encountered it and there was no furniture present to cue their understanding.

As Miller explains, “function tends to remain our default gear in driving towards any explanation of why we have what we have” (2010, 44). A parallel argument is that naming is highly influential in determining function and the perceived proper use of a given object or space. For Al and Peg, the bedrooms, the thing that is problematic about the bedrooms is that the function implied in the name “bedroom” does not match up with their actual or desired use of most of the six rooms. In their map, they label the spaces TV room, extra room, bed1, bed2, office, and game room. Of these spaces, the TV room and game room are the most problematic for Al and Peg because of Al’s preference for these space to be used in rough accordance with the official “bedroom” designation, a designation that is further reinforced by regulation — they inform me that the house is on record with the taxation authority as having six bedrooms. They labeled the spaces represented on the cognitive map that they drew the “TV room,” where they play video games, the “game room,” which contains a Foosball table, but in these spaces are referred to in speech as “bedrooms.” The spaces are more imaginary than they are real. Fully unrealized at the point of the interview was Peg’s desire to have what she calls a “wine tasting room,” which she described as a room lined with shelves with a small table for sitting with friends and talking while drinking wine. Although Peg describes this to me as an ongoing debate, it occurred to me that the naming of these spaces means the battle is, in fact, over, and her dream of a wine cellar will remain a dream, one that is poorly represented by the small wine rack in Al’s TV room.

Sullivan and Gershuny describe one motivation for the consumption of goods as “an imaginary potential future when there will be time” to use what one has bought (Sullivan and Gershuny 2004, 93). Referring to these “imagined futures,” they write:

Thus, the purchase of cookery books and expensive equipment in this case signifies the wish to produce high quality meals at home while the practice somehow remains one of eating out or buying ready-to-serve meals in the supermarket on the way home from work because of time pressure due to working late and general tiredness. The mere presence, rather than the display, of the books and equipment nevertheless symbolizes the possibility of a time when there will be time. . . . They signify the continuing potential to produce

something of real quality at home. In this way, it is possible to enjoy the fantasy of potential leisure while actual leisure time is restricted primarily to watching TV due to being too tired to do anything else. (96)

Sadly, most of the American respondents had similarly unfulfilled dreams. For Rob, the projective space was an entire house, located in a specific Portland neighborhood, with particular stylistic and architectural features, into which he would invest time and money. This dream space compensated for his dissatisfaction with their existing condominium. Even though Rebecca and Garth designed and built a house with a high level of consciousness towards making it fit the specific lifestyle, it still contains an unfinished and unused root cellar. Significantly, although their basement shows a need for more storage, they have not put anything in this space, nor have they taken anything out of it; the only thing in it is the gravel on the floor and a few scraps of construction waste. This space is being held open as a container for a future desired use.

The only American participants to buck this trend are Carolyn and Frederick. Their home well contains their dream spaces in three ways. First, this was achieved through experience and adjustment — the main living space of the house they built was a close reproduction of the house they lived in before, so they were able to tweak spaces and arrangements to best suit their practice. For example, they had an architect remove the wall separating the dining and living rooms from the family room and kitchen area because they knew they would not use the space otherwise. Second, and related to the first point, while their first house had a slight theme, they went all out on this one, choosing rich colors and details that Carolyn describes as matching the “Tuscan style” of the house. This is opposed to the design of their very first house, which they outfitted in Danish modern style, but which they did not like very much, nor did they feel like it suited the dreary Portland climate. But this house, which Carolyn described as “our dream Mediterranean,” transforms any trace of fakeness and apparent out-of-placeness into a virtue. Carolyn and Frederick’s house is the dream place realized: they have projected themselves into the happy present in which they are now living (see also Findlay 2003). Third, the house contains spaces where Carolyn and Frederick, who are both retired, engage in their hobbies: Carolyn out in the yard, Frederick attending his three antique cars in an impeccably organized garage.

Matt and Dora’s house is quite similar to Carolyn and Frederick’s in a number of respects: it is approximately the same size, has a commanding view, and has been quite carefully built to reflect the couple’s preferences. Both houses also reproduce the spatial order from the previous house — a house that, in both cases, was also selected and built by the couple. But Matt and Dora’s house still contains a space of projection, and it is one that reflects a distinctly different temporal orientation than Carolyn and Frederick’s home.

DISCUSSION



DISCUSSION

This space, of course, is the lower level of Matt and Dora's house, the space that, once it is finished, will contain the same types of spaces as the upstairs (kitchen, great room, bedroom, bathroom.) It is intended to be used in the future for Matt and Dora's caretakers. They have, in effect, built their own retirement and nursing home. This, along with other design decisions in the house, seems to have been influenced by the experience of a close friend, who became a quadriplegic after an accident, and who redesigned his house so that he could live in it with a minimum of assistance. But while the threat of future decay is not visible in any way in Carolyn and Frederick's house, it has been accommodated and transformed in Matt and Dora's basement. So, again, it is significant that this space remains unfinished. In its unfinished state it represents only the possibility of needing care in the future; finishing it and making it ready for regular occupation will indicate that time or other factors have transformed this possibility into a likely need. The space represents this uncozy reality, even with the reassurance that they will be able to stay in this home for the rest of their lives rather than be forced to move to an institutional setting.

While American participants used unfinished or incomplete spaces, either real or imagined, as containers for possibility, Danish participants in the same stage of life as



Matt and Dora and Carolyn and Frederick seem to instead use objects to anchor the future world of possibilities to the present moment as represented by material goods. In Poul and Karin's interview a significant theme was the threat that they might someday have to move out of their house. They seemed to be in a state of conscious denial about this inevitability, pointing out objects that functioned as a "reason we could never move." Karin started the interview by directing the camera *out* of the house, to a tree in the yard ("our church.") And again, within the house, the presence of Karin's children's stuff in the basement and hanging on the hallway walls was explained as another reason why they could never move. Poul's description of the technically complex heating system in the house, however, suggests that the house itself might make them want to move because its demands a level of engagement and financial investment that they may not want or be able to maintain as they continue to age. He referenced moving to a smaller apartment, a comment that stands out in particular because Karin has been so vocal about never being able to move. Her line of work as a *hjemmehjælper*, literally a "home helper" for the elderly and infirm, probably helped to convince her that staying in her own home as she ages is a concrete possibility. Furthermore, Poul's mention of a future space is dim and undetailed. It is expressed as a conditional – "if we have to move to a smaller apartment" – and as such this space has not been invested with much, if any, meaning.

This can be explained by the fact that most of the Danish participants, and indeed, most Danes in general, have access to a *sommerhus*, or summerhouse, that might be either owned by one's self or one's family, or rented by a family or group of friends. Cabin or "vacation house" would probably be a more appropriate translation, however, especially for ones built more recently, which are required by code to be as well-insulated as any ordinary house, and therefore can be occupied even in the dead of the Danish winter. Industries and regulations exist around the cultural norm of spending time at the summer house. Companies manufacture and advertise prefabricated vacation homes that can be quickly built on a remote site. Special taxation rules exist for houses that are not continuously occupied. Zones within small towns are set aside that can only be developed as vacation houses, and these zones are sometimes closed off in the winter in the primary interest of security, but also to ensure that people are not living there year-round. Thus the Danish summer house is understood to exist in a special kind of place and time that is somehow different from the everyday. But it is not only access to a summerhouse that provides space for projection, but also the culturally constrained ways of thinking about this kind of space; Carolyn and Frederick, after all, have a summer house in Denmark!

Therefore, in Denmark, one's ordinary place of residence does not have to contain projective space. This role is instead carried by the summerhouse or its equivalent. Per makes an explicit connection between the activities he associates with *hygge* – making music, in particular – not only by the metaphor he chose to describe the concept, but also by describing his experience at a rented summerhouse in terms of the activities he



Summerhouse in [Remote Location].
Sweetheart eats breakfast.



Summerhouse – sun nook



Summerhouse – living area (*stue*) and view
into the kitchen



Summerhouse – guest room

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likes to do with friends: cooking and making music. Likewise, Poul and Karin's caravan is a portable summerhouse. It provides for the kinds of out-of-the-ordinary interactions and enforces a kind of closeness through proximity that is difficult to achieve and maintain within ordinary domestic space. Significantly, when I asked Poul and Karin to indicate areas associated with *hygge* in their house and caravan, they indicated discrete spaces in their house (bedroom, kitchen, and so on) but encased the entire caravan in an egg-shaped bubble of *hygge*. In fact, this was the only cognitive map a participant made where the line used to represent *hygge* was drawn outside of the lines that represented the material bounds of the space.

Instrumentalization of the Material

“The house has changed Bob and Dianne’s lives. After a year spent in their Not So Big House, designed to express their personalities and accommodate their needs, they decided to make this second home their primary residence. They still commute to the city for work, but they’ve completely downscaled and now stay in a small apartment while they wait for the weekend. Their retreat has become their home; and this is where their hearts are.” (113)

Like Bob and Dianne, many of the participants in my sample aligned a project of identity transformation with a corresponding home remodeling project. Instrumentalization of the material describes the process through which material objects are consciously charged to have agency over everyday life (Bean and Arsel 2011). This process has to do with understanding not only the symbolic property of objects, but also the role of objects in practice at the level of the individual and the cultural. This represents a conscious engagement with objects to change practice at the individual level, an engagement that reverses the usual order of normalization, whereas new ways of doing are seen as foisted upon an individual by an outside authority, which then uses mechanisms of power to enforce routines through which tastes and preferences become internalized (Bourdieu 1984). Instead, in the process we call instrumentalization of the material, new ways of doing are sought out and associated with spaces and objects because they offer new meanings and possibilities for transformation. A generic statement that describes this process is “I charge that object with the power to change my behavior.” Thus, within the taste culture affiliated with the design blog and book we studied, brightly-painted walls can take on the power to spark a new romantic relationship, or a sparkling clean kitchen can compel one to cook every day (Arsel and Bean 2010).

This process is evident throughout the data used in this dissertation, but it is perhaps the most clear in the case of Rebecca and Garth, who designed their house to enforce a lifestyle that they describe in terms of their consumption decisions. Food comes not from a grocery store, but from the farmer’s market or from the garden, or from about seven specialist stores within walking distance or a short bus ride. Olive oil comes from a guy down the street who is an importer and will fill bottles on demand. Garth got rid of his car when they built the house and Rebecca is considering selling hers because it’s used infrequently. The house played a role in all of these changes in consumption patterns, but instrumentalization of the material is particularly evident in their relationship to food. The house has spaces designated for a garden and for fruit trees. The basement has a space dedicated for seed storage and a potting bench, both of

which are in active use. The fruit trees have not yet been planted, but the garden was a priority over the summer, and the subject of a considerable effort in learning on Rebecca's behalf; she took a class offered by the county to learn the skills needed to have a successful vegetable garden. Even with this experience she was surprised at the investment of time and money required by gardening. Although it is something she enjoys, she has found that she has to reduce her expectations of what is possible given her available time and budget.

But it is adjustment, not abandonment. The garden is part of a larger way of thinking about and using food in everyday life that is common within my sample and that, in comparison the research as mentioned above appears to be representative of a well-educated, upwardly mobile global citizen (Chytokova 2010). Seen from this perspective, cooking in the kitchen — an integral part of the main living space of the house designed for regular and intensive daily use — is only one part of the practice, which ideally includes maintaining some level of connection to both global and local foodways. For Rebecca and Garth, this means cultivating food in her own garden, processing and storing food from the garden on-site, making labor-intensive products such as beer, wine, or cheese, and maintaining relationships with farmers at farmers' markets and with the proprietors of locally-owned, small-scale food shops. Whereas Rebecca cooked on a regular basis before they moved to the house, she did not perceive the previous kitchen as adequate for her needs, but the lack was not so much the kitchen itself, but instead the lack of other elements of that system — in particular the cultivating and storage of food — that would be difficult to integrate given the general lack of storage in their previous apartment and the lengthy waiting list for the local community garden. Thus, Rebecca and Garth's new home completes the requirements for participation in this system of food-related practice, while at the same time the home enforces through material means their participation in this system.

This contrasts with the adjustments that Peg made to her kitchen and is, in general, reflective of a different way of engaging with the material world. Peg took her practices into the new house with her and is in the process of changing the space to reflect them (cf Hand and Shove 2007; Hand, Shove, and Southerton 2007). Therefore Peg plans to convert the space off of the kitchen (which most Americans would identify as a breakfast nook) into a pantry. This is necessary to accommodate the freezer, which in turn is needed to store the beef that her rancher parents give her regularly. Therefore the space is being transformed to bring it in line with what Peg's construction of normality as expressed through the linked practices of eating and identity.

In contrast, whereas Al and Peg felt that the ways they wanted to use the space within their house was frustrated by the configuration and naming of bedrooms, Rebecca and Garth consciously named spaces in and around their home so that they are compelled to use spaces in a particular way. This appears to be a recognition and inversion of Miller's observation about naming and use as mentioned in the previous section. They name space to dictate use: their 50' x 50' lot accommodates a house and

what would in other circumstances be termed an undifferentiated “yard,” or perhaps cut up into a “front yard” and “back yard” (cf Halle 1993). Instead, Rebecca and Garth have a section they call “the vegetable garden” and another that will be “an orchard.” The orchard has yet to be realized, but the vegetable garden has been a major focus of activity for Rebecca. Placed in the front of the house, facing south – must be tended, not only because it is visible to neighbors, but because it has been charged with meaning through a conscious act of naming as being a significant part of the meaning system that constitutes their concept of home. Likewise, they refer to the lowest full floor of their house as the “basement,” even though the floor of this space is actually in plane with the adjacent street. They could have called this space a “garage,” and indeed, by framing for a slightly larger door, it could easily have been – or be able to be converted into – a garage. So the car – a problematic object in Rebecca and Garth’s worldview – is doubly excluded, once by exterior doors which are too narrow for it and again by naming. Despite this level of investment, Rebecca and Garth use their “basement” as most people use their garage: as a space for mechanical equipment, storage of unwanted items, and activities such as gardening and DIY projects that are deemed too messy to take place inside the main living space of the house.

At an abstract level, it is the process of instrumentalization of the material that Rebecca refers to when she talks with affection about how she feels the house is “engaging,” a word that emerges as a cover term when she is talking about the many changes of vertical level in the house. When the house was in the planning stages and in construction, she worried that there would be too much up and down. But now that she occupies the house, she has decided that she likes this aspect of her home because it is “engaging.” By this she means that she likes seeing the house from multiple points of view, but she also likes the way that it keeps her active and moving when she is inside the house. Here, the design of the house brings Rebecca an awareness of the materiality of her own body, and she has come to appreciate this quality. Likewise, Chris also shows some affection when he is talking about the “pain in the ass” parts of owning a houseboat: learning to tie large ropes, pumping out the sewage tank, finding someone who can replace the window glass. He expressed this sentiment in several parts of the interview, but when he was talking about the rope, Chris said it reminded him of “the technical way – the physical way – in which things hang together.” The specific way that Chris and Ditte’s houseboat hangs together, the many steps and changes of level in Rebecca and Garth’s house – even getting out of bed or retrieving an infrequently used dish requires a stepladder – includes the person as part of the material landscape of home, and homes that demand a certain level of engagement between body and material are thus more engaging. This is because the materiality of the person gets bound up with the materiality of the house. Because of the way Rebecca and Garth have defined foodways as part of their house this is particularly strong – the produce from the garden, along with their preference for food from the farmer’s market and a variety of other nearby sources, makes it possible for them to literally consume home.

Within a given household, practices of individuals that others perceive as problematic – which are usually practices associated with disorder or conflicting standards of cleanliness – often trigger attempts to instrumentalize the material. These situations usually arise when there are divergent views about what constitutes disorder, but can also exist when there is general agreement about how things should be arranged. For example, in one participant household, which is not



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presented in the previous pairings, most horizontal surfaces, and especially those in public view, such as the dining table, were always kept clear of clutter. The participant had a habit of leaving her keys and mobile telephone on the windowsill near the front door, and her husband found this to be a problem because he perceived it as clutter. However, aside from the floor and the table, there was no other place to put the keys. Thus a small metal cabinet – the type sold for bathroom storage – was installed for the express purpose of storing the keys and mobile phone. This arrangement, while it restored the “clean surfaces” rule, which was particularly important given the role of the windowsill in transmitting ideas about cultural membership (cf Garvey 2005), did not work particularly well for storage of the mobile phone, because the door to the cabinet would not shut if the phone was plugged in to charge, and because the phone’s display could easily be checked for missed calls and text messages without opening and shutting the cabinet, so the cabinet tended to be left open. The new cabinet also began to collect more clutter from both partners: scraps of paper, things on their way into or out of the house, and so forth, and so became a messy collection of objects that was more problematic than the practice it replaced. The solution being contemplated was to place another cabinet, more commodious than the one that had been installed, and also located closer to the front door. Indeed, this was done by the time of my second visit no more than a few weeks later. Cabinets of the sort sold by IKEA for use in the kitchen had been installed in a corner of the *stue*, and the problematic small cabinet removed. Significantly, it appears that instrumentalization of the material is a one-way process: once material has been engaged to enforce a change in practice, material objects become a key tool used to maintain that practice. The design blog Apartment Therapy, for example, suggests the institution of a “landing strip” near the main entry for the efficient sorting of outerwear and mail, and Susanka’s book makes a similar suggestion for a central “command center.” Once one commits to the practice of confining stuff from the outside in a particular part of the house, the sorting zone becomes indispensable. As adherence to the practice increases, the sorting zone may be

expanded, reconfigured, or improved, but as long as the practice perseveres its material components (and the spaces involved) will be maintained.

To take an example from a different context: frequently discussions about sustainability and transportation involve questions about how to shift people from one technology to another: from a gas to a diesel car, from an airplane to a train, from a bus to a bicycle; less often is the discussion about shifting people away from technological transportation solutions to walking, a mode of transportation that requires a minimum of technical artifacts and energy use. Nonetheless it is quite common for young people in certain taste cultures – such as those where the rejection of car ownership and the everyday use of a bicycle and public transportation is an important way to show group affiliation – to invest the time and money that might have gone into hotrodding a car into creating a highly individualized fixed-gear bicycle or “fixie.” Fluency in a signaling system that cannot be transmitted through material goods for reasons of ownership or temporality can be transmitted by immaterial modes of communication such as Twitter and Facebook, to demonstrate, for example, expert use of bus lines by broadcasting statements such as “just executed a perfect instant transfer between the 5 and the 17.” Thus instrumentalization of the material can also be extended through the process of representation.



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Containment

As I saw it emerge from the data, containment is a material and spatial strategy for creating and maintaining the order of objects and the desired quality of everyday life within the home. It seems to be present at some degree for all participants, but their particular method of containment varied greatly. Per, for example, maintained order by acquiring only objects which could fit in his car. Stacy and Mat's containment strategy is articulated through the spare furnishing of their house – they guessed correctly that they had much less furniture and more open space than the other American participants. Likewise, Danish participants Chris and Ditte, who live on the houseboat, expressed a similar strategy of containment through exclusion. At the risk of stating the obvious, their house itself is isolated and marked as different from its context by the fact that it floats and looks like a boat, rather than an apartment building or a house. But they also made a conscious choice to not fill their rooms with furniture, explaining that they liked “to keep it open.” To people like Chris and Ditte and Stacy and Mat, clutter of the sort described by McCracken (1989) is not a source of comfort because it limits the free movement of the body within the domestic space. Particularly important to both Chris and Ditte and Stacy and Mat is the plane of the floor, but for different reasons. Both use it as a place to socialize and relax.

This use is complemented by another strategy of containment: removing shoes before entering the house. This is a typical practice in Denmark, and it is one that Stacy has adopted at Mat's insistence. Here containment is achieved through keeping dirt and grime outside the house, a strategy that resonates with the importance of sweeping that Pink observed in Spain (2004). For Mat the lack of a sunken entry in Western houses is a serious problem, not only because it creates a practical difficulty (the sunken area typical in Japan creates a ledge, but in US homes, there is no place to sit while one puts

on or takes off shoes) but also because without any threshold dirt and dust from the shoes are perceived to circulate throughout the house and contaminate it. This is abundantly clear in the map he drew, which has a heavy red box, indicating conflict, outlining the area of the entry.

Poul and Karin practiced multiple layers of containment. One strategy for containment is clearly visible in the type case they use to hold souvenirs. Because the case has restricted dimensions, Karin and Poul's choice of souvenirs is constrained by the dimensions of the case and the fact that any potential souvenir will be displayed in combination with the ones they have previously collected. This enforces a somewhat consistent theme – many of the souvenirs are offbeat or unusual, such as a Victorian amulet for smelling salts – and so functions to constrain, and therefore to contain, the multiple choices offered by the market. A second strategy for containment is the prohibition of family photos in any space in the home aside from Karin's office. This does not mean, however, that family connections are banished from the remainder of the house. Despite the ban traces of family life and connection exist in nearly every room of their house. It is simply that the traces exist in symbolic forms that can masquerade as "appropriate" decoration for a given room. The Chez Panisse poster in the kitchen commemorates a visit to California and a daughter's graduation, but relates to a visual theme about food and cooking that is, obviously, appropriate to the kitchen. Likewise, the Romeo and Juliet poster in the bedroom carries cultural meanings about love and romance of, but reminds Karin of her youth. Cast off belongings of both of Karin's children occupy large swathes of the basement, but Paul and Karin don't seem to mind. The stuff keeps them rooted to the house. It is material evidence of the children's existence of and, furthermore, a guarantee that they will continue to return to

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this place. Another strategy for containment is the assignment of particular spaces and objects to either Poul or Karin. In tour, they pointed out Karin's kitchen, Karin's laundry room, Poul's TV, Poul's workshop, and so on. The "owner" of these particular spaces is responsible for instituting and maintaining order, and their method is acceptable even if the rules are opaque to the other. Thus Karin accepts the apparent disorder of Poul's workshop by explaining that he knows where everything is, and Poul, accordingly, accedes to Karin's ideas for the landscape of the garden. These strategies are ways for maintaining order in the house, but they also function to maintain the relationship and reduce the potential for conflict. Clearly, there is a gendered component to this division of spaces, and this is described further below.

Practice

Gender

The relationship between gender and the use of space was particularly pronounced in the interviews with participants in their 60's and 70's. Women's space in the house tend to be centered on the kitchen, whereas the spaces most often used by men are more distributed. This is clear in Carolyn and Frederick's home, Matt and Dora's, and Poul and Karin's.

In Poul and Karin's house gender codes almost every space and use. Poul, for example, lays claim to the workshop, while Karin "owns" the laundry room. Poul is also responsible for the main area of the basement, as well, even though the objects in this area do not belong only to him. Ideas about order overlap with the gender, too. Karin is not annoyed by the disorder in the workshop. She sees that it works for Poul. The state of the laundry area, however, is a different story. This is her space. Order should prevail here, and order is not represented to Karin by surfaces that she perceives as unfinished or unkept, such as the unfinished concrete walls and floor in the laundry room. Thus it is important enough to tell me that a carpenter is coming to make this space "nice." Karin focuses on the visual aesthetic qualities of space, While Poul is more interested in the technical qualities of objects. Therefore Karen pointed out that the windows needed paint, and that this was one reason that they were replaced, whereas Poul communicated the increase in efficiency he attributed to the replacement of the windows. On the main floor, the kitchen is Karin's territory, as is her library. The combined living-dining area in the house, on the other hand, is a gray area belonging neither to Karin nor Poul. Objects, however, in this space, do map to one individual or the other. Karin labels the television as Poul's, While at the other end of the room their identities are represented as both merged and separate by Poul's paintings and Karin's family photographs. Upstairs, the bedroom is another neutral space, shared by both Poul and Karin, but decorated and maintained by Karin. It's interesting because the room is minimally decorated. There are only two adornments on the wall, the large marriage certificate, which has been framed, and the poster of Romeo and Juliet. So Poul's gun, the one he uses to scare off the pigeons in the morning, is funny because it doesn't fit proper ideas of the kinds of things that should be in the bedroom in this room in any way. At the same time it is Poul's way of asserting himself in this space.

Frederick, who has a small collection of three antique cars, and Matt, who has a sizeable tractor collection, both have garage or shop spaces dedicated to their exclusive use. In Frederick's case, this space is an oversized three-car garage separate from the main garage of the house and accessed from the lower level. Matt's space is a separate building about the size of the main house. The spaces that Carolyn and Dora consider their own are both located in between the kitchen and garage. Significantly, neither the location of Carolyn's computer in "the largest laundry room in Portland" and Dora's, which is tucked in a bit of circulation space between the family room, kitchen, laundry

room, and garage, offers much in the way of privacy. By this, I mean privacy in the classic sociological sense of control over unwanted interactions. The location of their computers means that Carolyn and Dora are bound to be interrupted by others – their husband, their guests, visiting children. But their spouses, meanwhile, have domains that are significantly more private.

Frederick's office is downstairs, out of the main flow of traffic through the house, and adjacent to "his" garage and workshop. He maintains a further sense of privacy through an enforced routine. "Even though he's retired," said Carolyn, "he's really good at coming down here every morning and working for several hours." Frederick has created an expectation that this time is his to be alone, and Carolyn treats him accordingly as though he were away at a desk job in an office downtown. Matt, likewise, spends a good portion of every day tinkering with the tractors in his shop.

Another clear gender division was the importance of procedural order. Women much more than men tend to conceptualize the house as a series of spaces that should, in an ideal situation, be experienced in a particular order. This is particularly clear in the case of guests. For example, Matt and Dora had a brief argument about where to start the tour. Dora thought we should start at the front door of the house, where I had entered, and Matt suggested starting at the kitchen table, where we had been sitting while they read and signed the permission forms.

These ideas about order translates into the form, arrangement, and use of the house. Matt and Dora's house has a stair leading down from the entry to the basement. This is, in Dora's words, the "nice" stair. Another stair leads from the laundry room to the utility room. This is the one they tend to use on a regular basis.

Likewise, when I interviewed Stacy and Mat, who are not listed in the pairings above, Stacy suggested we start the tour at the front door. She lead me through the living room, hall, bath, bedroom, and office before we went to the kitchen. We spent little time in the bedroom or bath and spent most of our time in spaces typically considered the formal areas of the house.

This is despite the fact that Stacy and Mat's house is arranged in an arrangement that is typical for a house built for the lower middle class market in the 1940's, with a combined entry and living room, with a small hall separating this space from two small bedrooms and a bathroom and a separate eat-in kitchen. Despite this readily recognizable script, Stacy and Mat have decided to use the spaces in an unusual way. Despite its location in the front of the house, the living room is not intended for the use of visitors, and until fairly recently, when they rearranged it and added two Poang chairs from IKEA, it did not have the matched couch and chair set typical to many American and British living rooms. In fact, it did not have a couch at all; instead a thick wool rug and Japanese-style cushions provided a place for Stacy and Mat to lounge. Together they use this room as "a chill out space" for the two of them to be together, to watch the small tube TV or to listen to music. There is an impressive audio system here

with two vintage TEAC speakers, each about the size of a medium cooler, laid horizontally on the floor.

Interestingly, Stacy and Mat's house contained one of the most unconventional and innovative arrangements I encountered in my research, but it was not apparent from the upstairs. They completely renovated their basement into a series of spaces — a multipurpose area with a concrete floor which they now use for a ping-pong table and a contiguous area separated by lightweight curtains set up as a home theater. This is a "luxurious" spot for them to be together once or twice a week. A small passageway leads past a utility closet where the control system for the radiant floor heat is installed to a space that is part hallway, part laundry room, and part bathroom. To the left is a pocket door and what Stacy and Mat call the "art room," which Mat uses for music practice and Stacy keeps a printer and other supplies for her digital photography hobby. The hybrid laundry room-bathroom-closet space, which is not separated from the home theater area by a door, is their favorite part of the house. The contractor had to remove a section of concrete floor to install drains for the bathroom and the new section of floor is heated. Stacy opens a glass door leading to the shower, which is completely enclosed in a tiled room of its own, to show me how it traps heat inside. "It's always warm in here," she says, stepping in. "It's particularly nice on a cold morning."

The bathroom space was modeled after a spa Mat and Stacy like to visit in Japan. Adjacent to the shower, but in the same room warm room, is a deep Japanese soaking tub. There is only one sink, which is located in the hallway area, and the toilet is in a room of its own, concealed by a pocket door with etched glass panes to let the morning light pass through. Behind the sink is a matched set of a front-loading washing machine and dryer. They appear to be built into the space and are topped with a thick butcher board countertop. To the right of this area is an open space measuring about 12 feet square that functions as Stacy and Mat's closet. It is painted in a brilliant blue color and is outfitted with the Stolmen organization system from IKEA. The couple's clothes and shoes line the room. Mat explains that he didn't realize until the project was done the difference having a space like this would make in his daily life. "You don't realize how irritating it is to have a bathroom that doesn't work quite right, to have closets that don't hold your clothes."

Stacy and Mat, however, have not moved their bedroom to the basement, even though the renovation added code-mandated egress windows. Nor did they consider installing this unconventional arrangement on the main level of their house. This can be explained in two ways: first, the basement "needed" work that the main level did not. It had been remodeled once before but the work was done very poorly and the resulting spaces were too small to be of use to Stacy and Mat. Conversely, they did not perceive the upstairs as in need of any renovation; this was one of the things that attracted them to the house in the first place. But the conventionality of the upstairs arrangement has also given them license to experiment with the innovative arrangement in the basement. I asked if they had thought about putting the large laundry room and closet upstairs,

DISCUSSION

because it would be closer to their bedroom. In response, Stacy told me about friends of theirs who have just completed a remodel in another part of town. She likes the results, but thinks that it's a little odd because the main living spaces are on a different floor than the entry.

Coziness, *Hygge*, and Homeyness Considered as Scripts

Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* is often described as a "structuring structure." *Habitus* reflects the embodied attitudes, preferences, and habits that naturalize systems of distinction through everyday practice. While the theory of *habitus* is a useful one, it is part of an body of theory that Shove and Pantzar (2005) and others have criticized as overly social and lacking connection to the material world. Therefore it is useful to draw in newer ideas from the realm of Science and Technology Studies, specifically the process Akrich describes the socio-technical script associated with an object (1992). Akrich contends that designed products and services contain meanings that function akin to an instruction manual and that part of the work of design is loading these meanings into products in such a way that they can be decoded by the user. Of course, as much consumer research shows, people do not always make use of the meanings scripted in object by their makers, instead imposing or inventing other meanings and uses. Therefore other scholars, most notably Latour, have extended the scripting metaphor to account for the components of this process (2005). As Fallan claims, an analysis of the socio-technical scripts must include "all kinds of communication that surrounds and accompanies the product, such as the manufacturer's image, brand identity, market position, product reputation, user feedback, subcultural appropriation of the product, and – probably the most explicit expression of the socio-technical script – marketing, advertising, and general media coverage" (2008, 65).

Thus considered, script analysis can help us account for the ways the *habitus* contributes to the sedimentation of structures of meaning. Following Schazki (2001), the practice theoretical approach, while also building on the scripting metaphor and other theories central to STS, extends this perspective by paying attention to the relationships consumers and producers enact between three analytical categories: image, artifacts, and forms of competence, which can be expressed in more friendly terms as image, skills, and stuff. Image deals with individually and collectively held systems of meaning, skills with the habits and abilities of individuals, and stuff with, well, stuff, but with an eye to the tendency for material objects to mediate the relationships in which they are involved (Shove and Pantzar 2005, Epp and Price 2010).

Two further observations remain: first, books such as Susanka's *The Not So Big House* and articles such as the one she wrote are essential links between abstract ideas and practice. Following Rip and Kemp (1988), Hand and Shove identify these dominant groupings of ideas as "regimes" and argue that they are significant because they have material effects (2004).

Susanka's book is foundational to the popular media that cemented the Not So Big idea as a regime. Considered as an instruction manual, its effects are significant not only because they influence how people think about space, but also because they function to structure ideal interactions in space. Understanding sound-producing activities as something that must be isolated from others in an "away room," for example, requires not only a certain arrangement of space and building materials with distinct visual and

acoustic properties, but also a particular way of thinking about social relations between the individual and others. This is the core content of Susanka's book, and it is delivered through textual and visual form.

Returning to Campbell's point about resistance to the alienation effects of mass consumption brings us to a point of apparent conflict within the book. The book and its "Not So Big" message could be read as an apologia for conspicuous consumption. First, the book carries the appealingly expiating idea that its readers will build smaller and thus less energy-consuming houses than they would otherwise. A secondary message is that the creation of things of beauty somehow justifies the consumption of resources required for both creation and ongoing maintenance. These ideas do not square with messages about sustainability in the final chapter. Furthermore, a critical reader could easily point out that the standalone single-family house, the only housing type featured in the book, is necessarily the most consumptive of energy. A further contradiction is Susanka's resolute conviction that a home's design should be a reflection of an individual, which does not jibe with the demographic trend for moving more frequently. These contradictions can be better understood by thinking about the relationship between individual and collective identity encoded in the book.

In the fourth chapter, at the close of a detailed description of a Wrightian house set on 35 acres designed and occupied by a single architect, she warns that a house that reflects one's one idiosyncrasies can become a problem if a new relationship begins. "My experience as an architect," she writes, "suggests that most new partners, when they move into a house that is so clearly an expression of the other's personality, will want a different space that expresses both personalities – even if the existing house is beautiful and comfortable" (106). In so doing, Susanka grants a license for consumption behavior that may be considered overindulgent or luxurious by invoking her concept of beauty: even if circumstances force you to move away from the house you have invested time and money in, someone else will be obliged to take care of it, provided that it is well designed. She writes:

Beauty, more often than not, comes from careful crafting. And when a well-crafted object ages, no matter what it is, society almost always helps it to age well. Just look at the buildings our culture has chosen to preserve – all of them were well designed. Owner after owner of such homes has recognized the treasure inherited and cared for them lovingly...What I am proposing in this book is that our house can express our personalities, that they can be designed to accommodate our changing lifestyles, and that they can be built for future generations. (27)

Beauty, therefore, in this context is a way of imposing upon others a mode of sociality that honors craft and skill through creating the obligation of maintenance. Daniel Miller puts it this way. "The very durability and physicality of things make them liable to represent attributes which were not those that an individual desired them to convey: for example, that they are actually torn rather than whole, or not quite the same as the object they were supposed to replace" (Miller 2001, 119). Arguing a parallel line of thought to Latour (2005), Miller argues that this is a way consumer culture engages materialism in such a way that things can stand for people (Miller 2001, 199). The extension of this observation is that "where we can not possess we are in danger of becoming possessed" by the ideas of other people about the use and meaning of the objects which surround us (120). Susanka creates awareness of this way of thinking about future action to justify a set of spatial strategies that structure both immediate and long-term consumption decisions.

Modernist Homey

With one exception, my Scandinavian participants valued *hygge* and thought of their own homes as *hyggelig* places. Pernille's affection for modernist furniture (her home is not described above, but it is similar to Ann's) is typical of the majority of the Danish participants. Pernille purchased the Eames Lounge shown in the Polaroid on this page for her partner upon his completion of graduate school, a frame of use that maintains the ideas of modernism, luxury, and masculinity that are typically associated with this particular chair (Carpenter 2009). Yet for Pernille the chair also carries the meaning of *hygge*. Despite the mark of craft as carried in its leather upholstery, the Eames Lounge is hardly the kind of bric-a-brac or wood gingerbread that McCracken connects with homeyness.

Despite the usefulness of McCracken's theory of homeyness for understanding the normative strategies at work within Susanka's *The Not So Big House*, his opposition of architectural modernism appears to conflict with cultural boundaries when it comes to the research I conducted in Denmark. McCracken claimed that "homeyness cannot survive the bleak expanse of an off-white wall. It cannot tolerate sparse furnishings, clean, uncluttered lines, or 'elegance' of any kind" (1988, 28). This describes perfectly, however, the setting that the majority of the Danish participants created in their homes, which indicates either that *hygge* is a substantially different concept than McCracken's North American homeyness or that *hygge* and other concepts, including homeyness, might accommodate a different mode of aesthetic mapping. All participants in both Denmark and the US identified spaces in their home as either *hyggeligt* or cozy. Despite this these homes exhibit characteristics McCracken claims are anathema to homeyness: sparse furnishings, largely unadorned surfaces, a lack of clutter, and the presence of a number of readily recognizable "designed" objects. Upper-middle-class Danish cultural norms value this kind of Modernist aesthetic, and other research could be considered evidence that a variation of the Modernist aesthetic is considered quite homey in not only Denmark and the US, but among an educated, upwardly mobile group that considers themselves post-national citizens of the world who eschewing any one dominant national identity through the practice of mixing and matching cultural traditions from across the globe (Chytokova



Image © Intel Corporation. Used with permission.
New chair! My sweetheart's dream chair
(*hygge*)



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2010). Indeed, a minimalistic aesthetic sensibility is clearly visible in the homes of two of the American participants, especially in Rebecca and Garth's home, presented second in the fourth and last pair of households, and to a lesser extent in Stacy and Mat's house, discussed later in this section.

Beyond its symbolic function in indicating in-group status, there is a use value to a minimalist style of arranging objects in space. Embracing an aesthetic where "less is more" is the operational maxim functions as a way of cutting out the work involved in choosing from the panoply of choices offered by the marketplace. Furthermore, owning less stuff – and hanging less of it on your walls – facilitates social and physical mobility. Eschewing bric-a-brac as a category of objects results in having fewer objects that might inadvertently transmit meaning. But there are purely pragmatic benefits to owning less stuff, as well. It is easier to take off for another country for a few weeks. It is easier to let out an apartment to a friend or stranger without worrying that cherished possessions are going to be mistreated.

With less stuff, meanings, including status, tend to be communicated through practices instead, especially those practices relating to food and eating. Food practices, it should be noted, are particularly malleable; one can match the meanings represented in a meal to a particular audience with careful shopping at the grocery store. One might

buy organic milk when entertaining but pour ultra-pasteurized homogenized stuff for the kids for reasons such as cost or safety.

A larger shift in this collusion between modernism and coziness is the shift from a conceptualization of coziness as a singular quality unique to an individual, household, or material instantiation of home, to a collectively constructed concept. This, too, has use value for the detached modern individual, as I learned firsthand when I found myself in Denmark trying to stave off jet lag by accompanying a friend on a errand to IKEA. As we walked through the store, I found myself in an uncanny reproduction of the kitchen I assembled in my own home, a reproduction that included not only the shiny red cabinets and black countertops of my kitchen but a sizable percentage of the pots, pans, utensils, and textiles within it. The experience brought on the distinct feeling of homesickness. Chris Cullens writes about the emergence of *Wallpaper* magazine in the late 1990's. The imagined reader of *Wallpaper* is a young, detached individual who can experience homeyness anywhere with the correct assemblage of objects (1999). Writing about what it might feel like to return from a trip abroad to a home reflecting the uncompromisingly modernist aesthetic the magazine fetishizes, Cullens claims:

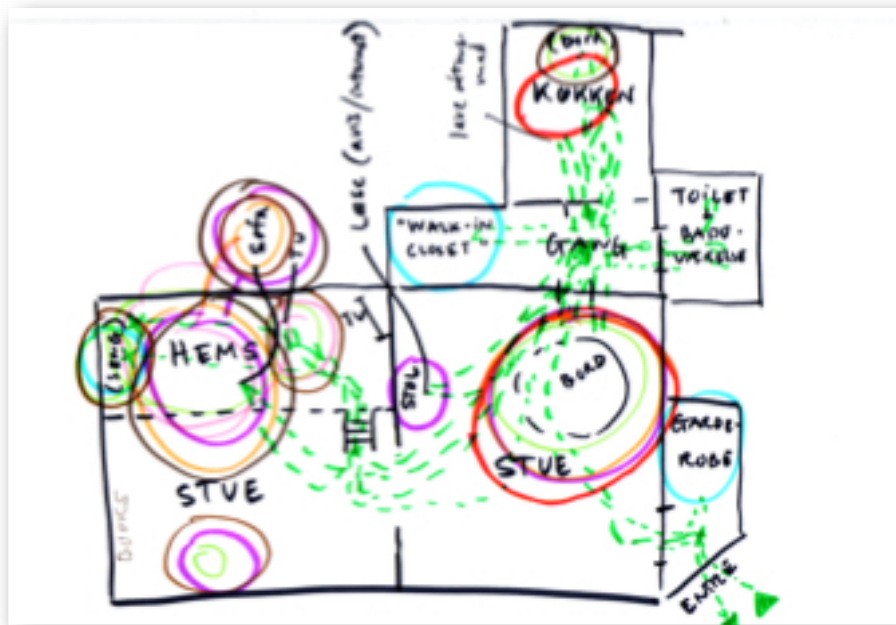
If this plays to a self-elected elite's version of cocooning, let it be noted that the freezingly cool, metallically accented, bare interiors and beautifully lined but ergonomically punishing (and often fiendishly expensive) pieces favored by the magazine do not, at first glance, conjure up visions of coziness or a sense of enveloping bodily ease... it is specifically with the contents of one's dwelling, rather than with the "home" itself, that one celebrates the ecstatic reunion. The space is secondary, because it is temporary. And yet as the magazine's visuals attest, what makes the domestic interior a recuperative place is that everything in it has been not just chosen with the most exhaustive discrimination, but also deployed to maximize the sense of open, unencumbered, surveyable space.

(216-7)

For the modern individual for whom mobility is more or less a fact of life, homeyness, then, has been detached from any individual structure or specific space and is instead something that can dwell in objects, which are mobile enough to be redeployed elsewhere. While mobility challenges elements of McCracken's analysis, in particular his claims about the role of homeyness as insulating the individual from status differences, it usefully illustrates the contention that the ultimate quality of

homeyness is its ability to situate the individual. When mobility is introduced to a home constellation of material objects, the individual is situated within a universe of known (or knowable) things. Thus, it is not just international modernism that offers resources for meaning, but the specific representation of international modernism as shown in *Wallpaper* that is situating. Thus those who consciously subscribe to other styles – vintage midcentury furniture, steampunk, shabby chic, and so on, stress the authentic quality of their particular interpretation of the style, which is often identified with a particular media resource (cf Cullins 1999, Wolf 2004, Bean and Arsel 2010).

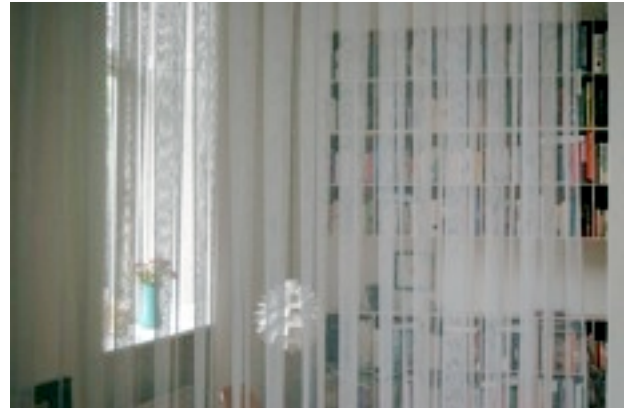
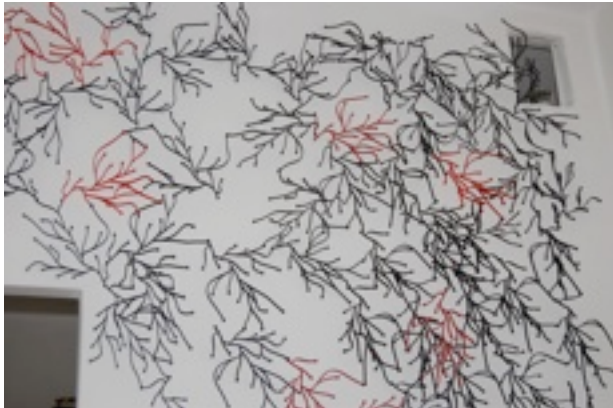
Despite the importance of mobility, it appears that enclosure – or at least tongue-in-cheek references to it – remains a core element of *hygge*. To illustrate this I will return to Pernille's apartment, illustrated above. Three aspects of its decoration and arrangement²³ align perfectly with elements of McCracken's analysis and with one author's article from the 1960's series on *hygge* in *Politiken*. First is what can be seen as a modernist version of ivy, plastic molded in the shape of branches, or networks and nodes. Pernille and her boyfriend have arranged many of these pieces on the wall that faces the front door to their apartment. (In the cognitive map shown here she drew this wall is represented by the black line between the labels *stol* and *TV*.) This wall divides two rooms, which contain three spaces. The *stue* closer to the entry contains one space



Translations, from top to bottom:
bord - table
køkken - kitchen
toilet + badeværelse - toilet and bathroom
gang - hall
hems - loft bed (lit. mezzanine)
seng - bed
bord - table
stol - chair
stue - living room
garderobe - wardrobe
entré - foyer (lit. entry)
 Note "walk-in closet" is the only space labeled English. This way of using space has been imported from the US like the word used to describe it.

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²³ This is one of many times during this project where I have wished for a direct translation for the Danish term *indretning*, which refers to the process of decorating and arranging a home's inhabitable spaces. Although *indretning* could be translated as "interior design," it does not necessarily carry a connotation of professional expertise.



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that is considered public relative to the other. It contains a table (*bord*) which Pernille and her boyfriend use to do work. Therefore the “ivy” serves to separate the more private *stue*, which Pernille described in English as “cozy,” which she translated upon request to *hyggelig*. This *stue* contains two spaces, a lower living area and a lofted bed area, or *hems*, which is made more private by virtue of being raised out of the line of sight. Under the *hems* is the arrangement of the lucite Phillippe Starck Ghost chairs and a daybed earlier in this section. Across from this arrangement and by the window is the *hygge* “new dream chair,” also shown earlier.

Reinforcing the enclosed aspect of this room is a translucent curtain that Pernille has constructed to hang in the opening between the two *stue*. This directly recalls architect Arne Karlsen’s article for the *Politiken* series on *hygge* (1969), which in turn is referenced by Hansen (1980), Borish (1991), and Jørgensen (1996). Karlsen writes about how the open spaces and glass walls of modernist architecture have lead Danes to rediscover Rococo screens as a way of creating enclosed space within modernist spaces that were too expansive for *hygge*. “When the family wants to *hygge* themselves,” Karlsen writes, “they turn their back on their beautiful home” (Karlsen 1969, 78; original in Danish).

To the right, on the party wall between their apartment and the next one over, is a wall of books that Pernille photographs along with the chair when I ask her to identify *hygge* spaces or things in her apartment. Thus the elements of



Tons of books! And a sculpture of a pair that reads (*hygge/work*)

enclosure — the plastic “ivy,” the curtain, and the additional thickness and layer of meaning present in the books do function as layers of enclosure for this room, even though there are no coverings on the windows.



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Only one participant in my research distanced herself from the concept of *hygge* with any resolve. Rikke is an architecture student who lives in a newly constructed building designed by a well-known Danish architect in a district of Copenhagen that is entirely new. She has consciously chosen not to include particular things in her apartment that others would consider a necessity: curtains and candles. Vertical blinds were only added as a matter of necessity because of the sun — she does not care much that people can see in, and Rikke thinks fabric curtains, which some of her neighbors have installed, clash with the style of the building. Likewise, Rikke was the only participant who did not fulfill the prophesy made in one of my first interviews that “every Dane has a drawer full of candles.” Candles, she thought, were old fashioned and stupid. Nonetheless Rikke adhered to other practices that my research shows to be particular to living in a Danish home. She concealed her television, stored her books in a variation of the Montana bookshelves that were a point of pride in Ann’s home, kept plants in the

DISCUSSION

window, drank wine on the balcony, and, most characteristically, displayed the few decorative objects she allowed in her home in pairs.

Conclusion

Theoretical Contributions

The primary contribution of my research is to show how the meaning associated with material objects and spaces relates to consumption. Following the application of ideas from Science and Technology Studies to the field of consumer research (Cochoy, 2004, 2007, 2009), I have argued that the remarkable stability of the cultural metaconcepts of *hygge* and coziness is the result of work done not only by the immaterial and symbolic attributes of consumption, but also by the interaction between cultural metaconcepts such as *hygge* and coziness and by the material objects that consumers use on an everyday basis in space (Shove, 2003). This is shown above by the phenomenon I call pairing.

A secondary contribution is an understanding of how taken-for-granted cultural metaconcepts such as *hygge* and coziness drive routine and everyday consumption. This has been developed through a mode of analysis that bridges methods from the fields of practice theory, consumption studies, and material culture studies. This linkage offers particular value for the study and teaching of design and “design thinking” in the context of business because it can illuminate the complex and codependent relationship between the business of design and consumer behavior. For example, I noticed while collecting the *Bo Bedre* data that the meaning of *hygge* shifted through three visually distinct stages over forty years. These different stages map to separate constellations of material objects, spaces, and consumer identity projects, yet contemporary consumers still perceive the three distinct and sometimes contradictory phases as part of a singular concept, showing the importance of situating models of meaning and action in consumer research with respect to cultural shifts.

These two contributions build on an existing stream of consumer research on the consumer meanings carried in magazines, such as those studies cited above. My research on *Bo Bedre*, combined with further work on *Sunset*, will form the basis for an article that further investigates the dynamics at play in these publications.

Areas for Future Research

The interdisciplinary nature of this research has three distinct implications. The first contribution is to ground existing behavioral research in a cultural context. The second contribution is a holistic way to think about space as an integral part of customer experience and brand. The third contribution, detailed in the following section, is the development of a rapid ethnographic method well suited for the demands of both academic and corporate research.

Rethinking Meaning and Space in Studies of Consumption

Some spatial aspects of consumption have been studied from a behavioral perspective (Vohs, Mead, & Goode, 2006; Meyers-Levy, Zhu, & Jiang, 2010; Morales & Fitzsimons, 2007). While these aspects have clear implications for the design of the purchase experience, the flooring chosen for retail stores, or the packaging of raw meat, more holistic approaches to the study of space have largely been left to the field of material studies. The gap between the fields of material studies and consumer research offers the opportunity to connect knowledge about individual behavior to the wider context of differing cultural settings, to identify new realms for the application of predictive and behavioral research, and to develop recommendations for how to increase the value of customer involvement through the design of space as an integral part of customer experience and brand.

This research offers insight into how consumers use products to create multivalent and atmospheric feelings such as coziness, *hygge*, warmth, or familiarity. Operators of servicescapes obviously stand to benefit from further research of this type, and it also has a direct connection to retail contexts of fast moving consumer goods, home furnishings, home improvement services, and durable consumer goods. For example, other retailers could follow the lead of IKEA to refine the design and merchandising of both the products they sell and the home-like showrooms where the products are sold. While IKEA generally does this very well, recent media reports about the company's new Beijing store, where customers use the showroom like a theme park, but buy very little furniture, point to the need for enterprises such as IKEA to engage with the cultural metaconcepts that influence how local consumers perceive and use space.

Participatory Ethnographic Method

The interactive ethnographic method I developed, especially when complemented with online qualitative and quantitative research services such as those offered by Revelation Global in Portland, Oregon, offers managers a rapid and context-rich way to understand how consumers use products and services outside of focus group or formal lab settings. My research also provides analytic tools that contribute to the burgeoning area of design thinking and transformation design in schools of business and in design-savvy consultancies such as IDEO or ReD Associates. Theoretical explanations for how cultural metaconcepts are linked to space can help managers to understand how and why products and services should be transformed to suit different cultures, as well as to enrich methods for setting brand strategy, to influence organizational behavior, and to impact customer experience through the use and design of space.

Homeyness Outside the Home

The concept of home can be associated with more than just a physical structure (Blunt and Dowling 2006). Indeed, the concept of home stands at the center of a dense

web of spatial relationships. First, there is the yard and garden, especially significant in cultures where suburban houses are associated with a romantic pastoral ideal (Ames 1992). Second, there are workplaces, themselves increasingly part of the home itself. 'Work' is a cultural category that, as Christena Nippert-Eng shows, can be constructed as completely opposed to the category of home, or intermingled so that boundaries between the two become indistinguishable (1996). Third, retail spaces have a special relationship with the home, especially in light of their historical role with respect to gender, and in their contemporary use as sites of recreation. Hotels, dormitories, and other dwellings fall into the realm of not-quite-home, and taking in lodgers or boarders – turning one's home into a sort of hotel or dormitory – is seen to fundamentally challenge the ideals embedded in the single-family home. Finally, parks, thought of as places where people go to get away from home, can be seen to serve some of the same purposes of home, especially with respect to the ideas of restoration and refuge. In the sections below, I explore each of these categories – yards and gardens; blue-collar and white-collar work; retail and commercial spaces; and national, regional, and local parks – and I speculate on opportunities for research engaging the concept of coziness.

Yards and Gardens

Studying coziness with respect to the yard and the garden would build upon research that has illuminated differences in the use of outdoor space between groups – for example, between men and women, between working and middle class, and between minority and dominant cultures. For example, researchers have focused on ways in which people from Latino cultures use the yard of the single-family house. In contrast to the non-use of the front yard, these studies find that the front yard is a significant site of socialization, and that fences are a significant part of personalization and control over that space (Crawford 1994, Rojas 1993). A study of coziness in the yard and garden could build on these and other areas of concern to landscape studies or social and cultural processes. For example, research could consider strategies used to denote territory in the pursuit of coziness, and the variation of these strategies between groups.

A related study would be to study the relationship between coziness and personalization. Such would build on the insights of Clare Cooper's study of Easter Hill Village and related work and could be conducted as comparative research between the yards and gardens of single family and multifamily dwellings (1975). If coziness is associated with personalization, then it is likely that this relationship would extend into the use of the yard and garden. This trajectory of research could focus on the visual attributes of coziness as expressed in domestic landscaping: are certain types of gardens regarded as particularly cozy?

Research on the yard and garden could also focus on the types of activities that go on there. The back yard – at least in the UK, US, and Denmark – is used as the site of socialization for the dominant culture. David Halle identifies three types of gardens:

the child-dominated garden, used by children for play; the contemplative garden, used by adults for relaxation; and the productive garden, used for the cultivation of produce. Suburban yards in the upper middle class district he studied combined the child-dominated and the contemplative types (Halle 1993). It is worth pointing out that the yard and garden are close to the single family home in terms of proximity, use, and symbolic function. In this way, the yard could be considered as part of the house itself. For example, Sophie Chevalier draws out the connections between the home and the garden in the UK; back gardens are used in much the same way as living rooms, and the lawn functions much like a rug (Chevalier 1998). Dianne Harris' study of architectural representations of suburban houses also supports the idea that the suburban house and garden should be considered as a unit (2007).

Following Virginia Scott Jenkins's history of the American lawn, non-use of the yard and garden also might be related to coziness (1994). Questionings following this line of research would include the following. Does the emptiness and non-use of the front yard function as a psychological distancing factor that serves to make the house feel more private—and therefore cozy? Scholars have asserted that yard and garden function as constructed representations of nature, representations that are made significant by their relationship to the house (Gregson 2007). Might coziness be different for people who do not bother with yard maintenance, for whatever reason, or who never spend time in their own yard or garden?

To further understand the relationship between coziness and the yard and garden, it makes sense to locate sites where yard and garden are not in immediate proximity to the home. This strategy serves a dual purpose. First, it should illuminate those characteristics of the yard and garden that might be overlooked in the looming presence of the home. Second, the geographic remove would serve to highlight particular strategies used to connect yard and garden with home.

One place to study this in detail would be the community gardens in many American cities, or the allotment gardens common to Europe. In light of my interest in *hygge*, gardens with habitable structures, such as Danish allotment gardens, or *kolonihaver*, would be particularly interesting. *Kolonihaver* were originally established in the 19th century as a way to provide food and relief from the city for the newly urbanized classes, and they remain in Denmark today (Damin and Palmer 2003). Government regulations prohibit one (although I have been assured these are occasionally flaunted) from residing year-round in the *kolonihaver*, so this is a place where the typical relationship of home to yard is disturbed. Understanding coziness in the *kolonihaver* would require dissecting the relationship between home and garden as well as the relationship between garden and nature, balanced with an analysis of the kinds of activities (gardening, drinking beer, hanging out) that go on there.

Looking for coziness in the yard and garden could mean following several directions. Research could focus on the differences in coziness between groups as manifest by observable measures such as expressions of personalization and

territoriality. Another possibility of research is to treat the yard and garden as a kind of doppelganger for the house, looking at patterns of use and non-use for evidence of coziness. Yet a third opportunity for the study of coziness in the yard and garden is to seek out sites where yard and garden are split from their usual companion, the house.

The White-collar Workplace

Coziness has an uneasy relationship with the white-collar workplace. Some see the connection between nature and garden as setting an ideal – even cozy – design for workplace environments. Environmental psychologist Judith Heerwagen and interior designer Betty Hase have developed and trademarked the concept of phylogenetic design for the workplace. This concept uses the image of pristine, untouched wilderness as a basis for the design of workplaces (2003). They draw from a number of theoretical sources to justify this argument, but key is geographer Jay Appleton’s twin concepts of prospect and refuge (1975). According to Hase and Heerwagen, “refuge is small and dark and provides a safe place from which to view and assess the surrounding environment for information and resources. Prospect is expansive and bright” (Hase and Heerwagen 2003, 29). They claim that nature provides prospect and refuge in balance, and that workplace design should reflect this precedent. Therefore, she calls for architectural devices that can provide a varying degree of openness around an individual workspace, and small, separated rooms “where one can go to read, reflect, and perform solo work without distractions.” These rooms should be complemented by areas with lower ceilings and softer lighting, places of refuge that would work as a complement to the prospect offered by bright, open corridors (ibid, 30). Hase and Heerwagen claim that this kind of workplace design can offer greater support of employees cognitive skills and creativity. It is significant that nowhere do Hase and Heerwagen tie the concepts of prospect and refuge to the home or to domesticity. Coziness in the office understood in this analytic framework would have associations with nature, and it would therefore be likely found where people are working alone or in very small groups.

This stands in contrast to Adrian Forty’s analysis of office design. For Forty, elements of the home have been present in the design of office furniture and equipment as a way to disguise hierarchical relationships and the goal of efficiency that underlies commercial enterprise (1986, 155). He points out similarities in the design of a desk and a dining room table, marking the similarity between the modernist furniture designs favored for most corporate offices to that in the homes of the British and American commercial elite (ibid, 144). This connection, Forty claims, citing Richard Sennett, is essential because “in contemporary Western society, home life is the only effective signifier of personal authenticity” (ibid, 152; citing Chapter 12 of Sennett’s *The Fall of Public Man*). Forty’s analytic framework suggests that workers might perceive coziness as a device of control, a method of intentional distraction from the distinctly impersonal goals of efficiency and the creation of wealth. A study of coziness drawing on this

framework would look for instances where management has tacitly attempted to create coziness (Google's famously informal offices spring to mind as an ideal, if difficult to access, site for study), and evaluate attitudes towards the workplace among workers with varying degrees of status and autonomy.

Whereas Heerwagen and Hase equate the office to nature and Forty to the home, Malcolm Gladwell makes the case that new approaches to office design are strongly influenced by Jane Jacobs' seminal study of the West Village and that office design is now thought of as a way to facilitate informal social encounters as a way to increase informal communication and, therefore, organizational productivity (2000). "Informal" may not be the best word, though; these encounters are seen as things that can be engineered: office layout is a form of social control. Gladwell explains how one consultant used visualizations of what we would now call social networks to make strategic recommendations for how to locate people within a firm's space in order to increase interaction, connection, creativity, and, therefore, output. Whereas Hase and Heerwagen might see places of refuge from this forced interaction as cozy, one might wonder if there is a place for refuge in this new kind of office, with the constant interaction and movement Gladwell claims will become the new norm. In this context, my research could assess whether coziness is displaced from the office entirely, if it is redefined to encompass greater interaction, or if employees engage in acts of appropriation related to coziness. Grounding research could involve a simple cognitive mapping exercise similar to the one I employed in my research for Intel, analyzed with respect to categories such as position in the organization, gender, and length of time on the job (Lynch 1981; Hasbrouck 2007).

These three perspectives indicate that, when applied to the white-collar workplace, the concept of coziness may in fact be a cover term for any number of conditions. Is coziness a "natural" feeling? Do the overtones of coziness in a "home-like" office work, in fact, to make people feel cozy? In light of the past decade's technological development and the pervasiveness of communication technology, Gladwell's account of offices designed to socially engineer interaction suggests that these might be places where research would find new forms of coziness emerging as a counterpoint to the new 'always on' work condition.

The Blue-collar Workplace

There seems to be little room for coziness in the blue-collar workplace as it is considered by scholars such as sociologist David Halle (1984) and historian Richard Edwards (1979). For Halle, blue-collar occupations consist of "factory workers, skilled workers (such as electricians and welders), transportation workers (such as bus and truck drivers), and (nonfarm) laborers. Drawing from 1980 statistics, Halle's categorization accounts for about one-third of the American labor force (Halle 1984, xiii). Halle extended the definition of blue-collar to include a group, new at that time, of

technicians whose job it was to keep watch over automated and computerized manufacturing processes.

Halle's study paints a picture of a blue-collar workplace where individuals had significantly more autonomy and decision-making power than the mill workers in William Kornblum's 1974 study of Chicago-area steel mill workers. Halle's study, as well as a later study by sociologist Michèle Lamont, also problematizes the distinction between working class and middle class, or white-collar and blue-collar, revealing a much more nuanced set of relationships between groups perceived as "above" and "below," or where equality is symbolized through homeownership.²⁴ Nevertheless, similarities remain throughout all three approaches. Work and home life are strongly separated through a number of mechanisms, such as geographic distance (cf Nippert-Eng 1996). Places outside the workplace, the union hall and the tavern in particular, are of equal, if not more, importance to understanding social relationships in the workplace. And blue-collar jobs, as both Lamont and Halle draw out, are highly gendered.

So I suspect a study of coziness in blue-collar jobs would lead me away from factories to taverns and union halls, at least where male-dominated jobs are concerned. Kathy Peiss's book *Cheap Amusements* would be a suitable historical grounding for a similar study of women factory workers. Scholarly perspectives stress a point made by Paul Groth, that for the working class the concept of "home" is spread throughout spaces in the city (1994).

While it would be worthwhile to identify those places working-class men and women regard as cozy, a more revealing study might be to look at the coziness as a product itself, and one fabricated by blue-collar labor. Given the close association of femininity, domesticity, and coziness, I imagine these jobs would not be associated with male-dominated world of factory work, but rather done mostly by women or historically associated with women (Sparke, 1995). One potentially fascinating site for study would be the salon and its universe of workers, including hairdressers, "shampoo girls," waxers, manicurists, and pedicurists (Willett, 2000). Flight attendants — both male and female — would also be a particularly interesting group to study with regard to coziness. They are given explicit instruction on how to make people feel comfortable. They are assigned to work individually, rather than in groups, so, unlike factory workers, they often work quite closely with unknown colleagues. Flight attendants are often away from home, especially early in their careers, staying overnight in hotels with people they may have met just a few hours before. In a well-documented phenomenon mentioned in both Studs Terkel's seminal 1972 book *Working* as well as the 2000 *Gig* (Bowe, Bowe, and Streeter), young flight attendants often live together in shared

²⁴ See chapter 3, assessing 'People Above' and 'People Below' in Lamont (2000), and chapter 11 of Halle (1984).

apartments, as a way of affording a place that would be otherwise too expensive; the overlapping schedules meant (at least in theory) that the apartment wouldn't be too crowded.

The case of flight attendants raises several issues a study of coziness could address. Do people who are trained to create the illusion of comfort and normalcy at 35,000 feet adopt similarly conscious strategies to create comfort in their own homes or shared apartments? How do they distinguish between the comfort they are paid to produce (or simulate) and "real" comfort off the job? What kinds of strategies to people use to make themselves feel cozy after 13 hours of ensuring the safety of total strangers?

As this exploration suggests, blue-collar work settings would be an ideal place to study the relationship between coziness and gender. Looking at the settings associated with blue-collar work would be one avenue of research, but a more revealing shift might be to study coziness as though it were itself a product of blue-collar labor.

Retail Commercial Settings

The study of coziness in retail commercial settings suggests two broad streams of research. The first would focus on the experience of coziness or homeyness in retail space; recent work does just this by applying McCracken's theory of homeyness to the analysis of upscale supermarkets in Sweden (Ulver-Sneistrup and Johansson, 2010). The second would focus on the procurement of objects or experiences intended to create or enhance coziness at another time or place. Both of these areas of research would complement existing streams of research in the consumer behavior and CCT literature.

Grounding literature for either approach would include work on department stores, such as William Leach's book *Land of Desire* (1993). I would also look to work on the commercial strip, including its many points of origin, as laid out by Richard Longstreth (1997), its experience as memorably rendered in JB Jackson's 1956 essay "Other-Directed Houses," and its contemporary use and re-use, such as that described by Timothy Davis (1997). The history of shopping malls would be particularly relevant, as scholars trace a broad arc from Victor Gruen's early malls—imagined as a place of respite and order—to Margaret Crawford's rendering of the mall as a place of fragmentation and possibility (1992). It is unlikely anyone thinks of fragmentation and visual overstimulation as cozy, but individual spaces or stores within these new malls may employ coziness as a point of contrast to the disorderly straggle of contemporary life.

That, in fact, is what a review of the trade journals suggests. Photographs of restaurants are often labeled with the adjective "cozy." These claims mostly function at the symbolic level: particular materials or colors are assumed to be inherently capable of creating coziness. For example, McKinsey research claimed the quick service restaurant chain Panera Bread installed fireplaces in a deliberate attempt to make its stores feel cozy (McPherson, Mitchell, and Mitten 2003). While it is primarily associated with visual design, coziness is also tied to innovations in the service experience. Starbucks is the obvious example here—the non-home, non-work "third place" popularized by Ray

Oldenburg in his book *The Great Good Place* (1989). Other commercial enterprises seem to be using coziness as a way to differentiate their retail locations. Oregon's Umpqua Bank, for example, claims the free coffee, homelike furnishings, and art exhibits in their branch banks makes them feel cozy (Olsson, Osorio, and Jensen 2008). But the relationship between this marketing spin and consumers' perception is not clear. So one point of contribution would be to study consumer perceptions of coziness in retail settings. Such a study could attempt to establish the characteristics of cozy commercial establishments through a combination of observation and interview techniques, or map historical changes in the representation of coziness using archival materials or literary analysis.

Another study with value to scholars interested in the home would be an analysis of the role of store displays in structuring the spatial and material arrangements people perceive as cozy. Trade literature indicates that big box stores such as Wal-Mart and Home Depot, in a bid to break down the impersonal scale of the big box store, are following the lead of IKEA and installing room vignettes that show the products they sell in use in a domestic setting (Strauss 2006). This study could be done historically using archive materials, such as personal photographs, old magazines, and catalogs, or it could be done using methods of participant-observation such as those used by anthropologist Pauline Garvey (2001) and geographer Nicky Gregson (2007).

A rigorous study of coziness in the retail store would be fascinating, but procedurally difficult unless one found the support of a cooperative retailer. Assuming such a barrier could be overcome, this line of study could provide insight into the ways that the spaces of the consumer economy influence everything from emotional experience to typical furniture arrangement and modes of display in the home. Research focusing on catalogs or magazines could reveal some of these same processes.

Hotels, Dormitories, and other Congregate Dwellings

Coziness could be studied in a number of dwelling arrangements other than private homes and apartments. These settings include hotels used as residences; Groth's book *Living Downtown* analyzes one type of this use (1994). Barbara Ehrenrich's book *Nickel and Dimed* (2001) and recent journalism on the "boom" in people living in inexpensive motels as an effect of the economic crisis points to a related area deserving of further study and opportunity for contemporary research (Eckholm 2008). Rooming houses could also be studied in either contemporary or historical contexts; grounding literature for this sort of study would include Sharon Marcus's book *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London* (1999). I can also imagine a contemporary study of lodging and boarding as it relates (or does not) to coziness. Again, recent journalism claims an increase in the number of people living in shared housing or

renting out rooms in their house to strangers.²⁵ This suggests the possibility of a longitudinal study of a family or individual before and after taking on lodgers or boarders.

Other sites for the study of coziness outside of the private home and apartment include communal and shared living arrangements. Karen Franck and Sherry Ahrentzen's edited collection *New Households, New Housing* discusses a number of these arrangements in detail (1989). Coziness would be particularly interesting to study in the context of cohousing, an arrangement where individuals and families each have their own unit with kitchen and bathroom, but share a "common house" where they may participate in the cooking and eating of meals (1988). It would be interesting to see how residents of cohousing perceive coziness, especially in light of the detailed attention given in the co-housing design process to the creation of transitions between public and private space, and the shared ownership of the common house. Cohousing would also be a good complement to my proposed research because it presents the possibility for a symmetrical comparative study between Denmark and the US. McCamant's concept, which defined how many think of cohousing, was based on research she did on a Danish living arrangement called *bofælleskab*. While some of these arrangements – particularly the ones McCamant studied in the 1970's – resemble contemporary versions of *bofælleskab*, younger Danes use the word to describe much less formalized group living arrangements. It would be productive to compare contemporary arrangements of cohousing with *bofælleskab* with an eye to the usage of the similarly related terms of 'coziness' and *hygge*.

Another form of congregate dwelling where coziness could be studied is housing for the elderly, especially assisted care facilities, nursing homes, and retirement communities. The quality of work done in this field ranges widely from the visionary work of Roselyn Lindheim to methodologically problematic surveys of visual preference (Marsden, 1999). There is a pervasive assumption that the visual is the primary indication of homeyness and a preoccupation with first impressions that perhaps reflects the reality that many forms of elderly housing function primarily as instruments for investment. The value of continuing this form of research using the concept of coziness rather than homeyness is that it gives attention to areas of sensory experience other than the visual. Further research might also help to shift the

²⁵ Two of the better articles on boarding: John Leland, "Homes at Risk, More Owners Consider Taking in Boarders," *New York Times*, July 16, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/16/us/16share.html>; Reid R. Fraizer, "Rooms For Rent," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 1, 2008, http://www.philly.com/philly/entertainment/20090401_Rooms_for_rent.html; for an article on middle-class people living in rooming houses, see Elizabeth Harris, "Room to Rent. Bath Nearby," *New York Times*, December 12, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/14/realestate/14cov.html>.

assumption that coziness is a remnant of one's previous domestic existence to ways that congregate housing could provide the elderly and their caregivers new experiences and types of coziness.

City, Regional, and National Parks

Because of the role they play in the dialectical relationship between nature and culture, parks would be a fascinating site to study the construction of coziness. On the nature/culture debate, I would look to Richard Grusin's excellent *Culture, Technology, and the Creation of America's National Parks* (2004) and to William Cronon's edited collection *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (2005). This literature would be well complemented by the more conventional historic surveys of national and state parks in the US offered by Alfred Runte (1979) and Ney Landrum (2004). As camping is an activity associated with the use of parks and bound to concepts of domesticity and gender, I would also look to the literature. Abigail Van Slyck's book *A Manufactured Wilderness* (2006) and Barksdale Maynard's 1999 article on the architecture of summer camps, together with archival materials of the sort reviewed in the exhibition and book *Past Tents* (2006), would be helpful in understanding the relationship between coziness and camping in parks.

In my review of the literature, I was surprised not to find a scholarly history of the architecture of state and national parks. Linda McClelland's broad survey *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction* (1998) deals with some aspects of architecture, and there exist several survey books, heavy on color photography and anecdotal description.²⁶ It seems likely that a scholar is working on (or has worked on unbeknownst to me) a topic having to do with domesticity and architecture in national and regional parks. Coziness would be an especially fascinating way to analyze lodges, cabins, semi-permanent tents, campfire circles, "comfort stations," concession stands, visitor centers, and the other building types associated with parks. Such an analysis would engage with methods similar to those used by Van Slyck, to show how the construction of coziness in wilderness was similar to the construction of coziness in the home.

Coziness seems more elusive in urban and suburban parks, perhaps because of their history, which, as Galen Cranz shows, is tightly bound to issues of class differentiation (1982). It is unclear if the idea of coziness is associated with parks, or which groups might want a park to be cozy (or not.) Ray Hutchison's research shows that groups of different ethnicities used park space differently (1987). Likewise, women and men likely have markedly different responses to this idea (Mozingo 1989). As Mozingo shows elsewhere, parks have also been designed to be unhomelike and to prevent certain types of behavior and bodily postures, such as lying down, in order to prevent use and

²⁶ Typical of this sort of coffee table book is Harvey H. Kaiser's *The National Park Architecture Sourcebook*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008).

occupation by the homeless (2004). Recently constructed urban parks reflect the cultural ideal of sustainability (Cranz and Boland 2004).

The relationship between coziness and sustainability as cultural norms deserves consideration. Whereas coziness is deeply assumed – the kind of thing Gregson suggests does not warrant further explanation when it is offered as a reason for action – sustainability is a much broader category and one that is still in the process of becoming fixed. Therefore, the proliferation of sustainable parks suggests another avenue for further research: be to categorize the ways in which nature is represented in the sustainable park, and then conduct research to see how perceptions of coziness vary between these modes of representation. As a concept, then, sustainability is in some ways very similar to the concepts of ‘park’ and ‘coziness.’ All three are social constructions – in Grusin’s terms, they are technologies for accomplishing and preserving a certain state of affairs. Because parks are constructed as ‘nature’ or ‘wilderness’ and therefore often stand in opposition to yards and gardens, workplaces, and dwellings of all sorts, they are a unique site in which to study coziness, a concept that most research links to the home.

Conclusion: Aim and Purpose

Although the role of retail space in creating consumer meaning has been well established (Maclaran & Brown, 2005; Kozinets et al., 2004; Diamond et al., 2009), few, if any, researchers in consumption have professional training in the architecture and evaluation of designed spaces. In contrast to the work on spectacular retail servicescapes, a growing stream of literature in consumer research (Thompson & Arsel, 2004; Epp & Price, 2010) focuses on everyday and ordinary spaces of consumption. Along with Grant McCracken’s (1989) classic study of homeyness, this stream suggests that a nuanced understanding of consumer meanings could be gained through qualitative research sited in the contemporary home. In its role as an anchor point of consumer culture, the home is “designed” by market forces. It is continually transformed through the routines of everyday life of the consumers who live therein. My research contributes to this stream by tracing the relationship between individual consumption decisions and collective cultural phenomena by describing how the ordinary use of designed space and the consumption of objects mediates meaning in consumer culture.

This work makes a number of contributions to existing research streams in consumer research and elsewhere. First, the concept of coziness, as I show below, offers the possibility of establishing meaningful connections between existing work from fields including sociology, geography, psychology, cultural studies, and visual anthropology. Second, the innovative method of in-home photo and video ethnography I developed to carry out comparative research helps to quickly establish rapport between participant and researcher and addresses the unequal power dynamic between researcher and participant. In turn, this method offers a third benefit: the generation and

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capture of a rich set of co-created representations of products in the social and spatial context of use.

The overarching aim of my research is to understand coziness as both symbol and practice, and to investigate how these concepts are associated with the material artifact of the home. Over time, this newly broadened understanding of home as an overlapping set of practices and symbolic meanings that individuals and groups project onto objects in space has direct implications to several disciplines. My research will render one set of cultural differences visible and understandable, and in doing so, will help the field of marketing to recognize and deal with the complexities of cultural metaconcepts as they relate to design, domesticity, and space.

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