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The modern home in space and time – considerations over the concept of dwelling and housing preferences*

Abstract

The home constitutes one of the most important realms in modern everyday life and to an extent hitherto unforeseen we engage deeply with our homes, talking about them, decorating them, rebuilding them, designing them – as lifestyle magazines and television programmes attest to. But what makes a dwelling a home, and how do people evaluate and choose their ideal domestic dwelling spaces? This paper focuses on the modern home as a dwelling-space in Denmark. Moving away from a purely economist conceptualisation of home-making and home ownership, the paper seeks to analyse the modern home as a space encompassing socio-material and temporal processes that make up everyday lives and spaces. It is argued that the concept of dwelling is particularly salient for an understanding of the relationship between materiality and sociality: Domestic architecture communicates meaning, and individuals attach meaning to their dwelling space through engagements. Hence, by acting, evaluating and choosing, individuals give information on the ways in which dwellings are used, shaped and reshaped, and on how a dwelling becomes a home. Using survey material and interviews, the paper seeks to arrive at an understanding of how the modern home may be perceived as a *taskscape* making associations between features of the environment and features of the social; in other words, preferences expressing the continuous using, shaping and altering of the dwelling so as to encompass personal and cultural ideals about 'the good modern life'. The paper then seeks to illuminate how this varies over life stages, arguing for a dynamic conceptualisation of dwelling and home.

*Home * dwelling * factor analysis* topologies*

Introduction

We lived in a very small rented flat [in Copenhagen], about 40sqm, and we really needed some more space. We looked at a couple of larger rented flats but the monthly rent was almost the same as the mortgage payments for this house would be. At the same time, we really wanted to have our own garden... The house [we bought] had a lovely big garden and lay at the bottom of a cul-de-sac which we thought would be just perfect when having children in the future. The house itself needed a lot of repairs and refurbishments but we actually appreciated that as it gave us the opportunity to

furnish and decorate it exactly how we wanted it. We also valued its proximity to parts of our families as well as its rural surroundings. So we bought it in spite of my husband's long daily commute to work.
Anna, late 20s

The above is a quote from a young woman who has recently joined the 63% of the Danish population who own their own home. While housing for the masses throughout most of the modern period of the 19th and 20th centuries remained insufficient, squalid and unsanitary, the home has after Second World War become one of the most important spheres in everyday life, not only providing shelter, but also being the frame of the family as well as a project of self-expression as the young woman above also expresses.

The home constitutes one of the most important realms in modern everyday life and to an extent hitherto unforeseen we engage deeply with our homes, talking about them, decorating them, rebuilding them, designing them – as lifestyle magazines and television programmes attest to. But what makes a dwelling a home, and how do people evaluate and choose their ideal domestic dwelling spaces? This paper focuses on the modern home as a dwelling-space in Denmark. Moving away from a purely economist conceptualisation of home-making and home ownership, the paper seeks to analyse the modern home as a space encompassing socio-material and temporal processes that make up everyday lives and spaces. It is argued that the concept of dwelling is particularly salient for an understanding of the relationship between materiality and sociality: Domestic architecture communicates meaning, and individuals attach meaning to their dwelling space through engagements. Hence, by acting, evaluating and choosing, individuals give information on the ways in which dwellings are used, shaped and reshaped, and on how a dwelling becomes a home.

In modern-day Denmark, the home has become one of the most important assets both economically and socially. Thus Danes spend a large proportion of their income on their home (about 25% of household's disposable income) and consequently live in some of the best and largest dwellings in Europe (the average housing unit is 109sqm occupied by two inhabitants, while the average number of sqm per person is 51, compared to 44sqm per person in the UK, 40 in Germany, and 38 in France (Centre for Housing and Welfare 2007: 8)). In terms of social significance, particularly the single-family home in the suburb epitomizes the important links between domestic space, privacy, and home ownership with nearly half of the population living in such dwellings (Ibid.: 26).

Using survey material and interviews, the paper seeks to arrive at an understanding of how the modern home may be perceived as a *taskscape* (Ingold 2000) making associations between features of the environment and features of the social; in other words, preferences expressing the continuous using, shaping and altering of the dwelling so as to encompass personal and cultural ideals about 'the good modern life'. The paper then seeks to illuminate how this varies over life stages, arguing for a dynamic conceptualisation of dwelling and home.

I will begin, then, by outlining the relations between the modern home, dwelling, time and space in order to argue that the home respectively partakes in associations between materiality and sociality, and in relations between transcendence and immanence, particularly by linking sociality and economic investment. Subsequently, I will introduce the concept of *taskscape* (Ingold 2000) and connected ideas in order to move closer to an understanding of dwelling as a dynamic mode of making oneself at-home-in-the-world. In this connection, the modern home, I argue, emerges precisely in the engagements with particular physical and social features of the environment. This will then be demonstrated through survey material and illustrative interview excerpts, which suggest different modalities or ways of orienting oneself in the world, maybe even attuning oneself

to particular features, when evaluating what makes a dwelling a proper home. Finally, I go on to suggest that the analysis of preferences and modalities of the home may be read as an oscillation between presences and absences in the social as well as material.

Before commencing it should be noted that the current paper is part of a work in progress. Hence it only covers a limited scope, namely quantitative analysis, of the meaning of home and dwelling, and the conclusion of the paper will seek to outline dimensions of further research into the topic.

Theoretical considerations on dwelling and the home

The modern home is an ambiguous concept within the social sciences (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). Thus, Alison Blunt and Ann Varley argue that: '*As a space of belonging and alienation, intimacy and violence, desire and fear, the home is invested with meanings, emotions, experiences and relationships that lie at the heart of human life*' (2004:3). The modern home, for this reason, is one of the most emotionally laden geographical concepts, being inextricably linked to that of 'self, family, nation, sense of place, and sense of responsibility towards those who share one's place in the world' (Duncan and Lambert 2003: 395), thus demanding scrutiny by cultural geographers. Once neglected and largely treated as an epiphenomenon to the spheres of production, capitalism and public life (cf. Marx 1976, Park et al. 1968), feminist scholars such as Bonnie Honig (1994) and Teresa de Laurentis (1990) have severely criticized the concept of home as supporting the notion of a unified self itself resting on the exclusion of difference. For a feminist epistemology sensitive to difference and otherness, the concept of home must be deconstructed and dissected so as to unveil alterity, fear, and subjection (although also a refuge from racialised subjection, see hooks, 1990) – ultimately, the concept of home had to given up or left altogether (de Laurentis, 1990: 138).

Such deconstructions can for example be found in neo-Marxist cultural geographies highlighting the socio-material ideological foundations of the modern home. Hence, Maria Kaika illuminates the implications of construing and constructing the modern home as a safe, autonomous and private haven through the exclusion of undesired social and natural features. The modern home is precisely founded both on the exclusion of undesirable social elements as well as metabolized nature and technology hidden from view, and in a manner of speaking *domesticated* to uphold the illusion of distinct spheres. Such domestication rests on presences and absences (Kaika 2004); absences being that which constitute the present-at-hand. In the modern home, Kaika's observations on the nature of the modern home as a series of exclusions and selective inclusions are demonstrated in the treatment of water as present in the home as health-giving, sanitary and safe, while the 'bad, impure' water is absent – kept from view through drains and pipes that may however burst and corrode the illusion of the autonomous home. In short, the modern home is seen, Kaika argues, to reside outside the public realm and its present others or strangers, thus reinforcing hegemonic gendered spaces as well as exclusionary and oppressive structures in society (Kaika 2004, see also Kaika 2003). On these grounds, she condemns the ideal of the safe private haven as an exclusionary practice, and calls for an end to the home as a private container.

Even so a range of literature on the home has emerged over the last decade or so, introducing novel ideas about home and domesticity by interrogating into what may appear mundane, trivial and overly-familiar (Blunt 2005: 505). Thus, the home has resurfaced on the academic agenda aided by a reconceptualisation of the notion of dwelling that, in contrast to former phenomenological approaches to the human experience of place, considers the connections between human and non-human elements in the making and experiencing of place, especially informed by advances in

Actor-Network Theory and Non-Representational Theory (Anderson et al. 2003:7).

Thus, as is poignantly pointed out by Vacher (2007), the modern home is, before it becomes a home, first of all a commodity designed to accumulate profit and value. Hence, for the modern dwelling to become a home it has to go through processes of shaping and reshaping, or we might say *domestication*, with its inhabitants. This line of thinking lends itself to ideas of dwelling developed in Heidegger's later works, most famously his lecture and later essay *Bauen Wohnen Denken – 'Building Dwelling Thinking'* (Heidegger 1971). Heidegger's essay developed the idea that building and dwelling were intimately bound up with one another, being related through people's involvement with their environment and their attempts to make sense of place.

Demonstrating the etymological connections between dwelling and building, Heidegger argued that dwelling should be seen as an accommodation between people and their surroundings – a way of being (at home) in the world '*for building isn't merely a means and a way towards dwelling – to build is in itself already to dwell*' (Heidegger 1971: 146).

It is important to note that Heidegger's building and dwelling took place together over time, essentially forming the way of life for ordinary people. Hence, Heidegger effectively undermined the perception of building as the architect's preserve (Ibid.: 159), arguing that building and dwelling described individuals' ongoing relationship with the world around them at a variety of scales; taking place over months, years and lives (Sharr 2007: 42).

The insights of Heidegger's later works have resonated strongly in branches of contemporary material anthropology engaged with the *Stofflichkeit* or density and materiality of human life. Here, dwelling is perceived not only as a container, a house, or a shelter, but the very process of making-oneself-at-home. In the recent works of anthropologist Tim Ingold (2000), the concept of 'task' understood as '*any practical operation, carried out by a skilled agent in an environment, as part of his or her normal business of life*' (Ingold 2000: 195) constitutes the conceptual as well as practical link between landscape and dwelling. Linking community, individuals and tools through tasks, the entire ensemble of tasks and their mutual interlocking Ingold terms a *taskscape* (Ibid.) which is qualitative, heterogeneous, and intersubjective as it is composed of mutual involvement (ibid.: 196). Hence, the human agent is always submerged, as it were, in the taskscape through the carrying out of tasks that are inherently social as they, in my reading, both create communal bonds and draw boundaries between groups or individuals through engagements and disengagement.

The insights of Heidegger's later works and especially Ingold's interpretation of it take us some way from the negative conceptualisation of the modern home, as we now see a rather dynamic notion of dwelling as *modes of home-making in the world*. The putative link between the home and a unified self based on the exclusion of otherness should perhaps then in this light be reframed into a process whereby the dwelling becomes a home for the self by materialising identity and anchoring the self to the physical world of others; although this empirically of course may prove to have exclusionary aspects denying some presences. As such, this position echoes that of Iris Marion Young, who in her essay 'House and home' (1997) find that home '*carries a core positive meaning as the material anchor for a sense of agency*' (1997: 159). The home, rather than being founded on exclusions and fixed identities, is the dwelling-space that holds together a coherent sense of self which enable us to engage further with the world (Ibid.: 151). In short, the managing and valuing of domestic space can be read as ways of making oneself at home in the world, and especially to create and sustain a coherent sense of self across time and space. That being said, of course such engagements with the world may spark off tensions involving domestic space and taskscapes as these are heterogeneous, yet the crucial point is that the home and the concept of dwelling should be seen, not as exclusionary and hegemonic, but as dynamic and inclusive.

In the following, I will turn to the empirical part of the paper, attempting to put the idea of dwelling as modes of home-making into play through quantitative analysis. Such analysis has its clear limitations, to which I will return in the conclusion, but in the following I will try to tease out the ways in which people evaluate, associate and engage with dwellings and subsequently how a dwelling come to be perceived as a home. Following the insights from the concept of the taskscape, the hypothesis is that people draw on or engage with different social and material features of a dwelling, when evaluating it as a home. Hence, the analysis follows the general academic interest in the intersections between materiality and sociality that can be found within Actor-Network Theory and Non-Representational Theory by looking at the ways in which human and non-human elements are associated and dissociated – although of course the following will be only from the perspective of the human agents, seeing as the analysis is based on a survey questionnaire.

Quantitative analysis of housing preferences

The quantitative data used in this section takes the form of a survey questionnaire conducted as telephone interviews in the Summer of 2008. The survey population consist of a random sample (N=1530) of the Danish population who were interviewed by the independent body StatBank Denmark for Centre for Housing and Welfare. The survey was subsequently coupled to registers giving information on housing characteristics, mortgage, family structure, income, employment, and social benefits. For analysis, the data has been weighted to make up for skewness in terms respondents' age and type of dwelling, and as such the sample is robust and conforming to statistical assumptions of linearity and normal distributions.

The qualitative data, in contrast, should be viewed as far more 'impressionistic' and exemplar in character, as the interviews included in this paper solely are pilot interviews conducted by the author. Pilot interviews are a conventional means of testing the themes to be included in an interview guide, and consequently the pilot interviews in this context were initially conducted to test and assess the themes around which future semi-structured interviews would revolve. With pilot interviews testing a given interview guide, it is difficult to speak of generalisability, but even so, the actual interviews yielded some very interesting insights that I have decided to included in the following to 'illustrate' some of the general points and findings with interviewees' own words, rather than dry statistical descriptions.

Initial impressions and descriptions

An initial look at the data regarding respondents' preferences to place of dwelling seems to indicate a high degree of satisfaction with current place of dwelling, in that most respondents state their preferred place of dwelling as the same as their current, and a three-way table on length of tenure, current dwelling location and preferences shows decreased desire to relocate as time passes. Thus, 67 % of the respondents living in a city centre, state such location as their preferred one, and to a slightly lesser extent this also applies to those living in city districts (42.9 % state city district as their preference). Even so, there is an interesting difference between city dwellers and respondents in more rural locations, in that the second most popular choice for the city dwellers is the suburb, with 15.5% of those in city centres and 21.8% of those in city districts stating this as their preferred location of dwelling. For the respondents in more rural locations (towns, villages and countryside), the suburb does not seem to attract, as they express a very high degree of place-attachment and satisfaction. Hence, 67.9% of town dwellers state the town as their preference with the second-highest preference being the suburb, but it is only 9.9% expressing such wish. Moving further out into rural settings 68.9% of village dwellers prefer to stay in a village, and the closet second with 11.4% is the countryside, while an overwhelming 85.9% of country dwellers prefer to stay in the

countryside and only 8.1% would like to move to a town (see table 1 in appendix for entire crosstab). Hence, using preliminary descriptive statistics, it emerges that one can talk of some modes of place-attachment in that one's current location of dwelling seems to affect preferences and ideas about the ideal location. Following this connection intuitively, one may ask whether earlier experiences of dwelling (i.e. place of dwelling in childhood) then also affect one's preferences, as is modelled in table 2 in the appendix. Again, there appears to be a strong connection between place of residence in one's childhood and preferred place of dwelling – with the important exception that the suburb is a strong second choice for most respondents, and even the first choice for those having grown up in city districts, while the country dwellers prefer to stay in the country, but subsequently in a town.

With regards to families (please refer to table 3 and 4 in appendix), the most popular choice of location is the suburb and the city district the least popular (again, this reflects the actual locations of families, as about 8% live in city districts and approx. 25% live in the suburbs). Looking at below table may give a somewhat more complete picture of dwellings and preferences, this time sorted by life stages. It emerges that certain places and locations seems more suited for particular modes of life with the city centre being the place of primarily young people (and singles to some extent) and the suburb and town the preferred and actual location of families and the elderly). The country, however, also seems to have strong attraction to young couples and families, but not to single parents.

Table A: Crosstab of social groups and dwelling (current, childhood, and preferred)

| | Centre of city | Urban district | Suburb | Town | Village | Rural setting |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| % within singles under 30 | 61.4 <i>11.9</i> 50.0 | 6.8 2.4 6.8 | 15.9 <i>21.4</i> 25.0 | 11.4 <i>26.2</i> 11.4 | 4.5 <i>21.4</i> 2.3 | 0 <i>16.2</i> 4.5 |
| % within Couples under 30 | 61.4 <i>5.9</i> 23.5 | 8.6 <i>11.8</i> 2.9 | 20.0 <i>14.7</i> 26.5 | 15.7 <i>25.0</i> 20.6 | 7.1 <i>17.6</i> 8.8 | 5.7 <i>25.0</i> 17.6 |
| % within Families | 13.1 <i>15.7</i> 11.5 | 7.60 <i>5.3</i> 6.2 | 27.4 <i>23.6</i> 27.9 | 28.3 <i>23.8</i> 24.0 | 14.7 <i>15.3</i> 15.9 | 8.8 <i>15.5</i> 14.3 |
| % within Single parents | 14.8 <i>20.8</i> 21.2 | 18.5 <i>3.8</i> 5.8 | 27.8 <i>24.5</i> 32.7 | 18.5 <i>15.1</i> 30.8 | 16.7 <i>18.9</i> 5.8 | 3.7 <i>17.0</i> 3.8 |
| % within Singles 30-59 | 32.6 <i>26.4</i> 26.4 | 13.0 <i>4.4</i> 4.4 | 23.9 <i>15.4</i> 28.6 | 16.3 <i>18.7</i> 17.6 | 7.6 <i>13.2</i> 5.5 | 0 <i>22.0</i> 2.2 |
| % within Couples 30-59 (no kids) | 11.8 <i>20.7</i> 8.4 | 7.9 <i>5.6</i> 6.2 | 30.3 <i>16.2</i> 27.5 | 25.8 <i>24.6</i> 26.4 | 15.7 <i>9.5</i> 15.2 | 8.4 <i>22.9</i> 15.7 |
| % within Singles +60 | 21.0 <i>20.2</i> 22.6 | 5.6 <i>5.6</i> 7.3 | 23.4 <i>11.3</i> 21.8 | 33.9 <i>22.6</i> 29.8 | 8.1 <i>10.5</i> 10.5 | 8.8 <i>29.8</i> 8.8 |
| % within Couples +60 | 13.3 <i>15.1</i> 12.6 | 3.7 <i>5.5</i> 2.6 | 28.9 <i>11.8</i> 29.3 | 25.6 <i>15.1</i> 26.3 | 15.9 <i>16.2</i> 13.7 | 12.2 <i>35.8</i> 15.2 |

Note: Respondents' **current place of dwelling**, *childhood dwelling*, and **preferred place of dwelling**

Such attraction to the countryside by young families is expressed in one of the interviews included in this paper. Anna, who is in her late 20s, has grown up in the suburb, but two years ago moved to a single-family house with her husband:

INT: Where did you grow up?

Anna: I grew up in a suburb, just like Morten [her husband] – actually in the same suburb (laughs...) We both grew up in modern single-family houses which is funny because we ourselves didn't want to buy such type of house; we wanted either a mason's villa or a country house...

INT: why is that?

Anna: well, the modern single-family homes can be really comfortable, but we really needed some "breathing space" and some distance to neighbours. At the same time, many modern single-family homes aren't furnished in a comfortable way...However, we were both really happy growing up in a modern single-family home... [Note: the interviewee uses the Danish term 'hyggelig' which does not have a direct English translation but denotes something like cosy, comfortable and snug. Hyggelig combines atmosphere, presence and concrete matter, such as furniture and decoration, but also lighting, smell and sound. A German translation could be 'gemütlich' CJJ]

Factor analysis

Having thus moved closer to an understanding of preferences and evaluations of particular dwelling locations, it then becomes interesting to look more closely at the preferences for particular social and material features, and how they make up the idea of a home for the respondents.

In order to go beyond the descriptive statistics of dwelling places and interrogate into the modalities of choice, it is necessary to perform a factor analysis of the variables relating to evaluations of the 'good modern home' (the respondents were asked about the importance of a wide range of factors that constitutes a good dwelling space). In the initial stages of analysis, it emerged that the variables expressing respondents' preferences were high internally correlated leading to poor model fits and high degrees of redundancy. In order to solve this, the following presentation of preferences to particular social and material features use factor analysis. Factor analysis attempts to identify underlying variables, or factors, that explain the pattern of correlations within a set of observed variables. Thus, it assumes that a set of general factors caused the observed patterns on correlations. Factor analysis is often used in data reduction to identify a small number of factors that explain most of the variance that is observed in a much larger number of manifest variables. Factor analysis can also be used to generate hypotheses regarding causal mechanisms or to screen variables for subsequent analysis. In this case the analysis is used to construct new transverse variables or factors that sum up and explain the patterns lying behind the original answers. In the model we can identify 6 components extracted from the original 15 variables, and the 6 components may be characterised as distinct *modalities* or associations of social and material features constituting certain respondents' ideas of the 'good home'.

Table B: Component Score Coefficient Matrix

| | Component | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Low levels of street noise | ,605 | ,116 | -,031 | ,250 | -,066 | -,068 |
| Low levels of social problems | ,866 | ,017 | ,187 | ,062 | ,072 | -,005 |
| Low levels of crime | ,863 | ,025 | ,140 | ,035 | ,067 | ,088 |
| Proximity to good schools and daycare | ,096 | ,870 | ,010 | -,022 | ,117 | ,008 |
| Communal facilities | -,060 | ,344 | ,142 | ,173 | -,075 | ,460 |
| Low degree of social heterogeneity | ,046 | ,106 | ,824 | ,046 | ,003 | ,042 |
| Good living conditions for children | ,057 | ,882 | ,022 | ,061 | ,053 | ,011 |
| Good public transportation | ,068 | ,054 | -,080 | ,036 | ,123 | ,704 |
| Low levels of ethnic heterogeneity | ,223 | -,059 | ,741 | ,029 | ,081 | ,063 |
| Proximity to green space | ,212 | ,149 | ,031 | ,779 | ,007 | ,029 |
| Proximity to water or lakes | ,077 | -,076 | ,049 | ,806 | ,073 | ,058 |
| Proximity to urban life | -,033 | -,114 | ,120 | -,029 | ,061 | ,714 |
| Proximity to workplaces or education | ,091 | ,218 | -,161 | -,162 | ,536 | ,233 |
| Close to friends and family | ,082 | -,050 | ,114 | ,108 | ,728 | ,189 |
| Close to own childhood home | -,105 | ,091 | ,243 | ,093 | ,718 | -,213 |

The first modality may be described as 'avoiding social discomforts around domestic space' as it shows correlations to having low levels of street noise, crime and social problems. There is also a weaker correlation to avoiding ethnic heterogeneity and to being close to green spaces. The second can be characterised as 'child-friendly' relating as it does to good conditions for children, proximity to schools and daycare, and communal facilities. Proximity to workplace also appears to be related although not strongly. The third modality can be summarised as 'avoidance of heterogeneity' as it relates to low levels of social and ethnic heterogeneity. Curiously, it is not related to closeness to work or education; one may speculate that perhaps this component reflects mainly elderly respondents. The fourth modality prioritises 'nature and tranquillity', that is, proximity to green space and water and avoidance of street noise, while social problems and conditions for children appear to be of little concern in this modality. This is in contrast to the fifth modality that could be describes as 'modern traditional', relating to proximity to workplace, family and friends and one's own childhood home. This modality is weakly correlated to childcare facilities and moreover weakly dissociated from communal facilities. Finally, the sixth modality may be characterised as 'urban lifestyle' that emphasises communal facilities, good public transport and proximity to urban life with cafés and cultural offers. Moreover, this modality is strongly dissociated from living near one's childhood home and weakly related to proximity to workplace/education and social networks; perhaps because this modality mainly expresses a young unattached lifestyle.

Thus, in summary, the factor analysis uncovers modalities behind the observed variables that, put together, can be interpreted as different ways of evaluating social and material features of one's ideal dwelling environment, and thus the model gives information on what it takes for a dwelling to be perceived as a space for making oneself at home.

A similar pattern can be found in the variables relating to respondents' evaluation of the relative advantages of owning or renting one's home. It is a fairly robust model, explaining about 63 % of the total variance in the variables.

Table C: Component Score Coefficient Matrix

| Component Score Coefficient Matrix | | | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Component | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Own: Possibility to invest | -0,203 | 0,068 | -0,067 | 0,549 | -0,053 |
| Own: Accumulate wealth when prices increase | 0,034 | -0,036 | 0,019 | 0,495 | -0,264 |
| Own: Freedom of use | -0,206 | 0,009 | 0,016 | 0,084 | 0,488 |
| Own: Economic safety in the future | 0,01 | 0,015 | -0,028 | 0,185 | 0,173 |
| Own: Having a house and garden of one's own | 0,046 | 0,016 | -0,044 | -0,289 | 0,654 |
| Own: Keeping value of improvements upon moving | 0,182 | -0,154 | 0,114 | 0,083 | 0,062 |
| Own: Ability to deduct interest rate from taxable income | 0,359 | -0,023 | -0,054 | -0,014 | -0,036 |
| Own: Ability to use equity for consumption | 0,432 | 0,011 | -0,069 | -0,064 | -0,109 |
| Own: Passing asset on to children | 0,487 | -0,017 | -0,093 | -0,206 | -0,036 |
| Rent: No down payment | -0,032 | 0,509 | -0,184 | 0,081 | -0,068 |
| Rent: Lower cost of housing | -0,128 | 0,523 | -0,149 | 0,067 | 0,022 |
| Rent: Claim housing subsidies | 0,094 | 0,310 | 0,015 | -0,188 | 0,079 |
| Rent: No financial risk | 0,024 | 0,002 | 0,344 | -0,060 | 0,040 |
| Rent: Easy to move out of | -0,071 | -0,136 | 0,504 | -0,009 | 0,021 |
| Rent: No repairs or maintenance | -0,116 | -0,188 | 0,529 | 0,050 | -0,074 |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Component Scores. | | | | | |

The model demonstrates 5 modalities relating to preference to dwelling. Modality two and three relates to renting, while modality one, four and five relates to owning one's home. Modality one expresses short-term economic gains of owning such as being able to deduct interest rate from taxable income and using equity to enable immediate consumption. Curiously, it is also related to the idea of passing on assets to children, while it is negatively related both to the idea of property as investment and to aspects of freedom and property. Modality two expresses economic aspects of renting, such as lower housing costs (at least short term), no down payment and – for the elderly – the right to claim housing subsidies. The third modality on the other hand is 'renting as easy and comfortable option' as it relates to rented accommodation no financial risk, easy to move out of, and no repairs or maintenance. The fourth modality is mainly focused on owning as a long-term economic investment with a weak correlation property as economic safety and a markedly negative one to aspects of having one's own house and garden to furnish, grow and decorate. This fourth modality may express some of the rationale behind the recent years' activity on the apartment market particularly in Copenhagen where urban regeneration led to the accumulation of wealth for apartment owners in central districts. The fifth modality is in this respect the complete contrast, in that it emphasises precisely the 'non-economic' aspects of homeownership, namely freedom regarding use, alterations etc. and the ability to have a house and garden of one's free disposition. It is strongly dissociated from long-term economic investment aspects and also weakly dissociated from short-term economic gains. Finally, it is somewhat weakly correlated to having economic safety in the future.

In short, the two factor analyses together express the fact that perceptions of what the home should be – and equally important should not be – can be construed as differing modes of relating to and drawing on social and material features of one's environment. Moreover, such preferences can almost seem like a patchwork of very different elements that change over time, making the relation between dwelling and home highly dynamic. This is well-captured in a longer excerpt from one of the interviewees, Karen, a woman in her early 30s, who bought a semi-detached in a suburb to Copenhagen with her husband. Their buying a house was motivated by a wish to start a family, and they currently have a small daughter.

We had probably looked at some 20 houses, but we really wanted a semi-detached; that was a compromise between John [her husband] and I. He wanted a house, but I was actually fine with staying in an apartment and couldn't really get used to the thought of a single-family house. I like having people around me. So semi-detached it was, because we both wanted a garden...Initially we had been looking in Albertslund because it had to be close to Copenhagen as our families live there, and our parents live in Rødovre, so it had to be close to them as well. We had a coop apartment and with that we could afford Albertslund, but then suddenly its value increased and we could afford Rødovre!

Then John's parents also promised us we could use their car if we moved to Rødovre, and at the same time we had begun thinking about children, and so it would be better to be close to our parents. I mean it is still very close to Copenhagen which we wanted so you can cycle to the city – where all our friends live – and if you want to maintain contact with your friends you can't just move to the countryside where you need a car to get there. But Rødovre was good because you can just cycle to Copenhagen.

But it certainly helped knowing Rødovre beforehand. We had said that we would NEVER move there, but then when you look at houses, everything seemed more comfortable [org. hyggeligt, compare to prev. quote] because you knew the local area, and it really mattered knowing where everything is etc.... We really wanted a garden, not just two meters of garden; that wasn't enough... and then in the longer run it is smarter to own rather than rent, because you're saving up and can use some of the savings at a later stage in life, whereas when you rent you're basically throwing money to a landlord and get nothing out of it. And then we had some savings already...

Possible interpretations of data and discussion

Once neglected and vilified, the modern home has resurfaced as part of a renewed interest in dwelling and being. In connection to this the present analysis has sought to demonstrate how people evaluate dwellings, assess their features and deploy or reject particular ones in their conceptualisations of what constitutes a home. Using factor analysis, the paper has sought to argue that the modern home is not so much based on exclusionary practices forming and supporting a unified self, as it emerges in the dynamic drawing-on social and material features. We may here allude to Ingold's concept of the taskscape, as a mode of engaging with the world that constitutes self, other and space through the drawing on particular social and material features. Interviews and data demonstrate that the home far from being the space of exclusionary practices is a domain related to family and to safety (both of which of course in some sense can be seen as exclusionary, but also inclusive and transcendent), to the environment (in terms of gardening), and to the self.

As the factor analysis thus expresses different *socio-material* and *socio-spatial* modalities, Ingold's idea of the taskscape may interestingly be complemented and expanded by a topological view inquiring into the principles of space and distribution. Originally a branch of mathematics, the

principles of topology are useful for social analysis in so far as they allow us to go beyond traditional Euclidean space (Lefebvre 1991:17) to see the social as a multiple spatial type. In other words, a topology enables us to understand several modes of performing the social (Mol and Law 1994: 643), or in this case home and dwelling, and how associations and distances are created between social and material features in this process (cf. Latour 2005).

Taking clue from the findings of the factor analysis, it appears as though the perception of dwelling as a home takes place through a manifest preference to certain features, a manifest rejection of other features and a certain degree of indifference to others. An example could be the urban lifestyle identified in modality three of the first factor analysis. Here proximity to urban life, good public transport and communal facilities are strong positive relations, while proximity to one's own childhood home, good daycare facilities and schools, and closeness to water are negatively related. Between these two opposite poles, several other factors range around 0 suggesting that they are not taken into consideration, yet they still exist in other modalities of the modern home. This may be indicative of a topology of presences and absences, as described by Annemarie Mol and John Law as the topology of *fire* denoting the *continuity of shape as an effect of discontinuity* (Mol and Law 2001: 615). Fire space denotes therefore a flickering between presence and absence which here enable us to think about the modalities of home-making. The modalities may be used to express such flickering that can be found in the different orientations or maybe different presences that characterise the modern home and the perception of dwelling as presences and absences. The idea of the home is characterised by absences and presences that constantly shift in the data material. This means that the ideal of the modern home for the respondents is made up of a series of connections and equally *disconnections*, characterising the relation between dwelling and being-at-home. Hence, the factor analysis really portrays how particular aspects of the social and the material are associated in modalities (or orientations to the world), leaving other possibilities in the background, or as absences that are nonetheless there as silences, contrasts, assumptions; simply as other modes of making oneself at home in the world.

Are we then directly back at a perception of the home as exclusionary? No, for the flickering between absences and presences does not uphold a unified object, the modern home. Rather, it demonstrates the multitude of the dwelling as a home, and when comparing groups of respondents on the different factors it shows that the idea of dwelling and home changes over one's course of life, as the preferences for location previously shown also demonstrates. Thus in the first factor analysis on the preferences for particular features, young singles under 30 are best represented on component six (the urban lifestyle), while the young couples can be found on component five relating to closeness to family and work. The families with children and single parents appear unsurprisingly on factor two (children-friendly surroundings), while the elderly score highest on avoiding noise and social problems as well as enjoying both urban life and nature.

| | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 | Factor 5 | Factor 6 |
|----------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Young singles | | | | | | + |
| Young couples | | | | | + | |
| Families | | + | | | | |
| Single parents | | + | | | | |
| Couples 30-59 w/o children | | | | + | | |
| Singles 30-59 | | | | | | + |
| Couples 60+ | | | | + | | |
| Singles 60+ | | | + | + | | + |
| Mixed couples | | | | | + | |

Hence, with Mol and Law (2001) we can argue that there are different versions of the modern home, maybe in the topological shape of fire (absences and presences, meaning that one modality stands out in one place but belongs to other absent modalities). This can be reflected in the data by people's preferences and value attributed to the modern home and particularly home ownership. The modalities may be used to express the different orientations or maybe different presences that characterise the modern home and the perception of dwelling as presences and absences.

Conclusions and a further research agenda:

The paper has sought to demonstrate how people evaluate and assess various social and material features that make a dwelling a home. Through the use of quantitative analysis and illustrative interview excerpts the multiple dimensions of the home as been illuminated in order to demonstrate the complexity of home and the salience of a critical attention to the concept of dwelling as modes of home-making. However, in this final section attention needs to be drawn to the limits to quantitative analysis on this subject as well as to an outline of further research into dwellings and homes.

Using quantitative material on people's perceptions of home and dwelling poses some methodological problems first and foremost regarding the qualitative nature of home. A survey only offers a certain range of questions as well as answers, and it is impossible for the researcher to follow up with further questions, to clarify or to work with dimensions that may not be caught on ordinal, nominal or continuous scales. When inquiring into the micro-geographies of home, therefore, it is absolutely conceivable that subtleties, routines, and perhaps even tacit knowledge is lost. One may even argue that an interview will encounter problems in this direction and that other methods, such as observation, participation and visual methods may be of aid here. Another problem encountering particularly survey questionnaires is the problem of time and context, as the survey so to speak only reflects the particular moment it is taken. Hence, it is problematic to work with a concept of generations without having access at least to several surveys, forming a longitudinal data base. For this reason, the paper has not been able to fully grasp the significance of time and the unfolding of lives in social and material space. In short, many aspects of homes and dwelling simply require a different kind of data but this will be covered in a future study forming part of the overall Ph.D. thesis.

With these limitations in mind, the analyses do cover some ground for an understanding of home and dwelling, and it could be followed up by more qualitative inquiries into the nature of home, dwelling, time and sociality, for example in the shape of Hägerstrand's time-geographies or Bourdieu's theories of action. The latter, in particular, forms an interesting contribution to an understanding of homes and the social, as Bourdieu seeks to reformulate economic behaviour on the housing market into a general conception of social action (Bourdieu 2005). Hence, he argues that economic investment should be not be regarded in isolation, but seen within a wider frame of action that seeks to navigate transcendence and immanence in the social. The house, thus, is an investment of monetary form yet intrinsically tied to the social (to habitus and field) as investments are related to social *transcendence*, that is, to the future as projects and positions. Investment and value are therefore not merely economic but related to family, social standing, time and space. A core point here is the relation between *transcendence and immanence* in the home, which brings us closer to a conception of dwelling as lived-in space and time, continually fluctuating between transcendence and immanence, and between absence and presence. Such conceptualisations may bring us closer to an understanding of the webs of significance in which the home is suspended.

For this reason, I want to end this paper and at the same time start further inquiries with an excerpt

from Lars, a 58-year old home owner, who in his own words expresses the intricate relations between investment, value, time and being-at-home in the home:

Ah yes, when I was... well, back in the old days! [laugh] when I was young and progressive I swore I would never own property, that was for the bourgeoisie! But then you change, don't you, because you want to improve your own living conditions, so I became a home owner too!... It was actually about having your foot under your own table, to own your own living space; we didn't really think about it as an investment. I think we really just thought about having our own, versus having a landlord intruding into your very private dwelling space actually, demanding money for heating unashamedly and we didn't know our rights back then and were afraid to protest. So that became too costly for us, that arrangement, and therefore we took the chance...

INT: So how did you finance it?

Lars: It cost 545 000 back then [approx. 73 000 EUR]! We thought that was a lot of money! We financed it with my pensions. Back then, you could apply to take out all your pensions, you had to apply one year before receiving the money, and we did that, and I have to admit that it is most likely the best investment I ever made...

* The current paper forms a part of a Ph.D. thesis which is an investigation into the modern single-family home and suburban spaces in Denmark. The study is funded by Realdania through Centre for Housing and Welfare, Department of Sociology, University of Copenhagen and commenced in December 2007, with expected completion early 2011. For more information, please visit www.bovel.dk

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Appendix

Table 1

| crosstabs: Current place of dwelling * Preferred place of dwelling | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-------|-----------------------------|---------------|--------|-------|---------|---------|------------|--------|
| | | | Preferred place of dwelling | | | | | | | |
| | | | City centre | City district | Suburb | Town | Village | Country | Don't know | Total |
| Current place of dwelling | City centre | Count | 195 | 5 | 45 | 22 | 1 | 22 | 1 | 291 |
| | | % | 67,0% | 1,7% | 15,5% | 7,6% | ,3% | 7,6% | ,3% | 100,0% |
| | City district. | Count | 18 | 51 | 26 | 12 | 6 | 5 | 1 | 119 |
| | | % | 15,1% | 42,9% | 21,8% | 10,1% | 5,0% | 4,2% | ,8% | 100,0% |
| | suburb. | Count | 29 | 13 | 285 | 27 | 16 | 22 | 0 | 392 |
| | | % | 7,4% | 3,3% | 72,7% | 6,9% | 4,1% | 5,6% | ,0% | 100,0% |
| | Town | Count | 34 | 8 | 39 | 266 | 20 | 23 | 2 | 392 |
| | | % | 8,7% | 2,0% | 9,9% | 67,9% | 5,1% | 5,9% | ,5% | 100,0% |
| | Village | Count | 8 | 2 | 11 | 17 | 133 | 22 | 0 | 193 |
| | | % | 4,1% | 1,0% | 5,7% | 8,8% | 68,9% | 11,4% | ,0% | 100,0% |
| | Country | Count | 2 | 0 | 2 | 11 | 4 | 116 | 0 | 135 |
| | | % | 1,5% | ,0% | 1,5% | 8,1% | 3,0% | 85,9% | ,0% | 100,0% |
| | Don't know | Count | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| | | % | ,0% | ,0% | ,0% | ,0% | ,0% | ,0% | 100,0% | 100,0% |
| | Total | Count | 286 | 79 | 408 | 355 | 180 | 210 | 8 | 1526 |
| | | % | 18,7% | 5,2% | 26,7% | 23,3% | 11,8% | 13,8% | ,5% | 100,0% |

Table 2

| crosstabs: place of residence in childhood*preferred place of dwelling | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-------|-----------------------------|---------------|--------|-------|---------|---------|------------|--------|
| | | | Preferred place of dwelling | | | | | | | |
| | | | City centre | City district | Suburb | Town | Village | Country | Don't know | Total |
| place of residence in childhood | City centre | Count | 105 | 8 | 58 | 33 | 23 | 21 | 1 | 249 |
| | | % | 42,2% | 3,2% | 23,3% | 13,3% | 9,2% | 8,4% | ,4% | 100,0% |
| | City district. | Count | 12 | 19 | 30 | 15 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 88 |
| | | % | 13,6% | 21,6% | 34,1% | 17,0% | 5,7% | 6,8% | 1,1% | 100,0% |
| | suburb. | Count | 47 | 16 | 160 | 25 | 13 | 26 | 0 | 287 |
| | | % | 16,4% | 5,6% | 55,7% | 8,7% | 4,5% | 9,1% | ,0% | 100,0% |
| | Town | Count | 56 | 13 | 56 | 176 | 20 | 27 | 1 | 349 |
| | | % | 16,0% | 3,7% | 16,0% | 50,4% | 5,7% | 7,7% | ,3% | 100,0% |
| | Village | Count | 26 | 12 | 36 | 30 | 81 | 24 | 0 | 209 |
| | | % | 12,4% | 5,7% | 17,2% | 14,4% | 38,8% | 11,5% | ,0% | 100,0% |
| | Country | Count | 40 | 10 | 68 | 76 | 37 | 104 | 0 | 335 |
| | | % | 11,9% | 3,0% | 20,3% | 22,7% | 11,0% | 31,0% | ,0% | 100,0% |
| | Don't know | Count | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 8 |
| | | % | ,0% | ,0% | 12,5% | ,0% | ,0% | 25,0% | 62,5% | 100,0% |
| | Total | Count | 286 | 78 | 409 | 355 | 179 | 210 | 8 | 1525 |
| | | % | 18,8% | 5,1% | 26,8% | 23,3% | 11,7% | 13,8% | ,5% | 100,0% |

Table 3

| Crosstabs: Number of children in household*Preferred place of dwelling | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------|-----------------------------|---------------|--------|-------|---------|---------|------------|--------|
| Number of children in household | | Preferred place of dwelling | | | | | | | |
| | | City centre | City district | Suburb | Town | Village | Country | Don't know | Total |
| 0 | Count | 158 | 40 | 229 | 201 | 96 | 126 | 5 | 855 |
| | % | 18,5% | 4,7% | 26,8% | 23,5% | 11,2% | 14,7% | ,6% | 100,0% |
| 1 | Count | 51 | 14 | 75 | 49 | 25 | 32 | 0 | 246 |
| | % | 20,7% | 5,7% | 30,5% | 19,9% | 10,2% | 13,0% | ,0% | 100,0% |
| 2 | Count | 56 | 18 | 72 | 75 | 45 | 32 | 3 | 301 |
| | % | 18,6% | 6,0% | 23,9% | 24,9% | 15,0% | 10,6% | 1,0% | 100,0% |
| 3 | Count | 13 | 6 | 23 | 27 | 12 | 16 | 0 | 97 |
| | % | 13,4% | 6,2% | 23,7% | 27,8% | 12,4% | 16,5% | ,0% | 100,0% |
| 4 | Count | 5 | 0 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 19 |
| | % | 26,3% | ,0% | 31,6% | 15,8% | 10,5% | 15,8% | ,0% | 100,0% |
| 5 | Count | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 7 |
| | % | 42,9% | ,0% | 42,9% | ,0% | ,0% | 14,3% | ,0% | 100,0% |
| Total | Count | 286 | 78 | 408 | 355 | 180 | 210 | 8 | 1525 |
| | % | 18,8% | 5,1% | 26,8% | 23,3% | 11,8% | 13,8% | ,5% | 100,0% |

Table 4

| Crosstabulation: Number of children in household*Current place of dwelling | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------|---------------------------|---------------|--------|-------|---------|---------|------------|--------|
| Number of children in household | | Current place of dwelling | | | | | | | |
| | | City centre | City district | Suburb | Town | Village | Country | Don't know | Total |
| 0 | Count | 196 | 62 | 216 | 195 | 106 | 79 | 2 | 856 |
| | % | 22,9% | 7,2% | 25,2% | 22,8% | 12,4% | 9,2% | ,2% | 100,0% |
| 1 | Count | 44 | 21 | 77 | 59 | 24 | 20 | 0 | 245 |
| | % | 18,0% | 8,6% | 31,4% | 24,1% | 9,8% | 8,2% | ,0% | 100,0% |
| 2 | Count | 35 | 27 | 75 | 95 | 47 | 21 | 2 | 302 |
| | % | 11,6% | 8,9% | 24,8% | 31,5% | 15,6% | 7,0% | ,7% | 100,0% |
| 3 | Count | 7 | 6 | 19 | 39 | 14 | 12 | 0 | 97 |
| | % | 7,2% | 6,2% | 19,6% | 40,2% | 14,4% | 12,4% | ,0% | 100,0% |
| 4 | Count | 7 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 20 |
| | % | 35,0% | ,0% | 25,0% | 15,0% | 10,0% | 15,0% | ,0% | 100,0% |
| 5 | Count | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 6 |
| | % | 16,7% | 50,0% | 16,7% | ,0% | ,0% | 16,7% | ,0% | 100,0% |
| Total | Count | 290 | 119 | 393 | 391 | 193 | 136 | 4 | 1526 |
| | % | 19,0% | 7,8% | 25,8% | 25,6% | 12,6% | 8,9% | ,3% | 100,0% |