

In and Out of the House. Housing Hau in Sønderborg and Frederikssund

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Abstract This article deals with houses and objects. Based on anthropological fieldwork on materiality in two well-off neighbourhoods in Denmark, the starting point are localisations of global flows in the privacy of houses. Filters and control showed out to be a major theme concerning the passages of things in and out of houses; these passages follow two rules: “something in means something else out” and “what comes in must be activated”. Openness and transparency showed out to be important themes concerning the house; there is a tendency towards large windows, few inner walls and large rooms, which are both poly-functional and poly-social. Furthermore, the filtering mechanisms for objects and the openness of the house are related to virtual flows from computers, telephones and televisions. Classical anthropological theories are used to understand this subject matter: the concept of haul (the spirit of the thing), exchange and social relations at large.

Keywords Filters · Control · Openness · Transparency · Housing

Introduction

As dwelling places, houses for living are also containers for accumulating objects.¹ In 2006, I conducted anthropological fieldwork in two provincial towns in Denmark with a focus on how the residents deal with the space of their houses and the things within the houses. Both sites are affluent neighbourhoods, one of them consisting of one-family houses surrounded by gardens and the other designed as a complex surrounded by semi-private space. One of the themes I wanted to explore was the ways global flows are localised in material objects and physical space. The pivotal point showed out to be that of filtering. The residents cautiously control the movements of objects into and out of the houses; of course, most objects are rejected long before they reach the quiet neighbourhoods. When they have come into the house, the chosen objects are activated: only a few things are selected just because of memories, beauty,

¹ In the following, the term *house* is used for several categories of dwellings, namely one-family houses, apartments and terraced houses. This is consistent with other anthropological literature, since the anthropological use of the term *house* includes a huge variety of housing forms, e.g. large round houses for extended families or whole villages in South America. The term *household*, the socio-cultural entity inside the physical house does not include the physical house, and the terms *apartment* and *terraced house* are part of an architectonic, rather than an anthropological, taxonomy. I therefore use *house* along with anthropological taxonomies, whereby I try to combine physical and socio-cultural aspects.

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sentiments or the like. The objects in the house have practical purposes; so the crystal glasses might be an heirloom and are most likely considered elegant and expensive, but they are not kept in the cupboard, they are used often, and they are washed afterwards in the dishwasher.

This article is based on interviews and participant observation conducted in a short-term fieldwork in 2006 in the two described Danish neighbourhoods. The tendencies, however, I try to give a glimpse of in this study, can also be found in other affluent Danish neighbourhoods. In Århus, the second largest city in Denmark, I thus discovered the same tendency, whilst conducting a long-term fieldwork in 2001–2002. I lived in the neighbourhoods for 8 months researching into the space-conceptions of the inhabitants as a part of my Ph.D.-project (Raahauge 2006a).

The attractiveness of these houses is connected to transparency, openness and lack of boundaries, whilst the movements of things in and out of these quasi-invisible boundaries are firmly controlled. This strive towards openness concerning space and towards closeness concerning objects are in a roundabout way part of the same complex: a wish to have a house that is manageable, easy to clean, emanating affluence of space, freedom to choose and a way to show who you are through your house and its objects. There are no secret cupboards, no dark corners and no ambiguities in the interior decorations.

Furthermore, virtual flows by way of computers, televisions and telephones might be related to this complex: The hominess of the house is much more open to virtual flows than to the strictly controlled solid things. The massive virtual impact is adding to the rather new and much desired feeling of transparency. The metaphor of a cell surrounded by filters has become an important analytical framework for understanding how global flows of things are localised in the privacy of the house.

Sønderborg and Frederikssund

Sønderborg is an old town situated in the southern part of Denmark, near the German border. Outside the old central district, a rather expensive neighbourhood built around 1960 is situated. It is nicknamed “the Gold Coast” due to its location near the coast, others call it “the porridge-neighbourhood”, since you have

to eat porridge for quite a long time to be able to afford living here, according to town gossip – as told by the inhabitants themselves. I conducted fieldwork in one of the most attractive streets in this neighbourhood. The 12 houses on the street are quite large one-family houses built in one level. They are situated close to the street in their approximately 1,000 m² of green garden each; they have wide spaces for lawns, but also terraces, greenhouses, flowers and trees are part of the estates; tall birches dominate this wide, quiet street. Only the residents and their visitors come here. Hedges surround the houses on the north side of the street, whilst they are almost absent on the south side of the street. Several of the houses facing south have no space between them due to the building of carports and other extensions over the years. Most of these south-facing front gardens are open and tiled. Here, the inhabitants have an outdoor café, Café 5, where it is common to meet after work over a cup of coffee, a beer or a glass of wine. This difference between north and south is due to the sun, the inhabitants point out. The houses to the north have got sun in the back garden, whilst the back gardens are shadowy on the sunny side of the street. Therefore, the residents from the sunny side take advantage of the sun in front of the house, and the residents from the other side come to the sunny café.

Everybody knows each other, and most of the inhabitants are friends. A few streets away a small store is situated, a little further away there are other stores, and the central district is easily reached by car within 10 min. Most of the inhabitants are in their forties and fifties with a few exceptions of first-generation inhabitants around eighty. Fairly many children of all ages live here.

Frederikssund is also an old town; it is located in the eastern part of Denmark, on the northwestern shore of the island of Zealand. By the waterfront, at the former harbour district just opposite the old central district a complex was erected in 2001 composed of 53 apartments in 1 long, winding building and 5 terraced houses in a shorter, straight building. The complex is attractive and expensive. Architecturally, it is quite homogenous and designed as one totality from the bricks to the concern about where the inhabitants are to do what. Such totalising and pre-designed areas are phenomena often seen in contemporary city planning. It is even more obvious, when it is not quite new neighbourhoods that are

planned, but instead older central districts being renovated, e.g. the city district of Århus has recently been renovated; this means that the whole area has been transformed from a heterogeneous to a homogeneous zone, aesthetically as well as socially (see Raahauge 2006a, b).

Most of the dwellings are two- or three-storied; many of them have got sea view. There are 11 types of housing in the complex, typologised from A to K on the homepage. The outdoor part of the complex has a collective space for barbecue and dining and a little play ground. A parking lot is part of the area, and that is necessary since the open space between the houses is for pedestrians only, designed with paths for walking and areas where you do not walk, but from where a feeling of spaciousness comes. You can easily walk to the nearest supermarket within a few minutes; it is built into the complex and it functions as a transition zone between the complex and the rest of the town. When you are in the complex, you cannot hear the noises from the town, and normally there are not many people around; you only go here with a purpose. You get the feeling of being in a private or at least semi-private space.² This feeling is quite contrary to the feeling and praxis in the area just outside the complex. Outside, both in the city district and at the waterfront, there is a feeling of public space. Many people walk or jog along the waterfront, or sail on the sea and in the canal, which makes this area attractive. This is part of the view for the residents, adding a bonus of city life to the seascape. Some of the residents know each other; others would like to get to know more people in the area. Many of the residents of the apartments are young pensioners in their early sixties. In the terraced houses, the dwellers are in their thirties and forties, raising their families.

The two neighbourhoods are not gated communities by way of physical characteristics (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003). All the same, they are framed by a strong mechanism of exclusion and

inclusion: socio-culturally, they can be understood as gated communities.

Other mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion are at work in the everyday lives of the residents. In the following, scaling down to a smaller entity, the focus will be on the filters surrounding the cell, the invisible boundaries layering around the house,³ including, excluding, filtering objects in and out of the house. Mechanisms for filtering other people in and out of the houses and neighbourhoods in the two cases dealt with here are described in Raahauge (2007), and the phenomenon as it works in another well-off case is described in the aforementioned study of the neighbourhoods of Århus.

Filters and Movements

According to the inhabitants of the two neighbourhoods, it is important to keep all kinds of stuff out of your house. The two neighbourhoods have rather different clienteles, but most of the inhabitants agree on this point. Many of them underline that it is a rather new phenomenon. Their parents and the older generation, as such, tended towards keeping everything, storing it in their houses, often saving the things from being used; a praxis deemed rather foolish or at least old-fashioned and absurd nowadays, by most of the residents, no matter their age.

Normally, the residents themselves choose their furniture and other home objects: they go shopping. There are other ways, though, to get objects into your house, the most important one is when you are to inherit property from your parents or others. This is the time when you have to be keen on observing the *in-means-out-rule*. A woman in her fifties from Sønderborg explained it to me whilst we were making a *tour de chambre*-interview in her house:

My father outlived my mother, and when he died a couple of years ago, we had to sell our childhood

² A more correct term might be *para-private space*, since the space is not half-way private, but entirely private simultaneously with being entirely public: It is public as a part of the city (everybody have access to the area), and it is private as a building containing private homes (situated apart from the rest of the city), architectonically (you can easily perceive this, when you enter the territory), and socially (only those living there actually use it). In this way, along with its being public, the territory becomes para-private (see also Raahauge 2006b).

³ The Danish philosopher Hans Fink argues that you can distinguish between to types of boundaries: boundaries that have effect and boundaries that are given effect, in other words: boundaries that define what is actually possible and boundaries that define what should be the case (Fink 1992). “Reality decides where the first set of boundaries are placed, whilst it is people who decide where the second set of boundaries are to be placed” (ibid.: 27) [my translation, kmr]. The filters surrounding the houses are constituted after both principles.

home. We are four siblings. And it is a farm way up in Juelsminde [a small Danish country town].⁴ And some of the things we would actually like to have, my husband and I. And we shared everything, there was no fighting, everything was done in harmony. But we decided that for example the writing bureau, [we are situated in the American kitchen, and now the woman points to an old, fine wooden writing bureau standing on a carpet in the room a couple of meters from the kitchen table] at that spot we had another old piece of furniture. So I say: 'Well, if something gets in, something else has to get out.' For although we have got so much space, it is going to be filled with all sorts of stuff, right? So we in fact managed to observe the rule. So the things we got from my childhood home, well, some of the stuff we had already got in here was thrown out [when thrown out, the objects are placed at a combined rubbish dump and recycling centre, the woman explains later on]. So in this way we did not get more stuff in here. [...] [We are now standing in the living room] It is a hotchpotch of all different kinds of things in our house, but we like it this way. And precisely because this is a large living room, it is not to be tamponed, because we like it like that, we like, you know, a little elbowroom. [*So when you buy a house like this, you buy space?*] Yes! [*Not space for placing things, but...*], ...but space for breathing, you see!

A man from Frederikssund in his sixties was making the same point, explaining his irritation with doublets:

My father always bought two, no three of each. Christmas plaques, jubilee plaques, bowls [the man gets a huge bowl of porcelain with golden ornaments and little coloured sceneries painted on it from a cupboard and shows it to me], so that he and his two children could get one each. We could not be bothered with that. Get it out! Only a few things from Royal Copenhagen [a distinguished, famous old porcelain factory in Denmark] are left. We haven't thrown them out, since they are too expensive for the rubbish dump.

⁴ About the brackets: Explanatory comments (e.g. about words and places) are represented in brackets as ordinary text. My questions during the interview are represented in brackets as text in italics.

His wife, also in her sixties, seconds him:

And then there are the three seals and a little pair of bears in wedding clothes. [She shows me the tiny figurines made of porcelain]. That [the bears] is us, father and mother; we got them from the children. And there is a flower-centrepiece from my aunt, and a couple of things from my mother. Otherwise everything is new. Furniture as well as bric-a-brac.

And her husband continues:

We do NOT keep stuff. We have thrown out a lot over the years and do not keep stuff. We have only got what we need, and what we like. We do not collect bric-a-brac either.

Apart from such generalised statements, there are many detailed examples of this. For instance, an 80-year-old couple from Frederikssund told me about their eagerness not to keep stuff and – when they once in a while kept something – their awareness of why they kept especially this object. As an example to illustrate the attitude of the whole family, the husband told me about his daughter. When she left home, she moved into an old farmhouse together with some friends. Approximately at the same time her grandparents died and she was to inherit furniture and other sorts of objects (so were her parents, but they refused). Reluctantly, she accepted an old, fine sofa. She only took it, her parents stressed, because she needed a sofa at the time, having moved into the large farmhouse, not because it had belonged to her grandparents. Later on the husband said: “now this is what means something to us, not all kinds of stuff, but this, this is – love.” And he produced a big poster from a roll in the corner of the living room showing a huge black and white blow-up of a photo of their two children as timidly smiling, longhaired teenagers in the 1970s.

So, the first major rule that most of the residents (with one or two exceptions) observe is: *Something into the house means something else out*. This rule could be further specified into: *Do not accept anything (or at least not very much) in case of inheritance or similar situations and Do not keep or collect (too much) stuff*. The in-means-out-rule and its two specifications are part of the same overall theme, namely, avoidance of new things you do not control or select yourself. Apart from this, there is a second major rule, which is

somewhat different; it concerns what to do with the objects, once you have accepted getting them inside your house: *Use your things – or get rid of them*. So, there is a code of activating the things you allow into your house.

I asked the aforementioned woman from Sønderborg whether she and her family in their everyday life used the few heirlooms they had. She answered:

Yes! Yes! Indeed. Well, as soon as some guests come by, well, not yesterday, that was a little spontaneous, but otherwise, then we use it a lot, yes. [*So you do not lock it away in a cupboard?*] No, no, no! No, no. And I have some aunts, from whom I have inherited some porcelain and some glasses, and we use it all the time. [*And if a plate is broken?*] Well, then it is broken. They are washed in the dishwasher, and then they must last as long as they can. It is not like it is taken good care of and locked away. Not at all. It should be used. For else there is no point in keeping it.

A woman in her forties from Frederikssund came up with the same argument. After telling me about how the family threw away old stuff some years ago, clearing the mind as well as the house, as the lifestyle book put it, she and her family have only got the things they use. Otherwise there is no point in keeping it. However, afterwards, she was not quite sure whether it had been a good idea to throw out so much stuff. In fact, she missed some of it now, especially shoes and clothes; she enjoyed the newly won spaciousness in the house.

These are just a few examples on a consistent tendency in the two cases. Before conducting my fieldwork, I hypothesised that beyond the overwhelming changes due to post-modernity, consumer society and globalisation, one might find something resisting change. I wondered whether it was in the materiality of the objects that this inertia was visible. Furthermore, heirlooms might be a key to find such continuity traces, as these kin-based objects represent continuity rather than change. But the complex interplay between continuity and change is not so easily pinpointed.

Stability and Transparency

For the residents, the two major rules (*in means out* and *inside means in use*) on how to handle the flow of

objects are important, not whether the object stems from your family or not. Your kin is important, but so are friends and neighbours, and your social relationships with your friends and neighbours do not implicate keeping heirlooms. The most important entity is the family, and it is made visible and stabilised through the house. The filters consolidate the stabilising cell of the house. This entity is not open to all sorts of things; instead, stability is shown by way of, among other things, object filtering: the residents control the flow of objects, and thereby they stabilise the family.

The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1982) uses the concept “transfixing”, arguing that houses have got a stabilising effect on unstable alliances (the house acts as a “transfixer”). The house transfixes the family and the alliance (and thereby kin) it is made of; in our context, the family unit is more important than kin. As the importance of the passage of time through kin is fading, so is the importance of heirlooms.

The phenomenon of inheritance is important in this context due to its being a black swan: it functions as a counterpoint highlighting the generalised praxis. As a black swan, the heirloom has become difficult to integrate into your everyday praxis and it has become hard to classify; it has become matter out of place.⁵ The filtering of objects can be understood as the explicit effort of the residents to make a personal choice (see Fink 1992). In this process, things coming from your kin, by reason of tradition, or in related ways, often turn out to be problematic to the one receiving them: you yourself have not decided to get them, rather they are forced upon you from the outside. You can choose not to receive these objects, and this is often the strategy, thus getting back in the position of having a choice.

These ways of filtering objects and thereby setting up boundaries are working. The physical houses that the things are filtered into (or not) become still more transparent with large windows, open kitchens and as

⁵ Matter out of place, the notion introduced by the anthropologist Mary Douglas in (1969), has become an ordinary tool in the anthropological toolbox. Douglas used it in connection with her analysis of the category “dirt”. She argues that dirt must be understood as matter out of place: “Dirt is a by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. Where there is dirt there is system” (Douglas 1969: 35). In a way, the heirloom is matter out of place in a consumer society, a by-product of a system.

few inner walls as possible (this is the model in Sønderborg when the houses are renovated); and 4 to 5 m to the ceiling, preferably showing the joists, huge windows from the floor to the top of the ceiling and the upper floor as one big room, containing kitchen, living room, and dining room in one (this is the model in Frederikssund). In this general move towards openness, the physical boundary between outside and inside becomes partly transparent, and the boundaries between rooms inside the house are reduced. The rooms get larger, and by that movement they turn from mono-functional rooms to poly-functional rooms. Moreover, they turn into *poly-social* rooms; residents and guests stay together in the same room, maybe doing different things, but being part of the same social setting. For example, in Denmark, the first poly-social wave was the spread of the American kitchen, an ongoing success with the nickname “the conversation kitchen”. Precisely, this aspect of the movement in spatial organisation is very popular.⁶ Once you are inside,

this inclusive, poly-social, open attitude leaves less room for exclusion, social distance, hiding away and secrets.

Virtuality and Transparency

In this doubleness of closing, controlling, filtering concerning the things, opening, joining together and striving for transparency concerning rooms, a third element is at work: the virtual flows of computer, television and telephone are welcomed into the houses without much hesitation. These flows are easily disconnected (and thereby closed, filtered out of the house again) and have a certain transparency (and thereby supports the over all paradigm of transparency and openness).

A man around 60 from Frederikssund exemplify this rather uncontrolled living with virtual flows. Like most of the residents in the Frederikssund neighbourhood, he spent most of the summertime outdoors doing sport. He had had a boat, but now he had devoted himself to golfing only. At wintertime, he spent most of his time inside his house, a large one-level apartment with an extraordinary view over the seascape. He often sat in his office where he had placed his chair so that he could see his computer screen nearby and his television screen at the other end of the apartment. The TV was placed in the corner farthest away diagonally, in the large poly-functional room of the apartment (containing kitchen, dining room and living room in one room). He had the remote control to the television at hand, and his telephone along with it on the table. The first thing he showed me was the fantastic view from his window facing the waterfront. A huge panorama window replaced the outer wall of his apartment, and beautiful romantic sceneries dominated the room with the seascape nearby and the rolling hills across the water. He pointed out that the seascape was in the right direction, namely, to the west, so the sun was setting over the water (this was, I gather, an ironic comment to the richest neighbourhoods in Denmark, situated North of Copenhagen facing the sea to the east, which gives the residents a seascape-scenery for sunrises, not sunsets). This view was the one thing making him buy the apartment, as he recalls, but in his daily praxis, he wonders whether he sees it very much – now the virtual pictures coming from two screens are

⁶ The Swedish ethnologist Orvar Löfgren (2003) has argued that bourgeois homes of the Oscanian period (the Swedish counterpart to the Victorian period) are defined by their separating spatial organisation, whilst working-class homes are defined by their mixing everything in the same room, to the regret of the bourgeois class. Programmes were started by bourgeois women to make working-class women proper housewives, not mixing, but instead separating the functions of the house. When mono-functional, the rooms become mono-social as well, and that was also the point of the bourgeoisie: every space has its use, and this also separates the people inside the house, makes a distinction of status between them, and makes them keep some aspects of life hidden from the other residents – and from guests. For example the parents’ master bedroom was an enigma to the children, and the children’s world was in many ways separated from that of their parents, clearly to be seen from the nursery and other rooms which only children and nannies used. Similarly, the house had rooms for receiving guests, separated from the rest of the house; the guest of course only saw the living room, not the private rooms (ibid.). At the court of the Sun King in France, such a separating socio-spatial organisation was also at work; the *palais* of the noblesse was built so that it was possible to separate the people inside in formalised manners. This case is analysed by Norbert Elias (1983). It is the bourgeois socio-spatial organisation of separation working in the Oscanian/Victorian period though, which seems to be the model that is abandoned in our material. The houses of well-off people figuring in our case are not only different from, but also in opposition to the old bourgeois ideal; a transformation is going on from many separating, secretive rooms to a few mixing and open ones.

much more in focus. From his chair in the office, he can hardly see the panoramic view.

The same man was very keen on throwing out all kinds of things that he had had to keep during his life; wives, parents, children, they had all made him keep all kinds of objects, a few of which he now reluctantly hid in his cupboards. Many of these objects were extraordinary, as the old set of baker's tins for different kinds of cakes in porcelain, which he had inherited from a grandfather. If he could just throw them out, he daydreamed; now he had divorced several collecting wives, thereby getting rid of a lot of stuff, but his children insisted on him keeping the remaining heirloom. He suspected that when he was not able to storage these things any more, they would get rid of them themselves. He sighed in a resigning manner and closed his cupboards.

How come this interest in virtual flows and disinterest in material objects? Why is it so important to invest the house with transparency? Why should walls be torn down? Maybe exactly the openness of transparency and virtuality calls out for a kind of closure, a closure that has to do with solid objects that you can keep out of your house. The virtual media are in a concrete way machines that produce distance: telephone, TV, and PC are all machines coming between the person using it and the part of the world it represents through sound or picture. This built-in distance is popular and makes it seem less problematic to integrate the virtual flows in your houses. It also has another effect: with the openness of the virtual media follows a feeling of possibilities and of the world being just next to you. This feeling is paralleled through the transparency of the outer boundary of the houses and it leaves no room for the aforementioned secrets, ambiguities and distance; in short, the effects of separation are left out.

Transparency and Control

In the houses of the two Danish neighbourhoods, it is typical to control the movements of objects, letting only a few of them inside our house. When they have entered the house, the objects are used, not put away. The handling of objects shows an effort to close, define boundaries and establish filters. Furthermore, the houses themselves are marked by openness and transparency – large windows mark the boundary

between outside and inside, and only a few walls separate the functions inside, giving way for poly-social rooms. This figure is pointing towards an effort to open and abandon boundaries, letting spaces melt together. This is highlighted by the virtual flows received happily in the houses. The aesthetic and also the social values of virtual flows is revolving around transparency and openness, adding this to the house.

This effort to put up filters to get rid of objects and to break down boundaries to be surrounded with space in fact go hand in hand: by getting rid of objects and by letting in virtual flows, you add to the feeling of spaciousness contained in your house. This figure of control and spaciousness is so pervasive in my cases that it has made me wonder whether there is something hidden in the objects that is important to keep out, whether the controlled objects are containers of something that is not convertible to normal everyday life in Denmark. Such hidden qualities of things are often mentioned in anthropological literature, especially about exchange. An overall frame of private property defines this field, it is not defined by exchange. All the same, our field of accumulation might be dependent on the refusal of the spirit of things.

Hau, Exchange and Accumulation

Some 80 years ago in his “Essay sur le don” (1924–1925), exploring the forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies, Marcel Mauss introduced the Melanesian term *hau*. *Hau* is the spirit of the thing, a force that makes things strive back to their origin. Exchange systems in Melanesia but also elsewhere are fuelled by *hau*, Mauss explains:

The *taonga* [thing] and all strictly personal possessions have a *hau*, a spiritual power. You give me *taonga*, I give it to another, the latter gives me *taonga* back, since he is forced to do so by the *hau* of my gift; and I am obliged to give this one to you since I must return to you what is in fact the product of the *hau* of your *taonga* (Mauss 1980: 9).

This force ascribed to objects in Melanesia where it has such a huge impact on exchange is universalised by Mauss together with the concept of exchange systems. Objects are constantly on the move through

exchange systems because they strive to get home. “For the *taonga* is animated with the *hau* of its forest, its soil, its homeland, and the *hau* pursues him who holds it” (Mauss 1980: 9).

In his Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss (1980), Lévi-Strauss criticises Mauss’ understanding of the function of *hau*; it is the other way round. The logic of exchange brings forth *hau* in the exchanged objects. Lévi-Strauss writes: “*Hau* is not the ultimate explanation for exchange; it is the conscious form whereby men of a given society, in which the problem had particular importance, apprehended an unconscious necessity whose explanation lies elsewhere” (Lévi-Strauss 1987: 48). The two agree that exchange societies are a universal from – or it was universal before the rise of industrial society. In recent years, it has been argued that exchange societies are not opposed to industrialised societies (or post-industrial societies for that matter), rather exchange is a principle immanent in all societies, working with more or less impact in different contexts.

In our Danish case, one could argue with Mauss that the objects inside a physical unit containing a social entity (the family-transfixing house) are striving to get out, to get home, but they are locked inside the house. This *hau*-constipation is avoided or lessened by putting up filters, controlling the objects that come in and using the things inside, putting them at risk of breaking. Following Lévi-Strauss, it is not a matter of *hau*-constipation, but of *hau* having faded together with exchange in general. Furthermore, exchange plays a rather subtle role in the sphere of the house where private property is accumulated. This means that the houses are very little *hau*-infected. Heirloom might contain *hau*, and that might be why such objects are avoided. They are part of a rare and strange non-consumers flow of things into the privacy of the house, and thereby classified as matter out of place. Objects play a role in these home spheres dependent on possession, i.e. accumulation. The relational object of exchange is found in other spheres. The gift is as important as ever, but not in consumer home displays.

With Mauss and Lévi-Strauss, the case could be explained as a case of *hau*-avoidance (Mauss) or *hau*-disappearance (Lévi-Strauss). Whether one or the other, this classical anthropological view on a modern (or even post-modern) society opens up for understanding the specific significance of objects in the

social relations of our case.⁷ The things in our Danish house setting represent social relations by giving identity to the one controlling the filters of the house. The things and the house transfix; they stabilise the entity of the family. The objects are part of a sphere of control, stability and entities, and whilst these things support the stability of the house, the flow of exchange, the tissue of social relations between the houses is managed by giving gifts at specific occasions (birthday, Christmas, when invited formally) and by immaterial presentations, such as formal dinner-party invitations and the like, but even better informal gatherings after work, as when you sit together in Café 5 or help each other with the fence (in Sønderborg), and as when you join the same club or association (in Frederikssund). Both places the inhabitants point out that the neighbourhood has become increasingly important, and an important trait about this kind of social relation is its informal, immaterial exchange of presentations.

The first rule, *something into the house means something else out of the house*, shows how things are keenly selected and avoided. The second rule, *use your things or get rid of them*, converts the value of the objects from a relational (*hau*) to a functional (practicality) aspect. Both rules reveal the importance of objects in the homey sphere of private possessions: as houses tend towards mixing everything, objects are separated, refused, filtered and put at risk. Activating the things inside the house prevent them from being exchanged, instead of being given as heirlooms, they are used until broken. They are being tied to the personal life of a family, and thereby taken out of a possible long-term generalised chain of exchange.

Globalised Flows and Homey Stasis

Globalisation means flows of objects, virtual flows, flows of people, that is the way it is ordinarily put. In our case, the globality of consumer society in the context of private houses and objects also means a

⁷ Anthropological theory and empirical cases have constantly emphasised the important role of materiality, especially in the form of gifts. Just to give a few examples, Arjun Appadurai edited an anthology with the significant name “The Social Life of Things” (1986), dealing with exactly these connections; Daniel Miller edited the anthology “Materiality” about the importance of materiality in social life (2005) and recently, “Thinking through Things” (Henare et al. 2006), another anthology, has dealt with this issue from a cultural rather than social angle.

stop to flows, control and filters around the cell of the house. The case also shows informality at work in important social relations and formality at work in transfixing home and family by way of the transparent house and its filtered objects. This movement is accentuated by virtual flows being transparent and changeable. So globality in many ways helps local expressions to find new forms, and things and space play a never-ending huge role in this interplay.

The artist Andy Warhol made a series of art works called Time Capsules. He was a dedicated shopper, and he placed most of the consumer goods in boxes, junk and bric-a-brac without any overall categorising principle. When a box was full, it was closed and stored away as a Time Capsule. Andy Warhol's Time Capsules were containers for mass-produced items and consumer goods. Apart from being a neurotic shop-a-holic's artistic solution to a problem of accumulating objects, and apart from becoming conceptualised pieces of art work and collectors items, the Time Capsules became monuments over consumer society. Strangely enough, these hau-avoiding, never exchanged Time Capsules have got a kind of spiritual power. This doubleness of the Time Capsules of not having hau and having something else of the same order, namely, the label "art", points towards something important that can be recognised in our case of houses and objects. Warhol's collections were a premonition that things contain new kinds of dangerous social value and cultural identity in consumer society although they are not exchanged. Warhol's solution, store it away!, is still in use or even extended: *something in means something else out!* – to the combined rubbish dump and recycling centre, and from there maybe moving along new and less personalised exchange systems.

The material filtering in-and-out of the cell of the house also filters cultural signs; this is a mechanism for defining boundaries, establishing cultural distinction. It is not an easy system of *hot* or *not*, but rather a flowing and complex web of implicit knowledge about old and new objects, spacious rooms and cosy corners, personal style and global consumers objects, transparency, virtuality, rusticity and authenticity, and how to behave in the new poly-social surroundings. Furthermore, all of this is not explicit to any of the people involved; only by inappropriate filtering the system becomes explicit. This material expression of cultural distinction is changing these years, and the mechanisms are revolving around establishing the right

mixture of closure and openness. Instead of making social relations through exchange, the things are given an ambiguous role inside these houses, acting as both transfixer and transformer of cultural distinctions.

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