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Urban compact living: Making home in the city

An ethnographic case study of compact living in an urban Danish context

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URBAN COMPACT LIVING: MAKING HOME IN THE CITY

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PHD DISSERTATION AALBORG UNIVERSITY FONDEN FOR BILLIGE BOLIGER

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URBAN COMPACT LIVING: MAKING HOME IN THE CITY

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AUTHOR CV

Anne Hedegaard Winther holds an MSc in Sociology from University of Copenhagen. The concrete meetings between human beings and their physical surroundings, particularly in the context of housing, has been a pivotal point of her professional interests from the beginning. Thus, before commencing her sociological studies, Anne studied architecture for a short period, and at Sociology, her master's thesis examined the influence of social and cultural dimensions on residential patterns of young urban families. Since then, Anne has followed the interdisciplinary path between spatial and social perspectives with a particular focus on cities and housing. Between 2013 and 2018, Anne was a junior researcher at Department of the Built Environment (Aalborg University) on the EU-framework project Urban Divercities studying diversity in European cities. The project conducted case studies in the Copenhagen neighbourhood of Bispebjerg examining settlement patterns, housing conditions, hyperdiversity, social housing and neighbourhood development. Simultaneously, Anne was a research assistant on other projects examining disadvantaged housing estates, segregation, social effects of physical measures, etc. in collaboration with Realdania and the National Building Foundation. Since 2017, Anne has produced articles on housing conditions for Trap Danmark, a multi-volume encyclopaedia of Danish municipalities. From 2018, Anne has been an Industrial PhD student, dividing her time between the two project partners Department of the Built Environment and the housing foundation Fonden for Billige Boliger. This dissertation is the written result of the PhD project.

ENGLISH SUMMARY

In recent decades, the largest cities in Denmark have seen significant urbanisation, which has caused increasing densification and increasing pressure on the local housing markets. In contrast to the rest of Denmark, where the average available living space has grown, average living space has shrunk in Denmark's two largest cities, Copenhagen and Aarhus. Yet in recent years, an increasing interest has been emerging internationally in deliberate downsizing of physical belongings and ideals of anti-consumption, based on arguments that it is personally liberating, highly sustainable and aesthetically progressive. This has generated an increasing interest from housing professionals, policy makers and the media, debating whether a novel approach to small-sized housing can be a tool for relieving the strain on urban housing markets. However, compressing the size of dwellings entails a risk of impairing housing conditions severely. Complicating matters even further, the general housing standards in Denmark are very high, and weighty ideals and norms about what makes a good home and an appropriate home have developed alongside the rise of the welfare state. Thus, such ideals have their roots firmly planted in cultural and socio-structural soil, and dwelling sizes are a key element in them. Nevertheless, Danish cities currently witness middle-class households choosing to live in much less space than is conventional for households of this type and size; space they could afford by moving out of the city. The dissertation terms this as 'urban compact living'. In this definition, urban compact living thus refers to compactness both inside the dwellings and in the surrounding environment, and it refers not only to the physical, but to the *lived lives* within these compact environments. However, knowledge about the motivations for choosing urban compact living and the ways it is practiced and experienced is lacking.

The purpose of the dissertation is thus to contribute to filling this gap by exploring urban compact living in a Danish context. Not only is this a new phenomenon in housing and settlement patterns internationally; it is also a new research field, which is still emergent. To allow this new field to unfold itself, including the unexpected, the ambiguities and the complexities, the study takes an explorative,

qualitative approach. The dissertation is built up around a case study designed to explore, grasp, comprehend and understand urban compact living. It focusses on narratives, meanings, experience, perceptions and practices. It combines ethnographic methods (qualitative interviews, notes, photo elicitation, home tours, and log keeping) with methods borrowed from architecture and design research (drawing, mapping, diagrams). Methods and analyses are designed to shift perspectives between humans, their practices, and the physical environment; that is, inside the dwellings as well as in the surrounding neighbourhood and beyond. The case study consists of six carefully selected examples of urban Danish compact living. They vary in household size and composition, ages and professions, type of dwelling and type of neighbourhood, and way of organising and decorating the dwelling. Yet all are urban, middle-class households living in very little space compared with standards in Denmark. However, one case of rural compact living is included in the study, because it offers valuable information unattainable in the other cases being a self-built tiny house, fully customised and tailor-made specifically to its occupant's preferences. The theoretical framework of the dissertation is built on the concepts of home and home-making. Studying the motivations behind urban compact living and the ways of practicing and experiencing it entails studying the making of home. The dissertation builds on a large body of literature understanding home as a relational engagement and as a process of practicing, doing or making home. In addition, the framework builds on the concepts of housing choice, perceptions of the city, lifestyle, and spaciousness; all playing key roles in the making of home in urban Danish compact living.

The dissertation finds that urban compact living is not necessarily driven by ideals of anti-consumption, personal freedom or of revolutionising home, although it is still driven by values and attitudes. The lifestyles identified in the case study are profoundly centred on the city, and this is the driver of their housing choice. Their attachment to the city is rooted in emotions, values and attitudes rather than activities or behaviour. It is based on a strong appreciation for the city *as it is,* for the specific, yet intangible, ambience and energy that they ascribe to the city. Moreover, distancing themselves from living in suburbia is a key way for the case study households to connect themselves to living in the city. Suburbia is represented as a dull, reactionary place of social control, self-sufficiency and materialism. The dissertation demonstrates how spaciousness is not solely physical, but perceived, interpreted and experienced by humans within a cultural, personal and socio-structural context. This perspective reveals how the physically compact city can be interpreted as socially spacious, whereas physically spacious suburbia is interpreted as a place of social claustrophobia. Thus, home is about what is desirable *"for someone like them"* (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020: 597), and feelings of fitting in apply on multiple scales. This does not entail that macro-scale

ideals about home are redundant in urban compact living. The case study dwellings are no replicas of the radical minimalistic aesthetisation of small-sized dwellings characteristic of current architecture and design targeted at compact living. The households exhibit acute awareness of conventional ideals of home and of their own deviation from them. Being behind on points regarding domestic spaciousness, they catch up by finding alternative points elsewhere in prevailing ideals, particularly in terms of comfort, functionality and aesthetics. However, this gives rise to challenges and tough compromises in the households' interaction with the materiality of their dwellings, for instance regarding individual privacy.

The high prices and boiling-point housing market in cities like Copenhagen and Aarhus put severe financial restrictions on the housing choices of the urban middle-class. In this study, area-related qualities are prioritised over dwelling-related qualities to an extent that it outweighs the physical domestic compactness. However, the explanation behind is complex: To start with, the households may diverge from macro-scale norms of home, but simultaneously on a smaller scale, they feel belonging and attachment to a lifestyle centred on values of anti-materiality, progressiveness, creativity, and liberatedness. In this, compact living makes sense. Furthermore, architectural tools like flexibility, multifunctionality and light can substantially change the experience of domestic spaciousness. Finally, to the households of the study, home is the *whole* city or the *whole* neighbourhood. Not in the sense that their domestic lives are relocated to urban space, but in a mental sense. This puts the compromises of making home *within the dwelling* into perspective. Their urban dwellings may be compact, but mentally, they largely become a tool for situating life in the place that feels like home.

DANSK RESUME

En stigende urbanisering har præget de største danske byer de senere år og medført kraftigere fortætning og et voksende pres på boligmarkedet. Modsat resten af Danmark, hvor det gennemsnitlige boligareal er vokset, er det faldet i landets to største byer København og Aarhus. Imidlertid har der de senere år været en stigende international interesse for bevidst at skære ned på (eller 'downsize') mængden af fysiske ejendele og for idealer om anti-forbrugerisme ud fra argumenter om personlig frihed, bæredygtighed og æstetik. Dette har genereret en stigende interesse blandt boligaktører, beslutningstagere og medier og skabt debat om, hvorvidt en nytænkende tilgang til små boliger kan bidrage til at mindske presset på boligmarkedet i byerne. Men en komprimering af boligers størrelse indebærer en alvorlig risiko for at forværre boligforholdene for beboerne, og de meget høje boligstandarder i Danmark generelt set gør kun udfordringen større. Tungtvejende idealer og normer om hvad et godt hjem og et ordentligt hjem er har udviklet sig undervejs i opbygningen af den danske velfærdsstat. Disse idealer er således solidt funderet i kulturelle og socio-strukturelle forhold, og boligstørrelser udgør et centralt element i dem. Ikke desto mindre dukker der eksempler op i de danske byer på, at middelklassehusstande vælger at bo på meget mindre plads end normalt for sådanne husstandstyper og –størrelser; plads de kunne få råd til ved at flytte ud af byen. Denne afhandling kalder dette 'urban compact living'. Defineret på denne måde refererer 'urban compact living' både til kompakthed inde i boligerne og i deres omgivelser, og det refererer til det *levede liv* i disse kompakte omgivelser, ikke kun det fysiske miljø. Imidlertid har forskningen endnu ikke undersøgt hvilke motivationer, der ligger til grund for at vælge urban compact living, eller hvordan det opleves og 'gøres'.

Formålet med denne afhandling er at bidrage til at udfylde dette vidensgab ved at udforske urban compact living i en dansk kontekst. Fænomenet er ikke kun nyt i bolig- og bosætningsmønstre, det er også et nyt forskningsfelt, som stadig kun er i sin tilblivelse. For at give plads til dette nye felt i al dets uforudsigelighed,

ambivalens og kompleksitet er tilgangen i denne undersøgelse eksplorativ og kvalitativ. Afhandlingen er bygget op om et casestudie, der skal udforske, indfange, begribe og forstå urban compact living. Casestudiet fokuserer på narrativer, mening, oplevelser, opfattelser og praksisser. Det kombinerer etnografiske metoder (kvalitative interviews, noter, logbøger, fotografering og boligbesøg) med metoder lånt fra arkitektur- og designforskning (tegning, kortlægning, diagrammer). Metoder og analyser er tilrettelagt, så de sikrer en vekselvirkning mellem forskellige synsvinkler: menneskenes, deres praksissers, og det fysiske miljøs. Dette gælder såvel inde i boligerne som i de omgivende kvarterer, byer mv. Casestudiet rummer seks nøje udvalgte eksempler på urban compact living i Danmark. De varierer i forhold til husstandsstørrelse og opbygning, alder, professioner, boligtyper, typer af lokalområde samt brug og indretning af boligerne, men består alle af middelklassehusstande, der bor i byen på meget mindre plads end normalt i Danmark. Dog er et enkelt eksempel på compact living på landet inkluderet i undersøgelsen i form at et selvbygget såkaldt 'tiny house'. Årsagen er, at denne case rummer vigtig viden, der ikke tilbydes af de øvrige cases, fordi boligen er skræddersyet og særligt tilpasset sin beboers personlige præferencer. Afhandlingens teoretiske ramme bygger på begreberne hjem og hjemskabelse. At undersøge motivationerne bag urban compact living samt hvordan det opleves og 'gøres' er at undersøge skabelsen af hjem. Afhandlingen bygger på et solidt fundament af litteratur, der forstår hjem som en relationel forbundethed og som en proces hvori hjem skabes, praktiseres eller 'gøres'. Herudover bygger den teoretiske ramme på begreber som boligvalg og bosætning, oplevelse af byen, livsstil og plads, der alle spiller en vigtig rolle for skabelsen af hjem i urban compact living i Danmark.

Afhandlingen finder, at urban compact living ikke nødvendigvis er motiveret af idealer om antiforbrugerisme, personlig frihed eller revolutionering af ideen om hjem, men dog stadig af værdier og holdninger. I casestudiet afdækkes en livsstil, der er kraftigt centreret omkring byen, og dette er afgørende for de undersøgte familiers bosætning. Deres tilknytning til byen har rødder i følelser, værdier og holdninger, snarere end i aktivitets- og handlemønstre. Den er baseret på en begejstring for byen *som den er*, for den særlige og dog uhåndgribelige stemning og energi, som familierne opfatter, at byen har. Herudover er en afstandtagen til forstaden central for familiernes skabelse af tilknytning til byen. Forstaden opfattes som kedelig, materialistisk, navlebeskuende, reaktionær og præget af social kontrol. I afhandlingen demonstreres det, hvordan plads ikke kun kan forstås som noget fysisk, men også som noget der opleves, fortolkes og opfattes af mennesker i en bestemt kulturel, socio-strukturel og personlig kontekst. Forstået gennem dette perspektiv har den fysisk kompakte by masser af plads – socialt set. Omvendt forstås forstaden som et sted, der har masser af plads rent

fysisk, men socialt set er klaustrofobisk. Det gode hjem handler således om det gode hjem *"for sådan nogle som os"* (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020: 597 [egen oversættelse]), og følelsen af 'at passe ind' gør sig gældende på mange forskellige skalatrin. Dermed ikke sagt, at makro-idealer om hjem er ligegyldige i urban compact living. Boligerne i undersøgelsen er langt fra at være kopier af den radikale og minimalistiske æstetisering af små boliger, som er karakteristisk for nye arkitektoniske og designmæssige tilgange til compact living. Familierne er meget bevidste om gængse idealer for det gode hjem, og om at de selv afviger fra dem. Eftersom de er bagud på point i forhold til plads, prioriterer familierne andre elementer i gængse idealer om hjem, i særdeleshed komfort, funktionalitet og æstetik. Dette skaber dog udfordringer og nødvendiggør vanskelige kompromiser i familiernes interaktion med boligernes materialitet, eksempelvis i hensynet til privathed.

De høje boligpriser og det pressede boligmarked i byer som København og Aarhus skaber omfattende økonomiske begrænsninger for den urbane middelklasses bolig- og bosætningsvalg. Denne afhandling viser, hvordan områderelaterede forhold prioriteres højere end boligrelaterede forhold i en sådan grad, at det decimerer betydningen af mindre fysisk plads i boligen. Forklaringen bag er imidlertid kompleks: For det første gælder det, at nok afviger familierne fra makro-idealer om hjem, men på et mindre skalatrin føler de sig samtidig forbundet til en livsstil funderet i antimaterialisme, progressivitet, kreativitet og frigjorthed. Her giver compact living mening. Herudover gælder det, at arkitektoniske greb (i særdeleshed fleksibilitet, multifunktionalitet og lys) kan forandre oplevelsen af plads i boligen markant. Og endelig gælder det, at familierne i casestudiet opfatter *hele* byen eller *hele* kvarteret som hjem. Ikke i den forstand, at det hjemlige liv flyttes ud i byen, men i mental forstand. Nok er deres boliger kompakte, men mentalt fungerer de overvejende som afsæt for et liv på det sted, der føles som hjemme.

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Finally, big thanks to my family: To my mother-in-law, Ingrid, for helping with the dissertation cover. To my mum, thank you for support, for being a full-time grandmother – and for being a first-grade schoolteacher during a month of pandemic lockdown (without that, this dissertation would not be done by now). To my kids: Sigurd, thanks for trying to teach me every detail about Lego Ninjago (without luck, I'm afraid) and for showing me what sincerity and dedication really looks like. Rosa, thanks for starting a party, for cartwheels in the living room, and for your curiosity. Last, but not least, to my husband Morten, thank you for patience, confidence, humour, new perspectives and a wider perspective, for coffee at seven in the morning and drinks on Friday afternoons, for reminding me of lunch time, for being a father *and* a mother these last weeks – and a housekeeper, a cook, an accountant and a career manager.

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PREFACE

"We're going to extend the house someday, of course", I heard myself say over and over again with an awkward laugh. My family and I had moved to the suburbs. We had followed the most conventional of patterns by exchanging our small 73 square metre flat in Copenhagen with a detached house with its own garden in the spacious, natural and childproof surroundings of the suburbs. However, we had not purchased more living space. Far from it. In fact, our new house was the same size as our flat in the city. On this parameter, we had deviated from the norms. Substantially. In urban areas like Copenhagen, people live in an average of 40 square metres per person; yet we had moved to a suburban municipality, where people live in an average of 50 square metres per person (KL, 2018), and average detached houses are 144 square metres (Finance Denmark, 2016). Even though I did not know these exact numbers at the time, I had a strong sense that we stood out. That people wondered. Some simply laughed at us a little, saying that they could never live on so little space, while others expressed concern about our well-being in the small house. In fact, some of our family were utterly upset on behalf of our two children, claiming that we were depriving them of the right to have their own rooms. Even though my husband and I had no doubts that our new house was the right home for our family, I felt the impact of the norms strongly – strongly enough for me to keep making excuses for our choice by mentioning our house extension plans.

Undertaking the three-year study, of which this dissertation is the written condensation of the results, has demonstrated in more ways than one the surprising strength of conventions and normalised perceptions of 'a proper home' as well as its immensely solid roots in the cultural, historical and social structures of the Danish welfare society. Having to settle for less due to financial limitations is one thing, but voluntarily choosing a small dwelling is quite another - and very much at odds with the norms. While conducting this research project, I experienced this in my own life (the timing was coincidental), and through the lives of the six households agreeing to let me scrutinise each of their versions of compact living. So why attempt to stir up such norms? After all, the changes in

general housing standards in Denmark over the last generations have improved the mental and physical health conditions of the population substantially. Why squander such achievements? I am very well aware that condensing the domestic does not come without challenges. For example, when searching for cases for the study, I got in touch with a woman who wrote that she and her husband had divorced *because* they had lived in a very small dwelling: *"We simply didn't have enough space for our differences"*. Foreseeably, she declined to participate in the study and added: *"I'm sorry for not wishing you good luck with your project"*.

The purpose of this PhD project is in no way naively to celebrate urban compact living. The project was organised as a collaboration between Department of the Built Environment at Aalborg University and the non-profit foundation Fonden for Billige Boliger[1]. This foundation works for the development of affordable housing for middle-income households in the capital region of Copenhagen. This is a challenging task. The housing market in Copenhagen is reaching boiling point. However, the current situation is precisely the reason why innovative forms of housing development are needed, and the innate risk of urban compact living justifying very poor housing conditions at very high prices is precisely the reason why knowledge about urban compact living is needed; knowledge about how it is actually experienced and perceived in the lived lives of real people. My hopes are that this dissertation can contribute to these ends and help us to walk the tightrope between spatial efficiency and high-quality living conditions in our cities (and perhaps elsewhere too).

[1] Foundation for Affordable Housing

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

"I felt like every square metre of extra space became a chasm between us and the good life – and in my view, that was in the city"

Housing is a key component in our perception of the good life – good housing, that is. Looking at prevailing settlement patterns, good housing means spacious housing; preferably a large house in a low-density environment. Yet the above quote is by a woman who exchanged a spacious suburban house with a small second-floor flat in a high-density urban neighbourhood. To her, the good life is in the city, and the spaciousness of their former suburban house became a symbol of the distance to it. She and her family are one example of a middle-class household that chose to squeeze together in a small flat in the city. What is this new kind of housing choice all about? And can we learn something from it? This PhD dissertation calls it 'urban compact living'[2] and sets out to answer precisely such questions.

URBAN COMPACT LIVING – WHY AND HOW?

In recent decades, the largest cities in Denmark have seen significant urbanisation, which has caused increasing densification and increasing pressure on the local housing markets (City of Copenhagen, 2018). In contrast to the rest of Denmark, where the average available living space has grown, average living space has shrunk in Denmark's two largest cities, Copenhagen and Aarhus (KL, 2018). Yet in recent years, a new trend seems to be emerging, especially in highly urbanised areas across the world: In popular media, social media and amongst housing professionals, living on very little space is positively promoted as being personally liberating, highly sustainable and aesthetically progressive (Boeckermann et al., 2019; Klanten & Kurze, 2017; Zeiger, 2016). In this light, advancing small-sized housing may be a valuable tool for relieving the strain on urban housing markets, as it allows for more units on less space, and as it lowers construction costs.

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[2] See section 1.1 for the arguments behind choosing the term compact living as well as a thorough demarcation of the concept.

However, living on very little space is not always good: on the contrary. Asian megacities, for instance, hold extreme examples of very high-density urban environments offering horrendous housing conditions in the form of inhumanly overcrowded flats or so-called *"coffin cubicles"* being sublet as dwelling units (see Lam (2017) for examples from Hong Kong). In Western countries, we need only wind back time one century to observe the physical and mental health issues caused by overcrowding[3] (Kohn, 2008). These issues still prevail in some areas. Furthermore, Western cities are already presenting examples of poor-quality housing at very high prices being promoted for financial gain through fashionable terms like tiny living, micro housing, compact living, etc. (Waite, 2015). Thus, compressing the size of dwellings entails a substantial risk of impairing housing conditions severely. Complicating matters even further, the general living standards in Denmark are very high. This includes housing conditions too. In a wealthy developed society like contemporary Denmark, housing is not simply a matter of having a roof over one's head, it is a matter of *good housing* of high standard, and it is a matter of creating a home. Home reaches far beyond the fulfilment of basic practical functions, and weighty ideals and norms about what makes a 'good home' and a 'proper home' have developed alongside the rise of the welfare state, and such ideals have their roots firmly planted in cultural and socio-structural soil. The expansion of domestic living space has always been a key element in the enhancement of Danish housing standards. Denmark has one of the highest average levels of living space per person in the EU, namely 53 square metres (Eurostat, 2018, figures from 2011), and the City of Copenhagen has a minimum unit space requirement for all new residential developments to increase the below-average levels of living space per person in the city (City of Copenhagen, 2019). Small units are typically associated with vulnerable population groups or with student accommodation or housing for the elderly. In other words, small-sized housing is behind on points from the start in terms of living up to the high living standards of a very developed and wealthy welfare society like contemporary Denmark. Yet as the introductory quote exemplifies, Danish cities are currently witnessing middle-class households choosing to live in much less space than the majority of this population group; space they could afford by moving out of the city. This is what is termed as 'urban compact living' in this study[4].

Urban compact living in this definition is a new and still very narrowly distributed phenomenon in Denmark. Precisely measuring this falls outside the

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[3] Issues, which have recently been put in all new perspectives in light of the Covid-19 pandemic's denunciation of physical density.

[4] Again, see section 1.1 for a thorough definition of the concept. See Chapter 3 regarding the data selection.

purpose of the study[5], but the immense difficulties experienced in the search for cases for the study is strong testimony of this. Despite the small extent of urban compact living (and non-urban compact living) in Denmark, the relevance and importance of studying it comes from the increasing interest in it within the population, amongst housing professionals, city governments and in the media, combined with the lack of substantial knowledge about it. If compact living is to be part of the future urban environment, it must be introduced on a qualified foundation to avoid the development of poor-quality housing units that compromise the living conditions of their occupants and reduce the quality of urban space. The question thus becomes what urban compact living is all about? How can we understand it – both in terms of the motivations behind it and in terms of the concrete experiences and practices? The very limited extent of existing research does not provide answers to such questions (see Chapter 2 for a review). Research dealing with the perspectives of the occupants is limited to *rural* forms of compact living, whereas research on *urban* compact living focusses primarily on concrete materialities and physical conditions. Furthermore, no Danish research has been undertaken, and the influence of this particular cultural and socio-structural context has thus not been studied. Knowledge is lacking about the motivations behind urban compact living: Is it an idealistic project of sustainability and personal freedom? What is the role of the city – why not move to a larger home outside the city? Additionally, knowledge is lacking about how urban compact living is actually experienced and practiced: What are the challenges, the advantages and the surprises? How does compact living affect daily life and the interaction between dwellings and occupants? And finally, does compact living have implications for life in the surrounding urban neighbourhoods? Altogether, the aim of this PhD dissertation is thus to examine the following:

What is the motivation behind choosing compact living in the city, and how is urban compact living practised and experienced?

The purpose of the study is *to understand* this new and emergent phenomenon – to explore, comprehend and grasp it in its complexities and nuances. To achieve this, an in-depth case study of six carefully selected examples of Danish compact living is undertaken, studying the making of home in urban compact living: the motivations behind compact living in the city and the experience of it, as well as

[5] The purpose of the study is to comprehend and understand urban compact living, not to measure it; see research question below.

the interaction between the occupants and the materialities of their dwellings and surrounding neighbourhoods.

Having presented the purpose of the study, the remainder of this introductory chapter firstly provides a definition of the concept of compact living, secondly, it accounts for the context and background of the study, and thirdly, it gives an overview of the structure of the dissertation.

1.1. DEFINING 'COMPACT LIVING'

Given the novelty and the bottom-up character of compact living, a commonly accepted definition of the term or other similar terms in everyday language does not exist. Instead, a myriad of terms have developed side by side: small living, tiny living, tiny houses, compact living, small space living, micro housing, minimal living, downsizing, and even simple living. There is one exception to this: Stand-alone houses, often self-built and often rurally located, are commonly denoted as tiny houses, yet these are not the object of this study[6]. Nor does a solid scholarly definition of the term exist: Studies focussing on regulations and sizes often refer to micro units (e.g. Infranca, 2013), whereas studies focussing on architecture refer to multiple terms like micro units, micro housing, compact living and small living (e.g. Jacobson, 2014). See Chapter 2 for a review of existing research. Consequently, clearly defining compact living and accounting for its suitability for the study is necessary.

The first part of the term, 'compact', has the quality of focussing on condensity as well as on size, in contrast to terms like small, micro or tiny focussing solely on size[7]. Condensity and compactness are key elements in the phenomenon under study: If households that would conventionally live in 100 square metres were to live in 50 square metres, it would entail a condensation of their home, physically *and* socially. Not solely because of the 50-square-metre area in itself, but largely because of its relation to conventional housing patterns of the household type in question. As described above, this study focusses on middle-class households living in less space *than conventionally*. The terms 'minimal' and 'downsizing' do not fit either, as they imply the presence of particular ideals and a particular approach to this condensation of the living environment; yet examining whether this is in fact the case is part of the purpose of this study, and accordingly,

[6] Notwithstanding, one case in the study consists of a rural tiny house. See Chapter 3 for an argumentation for this choice.

[7] Furthermore, the term *tiny living* would have been confusing to apply, as it connotes *tiny houses*: stand-alone rural houses often self-built and often with strong focus on sustainability (Shearer & Burton, 2019).

applying these terms would be a confusion of cause and effect. Furthermore, ‘downsizing’ indicates an act of exchanging a larger dwelling for a smaller one and thus leaves out households that have not previously lived in a large dwelling. An additional reason for choosing the term ‘compact’ is that ‘compact’ can refer to the character of both dwellings and environments, i.e. towns, neighbourhoods or cities. Phrases like tiny, micro or small, by contrast, cannot define such environments. As will be elaborated in the following section, the high density of cities and urban neighbourhoods plays a key part in the norms and ideals of what constitutes a good living environment. Suburban environments are characterised by distance between dwellings, division of functions, and open areas with recreational facilities and gardens. By contrast, the city’s physical condensation (horizontally and vertically) of buildings, streets, traffic, and people is a *compact* contrast to *ideals of spaciousness*. The term compact thus has the quality of being applicable and informative regarding the characteristics of both the dwellings and their surroundings. The second part of the concept, ‘living’, has the quality of a coupling with lingual connotations to ‘home’ or ‘dwelling’, while at the same time drawing attention to the experienced, the practiced, the perceived and the lived. Applying the terms ‘dwelling’ or ‘housing’ instead would entail a solely physical focus, which, as pointed out, is not the errand of this study. Applying the term ‘living’ allows for inclusion of practices and experiences of lived life. For these reasons, the dissertation denotes the concept under study as ‘compact living’. For the sake of clarity, the term ‘compact dwelling’, which is occasionally applied in the dissertation, refers to physical housing or design solutions targeted at compact living, yet whether they will in fact be sites of compact living cannot be determined by the physical alone, because compact living, in this dissertation, denotes a particular relationship between dwelling and humans.

The question still remains as to what constitutes a case of compact living. The definition in this dissertation has two criteria. The first criterion is that dwellings are substantially smaller than conventionally or normally applies for the given circumstances. That is, a comparison with housing standards and patterns in the surrounding society is necessary: I) The relation to standard levels of living space in the particular context is key. Whereas a 40-square-metre flat may be perceived as a small dwelling in a Danish context, even for a single-person household, it will likely be perceived as a relatively large dwelling in other contexts, like in Poland, where the average floor area per person is 26 square metres (Eurostat, 2018). As mentioned, Denmark has the second highest average floor area per person in the EU (ibid.), stressing the importance of the geographical context in demarcating a compact dwelling. II) A key factor is the number of individuals living in a given dwelling. A flat of 60 square metres may be customary for one person, but for a family of four people it is a different story (in a Danish context). III) The type of household living in the given dwelling must be taken into account: youths and

the elderly are two population groups for whom it is much more common to live in a smaller space than for adults of working age (KL, 2018). This underscores the appropriateness of the term compact, as the long-term home of a family demands the containment of more functions than the flat of a student, for example, regardless of the sizes of such dwellings. This also leads to the second criterion.

The second criterion is that the occupying household belongs to what could be termed 'middle-class'. Dividing populations into groups by financial situation, education, employment or other parameters is a highly complex issue academically, as acknowledged by the OECD in a recent report (OECD, 2019), and to some extent politically too. The point of applying the notion of middle-class in this dissertation is not to contribute to either of these agendas, but simply to establish that this study demarcates its field to households that do not belong to either the lowest or the highest income groups in society, that are not in precarious situations on the labour market, and that do not belong to socially vulnerable population groups. The purpose of this criterion is twofold. Firstly, to ensure that compact living has been genuinely chosen by the households and is not just an emergency solution. Housing standards in Denmark are generally high, but some households more or less have to accept the options offered to them. The lowest income groups in the population cannot prioritise between different housing qualities, one of which is dwelling size, as they simply have to accept the options at hand (Özüekren & van Kempen, 2002). Secondly, the purpose is to tap into current debates about the segregational consequences of the high-pressure housing markets in cities. Middle-class households (in the pragmatic definition outlined above) are the kinds of households that have received much attention in recent years as being forced out of the cities, figuratively, by spiralling housing prices (European Commission, 2020). The City of Copenhagen has made it a political goal to ensure housing for *"nurses, teachers and police officers"* as phrased in 2015 by the then mayor (Jensen, 2015)[8]. Accordingly, although middle-class households do have genuine options on the housing market, they cannot pick and choose freely (see Statistics Denmark (2020b) for housing conditions by income groups). In 2019, the income level of an average family in Denmark was approximately DKK 540,000 before tax (Statistics Denmark, 2020e, corr. to 71,500 euros). This would allow the family to purchase an average 120-square-metre house based on standard mortgage approval regulations[9] (Totalkredit, n.d.). Of course, housing prices vary immensely across Denmark, especially between

[8] In addition and no less important, the partner of this PhD project, Fonden for Billige Boliger [Foundation for Affordable Housing] has as its declared purpose to ensure affordable housing for households with middle incomes in the capital region.

[9] Assuming the minimum required deposit only.

Greater Copenhagen and the rest of the country[10]. In fact, an average family income would only allow for a 65-square-metre house within 40 kilometres from central Copenhagen (Finance Denmark, 2020). If the households in this study wanted an average-sized dwelling (112 square metres (Gadeberg, 2020)), they would have to move significantly far away from the city, not just to its inner suburbs. This is worth keeping in mind. It does however not challenge the argument for basing the study on middle-class households. To sum up, compact living refers to the phenomenon of middle-class households living in much less space than is the convention for their household type and household size, and urban compact living refers to cases of compact living within high-density urban environments[11].

1.2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This section will provide an introduction to the background and context of the study. In contemporary Denmark, living conditions are generally high, including the housing standards, which are very high compared to other countries (see e.g. European Commission, 2020). Of course, not all households in Denmark live in the same way, nor do we all have the same housing preferences. However, as this section will demonstrate, unmistakable norms prevail, and these norms affect people's impressions of which ways of living are normal, and which ways of living are good. In a highly developed welfare society like Denmark, housing is thus not only a matter of having a distinct geographical space and a roof over one's head. Housing is matter of high-quality housing. The following section will demonstrate the key role of spaciousness, within the dwellings themselves and in the form of low-density surroundings, in prevailing conventional norms of good housing. It will show how these spaciousness norms have developed over the course of time, closely linked to the development of the welfare society and substantially changing the character of our cities. Furthermore, the section will demonstrate how current examples of middle-class households choosing to live in unconventionally small flats in high-density urban environments are at odds with such prevailing norms, shedding light on the knowledge gap surrounding urban compact living.

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[10] In the area around Denmark's second largest city, Aarhus, housing prices are closer to national averages (Finance Denmark, 2020).

[11] In the academic papers (chapters 6-8), compact living is not defined consistently in the way described here, because the papers are independent texts completed and submitted to journals earlier in the process, and later adjustments were thus not possible to transfer.

GOOD HOUSING AND NORMS OF SPACIOUSNESS

The history of housing in Denmark is closely entwined with the history of the welfare state. Tellingly, a 1933 political agreement known as a cornerstone of the Danish welfare system formulated the country's first law on social housing (Knudsen & Møller, 2008). At the end of the 19th century, the housing standards for the large majority of the population were relatively poor. In cities, for instance, extremely high-density housing along with poor sanitation and indoor-climate caused health issues and disease epidemics (Lützen, 1998). Accordingly, the first steps towards improving the housing conditions of the common population were triggered by health considerations. In the 1850s, the Danish Medical Association instigated the erection of a terraced-house estate outside the dense city of Copenhagen, offering labourer families affordable flats in spacious, green surroundings, and in 1865, labourers formed their own Building Society (Bech-Danielsen & Stender, 2015). Thus, from the start, density was identified as an issue, both inside dwellings, between dwellings and in the urban space. Creating more spaciously generous environments and dwellings units outside cities consequently became a key tool for improving housing conditions for the wider population. For instance, simple detached houses financed by government loans, and state-subsidised rental flats were erected in the 1940s and 1950s in the green peripheries of larger towns and cities (Lind & Møller, 1996). Furthermore, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, construction of rental flats increased in the form of numerous large-scale housing estates with open landscapes and spacious dwelling units (Bech-Danielsen, 2013). Additionally, Danish society had by then reached a level of prosperity that, combined with new cost-effective construction and fabrication methods, allowed for the wider population to purchase their very own detached house on new parcellations (Lind & Møller, 1996). Thus, the suburbs expanded explosively in these decades, and this initiated new perceptions of proper housing standards for the ordinary household, perceptions which have developed steadily and become gradually more demanding since then. A review of products from a standard-house construction firm reveals how the sizes of living rooms, kitchens and children's rooms in particular have increased, how having two bathrooms is now standard, and how extra rooms like offices, guest rooms, teenage lounges or second living rooms have found their way into the modern-day standard house (e.g. HusCompagniet, n.d.). Our perceptions of standard domestic comfort and facilities have changed; amenities like dishwashers or floor heating have become customary, luxury amenities like boiling water taps or digital control systems are becoming increasingly so, and spaciousness has remained a key element in perceptions of good housing. The average size of newly constructed detached houses in Denmark has been steadily increasing for decades, strongly indicating a preference for large dwellings

amongst those who have the choice. Today, the average level of newly built units has reached 210 square metres (Statistics Denmark, 2020a).

Given the pivotal role of spaciousness, both within the dwelling units and in the surrounding environments, the detached suburban single-family house stands as a materialisation of conventional ideals of good housing in Denmark today. This widespread preference for detached, single-family houses has been repeatedly confirmed in 1986, 2001 and 2008 by large-scale national surveys concluding that nearly 80% of the population rated this housing type as their favourite (Kristensen & Andersen, 2009). Additionally, register data of housing patterns show that middle-income and high-income households live in detached housing to a substantially larger extent than low-income households (Møller, 2001[12]). Conversely, small-sized flats in dense urban environments stand as the opposite of such ideals of good living environments.

NEW-FOUND POPULARITY OF CITIES

The old image of the city is that of a dangerous, unhealthy environment with poor living conditions and a socially and economically deprived population. However, this image no longer holds. Copenhagen and Aarhus have become renowned for being green, safe, beautiful cities offering very high living conditions to their very happy populations, and in 2014, Copenhagen was lauded as "*the world's most liveable city*" (Brûlé, 2014). By contrast, research has shown how other Western cities are struggling with a gap between the physical facilities of urban space and the daily life patterns of their inhabitants, particularly families with children (Kerr et al., 2020; Lilius, 2014). In Danish cities, massive investments in the physical urban environments and facilities have been made, and urban life has become popular to the extent that even suburban residential developments are promoted as offering urban features, e.g. claiming *"pulsating urban life"* in a new peripheral residential neighbourhood (Bellakvarter, n.d.). Average income levels in cities are rising significantly, especially in Copenhagen, where the average income increased by 11.5% over the last five years (Pedersen, 2020), and the Danish labour market and several educational institutions are centralising towards the cities. Altogether, these developments have strengthened the economic foundation of the cities (Andersen & Winther, 2010; City of Copenhagen, 2018). Thus, even though the majority of the population still chooses to live in the suburbs, maintaining conventional welfare-state ideals of good living environments, the cities are becoming increasingly popular as a place to live.

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[12] See Statistics Denmark (2020d) on even stronger income divisions between owners and renters.

This urban success story has significant side effects, however. Cities are experiencing sharp increases in their populations (City of Copenhagen, 2018), a tendency that inscribes into a world-wide macro trend of rapidly intensifying urbanisation causing densification and increasing pressure on urban housing markets (European Commission, 2020; McFarlane, 2016). In Danish cities, prices of owner-occupied housing have risen dramatically – most notably, owner-occupied flats in Copenhagen have doubled their price over the last ten years (Finance Denmark, 2020). This puts increasing strain on the sectors offering affordable housing in Danish cities: social housing, private-rental housing and cooperative housing[13]. The latter two are consequently becoming less affordable (Boliga, 2019). This is presumably leading to city dwellers squeezing together in less and less space. In stark contrast to the expansion in available living space in Denmark as a whole, inhabitants of Copenhagen and Aarhus have got less space in recent years. Today, residents of Denmark's two largest cities have an average available living space of 40[14] and 46 square metres respectively (Dansk Byggeri, 2020). Of course, urban residents have lived in higher density environments than non-urban residents for centuries, as demonstrated above, yet the current rising average income levels in cities indicate that today, even middle-class households are living in very little space compared to overall Danish housing standards.

PART OF A TREND?

If conventional ideals of good living environments celebrate domestic spaciousness, why would a middle-class household remain in a small urban dwelling as opposed to relocating to a lower-density area? In light of this, a new trend that has recently entered Danish housing from abroad is highly interesting. In numerous countries such as the US, China, Japan, Australia, the UK and EU countries, new approaches to living in very small dwellings are emerging; approaches that perceive the domestic spatial restrictions as liberating and quality-improving. Phrases like micro housing, tiny living, small living, and compact living too, are used interchangeably, regardless of whether the topic is a set of ideals to live by, a particular type of physical dwelling, an interior style, or a definition similar to that of this study[15]. The purpose here is not to disentangle these different phrases, but to describe the emergent trend. Examples are found

[13] Cooperative housing primarily refers to Copenhagen, where it makes up one-third of the stock (City of Copenhagen, 2020).

[14] In Frederiksberg Municipality, which is also a part of Copenhagen, the average is 47 sq. m. (Dansk Byggeri, 2020).

[15] In contrast to the overall terminological muddle, the freestanding, typically rurally located, house described above has in fact established itself quite undisputedly as a *tiny house* (see Shearer & Burton (2019) for a suggested typology of tiny houses).

in rural environments as well as in highly urbanised areas. Across countries, people are building their own small houses of as little as 15 square metres, primarily in rural settings, while mutually exchanging experiences via numerous online communities, for instance the Facebook group Tiny House Talk, which has gained 250,000 followers (Tiny House Talk, n.d.), or the organisation tinyliving.com, which arranges so-called tiny house festivals (https://tinyliving.com). In cities, inhabitants are constructing smart interior solutions to make better use of their domestic space, for instance by integrating storage into partition walls or building loft platforms above other functions (see example in Figure 1). Arguments are that carefully constructed layouts and custom-made interiors can make life in very small dwellings work well. Idealistic perceptions argue that in doing so, residents can increase their feeling of freedom and happiness by liberating themselves from the strain of storing, managing and maintaining large amounts of possessions (Shearer & Burton, 2019). In this context, the trend expresses a clear sustainability awareness and opposes current macro-level trends of over-consumption (Vannini & Taggart, 2015).

Regardless of sustainability considerations, design ideas inspired by the composition of such compact dwellings (as mentioned in section 1.1., this term is applied when referring to housing or design solutions targeted at compact living) have become a widespread international trend, reaching mainstream media and products. For instance, the best-selling video game, The Sims, now has a *"tiny living expansion pack"* (EA, n.d.) allowing players to decorate and organise a small-sized home, and world-wide interior giant IKEA has developed a specific *"small space"* line (IKEA.com, n.d.). Architects and designers are developing dwelling units, conversion designs and tailor-made interiors for compact dwellings, often presenting radical, almost revolutionary approaches to homes. The heritage from Le Corbusier's iconic modernist *"subsistence dwelling"* (1924), understood as the most basic dwelling acceptable to human subsistence, is evident. Good examples are collected in Klanten & Kurze (2017), Zeiger (2016) or Slavid (2009), but to pinpoint the typical approaches, The All I Own House by PKMN Architectures (Figure 1; Quddus, 2014) presents a highly illustrative example. This design focusses on an optical expansion of space through an open-plan layout and a minimalistic style, and it presents radical solutions to space optimisation by constructing movable, multi-functional and expandable walls containing all domestic functions: a bed, a kitchen, storage, lounging, etc. In doing so, this design is a unified solution, integrating all domestic functions into one single element, which nearly comes across as a piece of furniture, as pointed out by Zeiger (2016). Metropolitan building professionals have detected the trend too. In the Netherlands, for instance, a dozen high-rise complexes of compact dwellings have recently been erected or are under construction (IC Netherlands (https://www.ic-netherlands.com); Change Is (https://www.change-is.com/nl)). These contain

studios of approximately 30 square metres, fully equipped with kitchen and bathroom and are let to young adults of working age in Dutch cities. In New York, the first housing complex of compact dwellings for families or shared living was constructed in 2017, consisting in flats of 45-65 square metres with integrated furniture like wall beds, storage and fold-down desks (https://www.lanesliving.com). And recently, Copenhagen gained its first example of an urban tiny house development in the form of converted containers put up on the old docks (https://cphvillage.com). These are student housing units and accordingly not urban compact living in the definition of this study. However, the example shows how unused urban areas can be a resource for establishing new housing units, although in much lower quantities than multi-storey complexes. Compact dwellings, micro housing, tiny living, small living – regardless of the name, this has become an international trend, both as a line of business and as a new approach to housing and domestic life. To fluctuating degrees, advocates focus on ideals of sustainability, anti-consumption, downsizing, minimalism and personal freedom. Whether such ideals play a role for urban compact living in a Danish context, regarding motivations as well as practice and perceptions, is worth examining.

This account of the context and background of the study has shown how urban compact living in Denmark is set in a context where conventional ideals of home are solidly founded on the high living standards of the welfare society and demanding norms of appropriate housing standards. Spaciousness, in the form of spacious dwellings located in low-density surroundings, is a key feature of this. At the same time, cities, which have traditionally been perceived as the antithesis to a wholesome, spacious living environment, have been transformed into immensely popular hubs of culture, ambience, vitality and, most notably, liveability. Simultaneously, and probably not independently, urban inhabitants are squeezing together in much less space than the 53-square-metre average in the rest of Denmark. Middle-class households that could in fact afford a larger dwelling outside the city are choosing to live on much less space in the dense urban environment. Is Danish urban compact living part of the trend sketched above, or should we understand it in a different way? What is the motivation behind it, and how do households go about their lives in the context of urban compact living? Before exploring this, the following section will overview the structuring of the dissertation.

1.3. STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

This chapter has introduced the purpose of the study and the concept of 'urban compact living', and it has presented the background, the context and the

relevance of examining this particular field. The following section rounds the chapter off with an overview of the structure of the dissertation.

First, Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework of the study. It concisely reviews existing literature about compact living, but since this is relatively limited in extent, the theoretical framework is built up around different literature. The carrying structure of this framework is the concept of home, understood as a process and as relational. The purpose of this chapter is to concisely connect and structure the relevant theoretical elements and hereby build up a meaningful and coherent framework. The chapter does not provide full reviews of home or other concepts, as they are independently dealt with in the papers making use of them (chapters 6-8). Next, Chapter 3 gives an account of the methodology of the study, arguing for an explorative approach focused on grasping and comprehending and arguing for the application of ethnographic case study as a highly qualified and pertinent method. Subsequently, Chapter 4 thoroughly presents each of the six cases studied: the features of the household and the dwelling, perceptions of the local neighbourhood, the housing-choice stories of the households, and the choices and prioritisations in their organisation and usage of the dwelling.

Chapters 5 to 8 make up the analytical part of the dissertation, including its three independently submitted academic papers[16]. The papers are presented in the versions of submission[17]. While papers are often placed at the end of a dissertation, here they are integrated as analytical chapters. This is done to enhance the flow of the overall narrative of the dissertation and to strengthen the connection of the papers to the theoretical framework, the complete case study, and the analytical building blocks in Chapter 5. Chapter 5 presents a collection of initial analytical findings, which are concrete and case-proximate, and which provide key building blocks for the three academic papers. Despite falling outside of the traditional structure of a paper-based dissertation, this chapter is included, because it valuably qualifies the three papers, and because it contains useful knowledge about a field that is still new and emergent. The explorative approach of the study creates a multi-facetted body of knowledge. Yet leaving out knowledge from the dissertation, because it falls outside its main analytical

[16] Winther (2021), Winther & Bech-Danielsen (2020) and Winther (2020). Permission for publication of all three papers has been obtained from the respective publishers. In addition to the three papers, preliminary analyses have been presented in Winther (2019) and Beckman (2018).

[17] Accordingly, changes made to the dissertation after the submission of the papers, for instance stylistic adaptions, adjustments of fixed phrases, or adjustments made in the proof reading process, were not applied to the papers. Details on submission status are presented at the beginning of each paper.

strands would entail missing the key aim of this explorative approach: to grasp and comprehend the new phenomenon of urban compact living.

After remaining inside the dwellings in Chapter 5, the first two independent papers, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 move beyond the dwellings into the larger scales of the surrounding environment. The aim of these papers is to examine the motivations for choosing compact living in the city. Chapter 6 consists of a paper asking why the households under study make the unconventional housing choices of compact living. Building on the conclusion of this chapter that the city is an absolute cornerstone in the lifestyles of the case study households, Chapter 7 subsequently explores which perception of the city this rests upon, and finds one of the city as a figuratively spacious place in contrast to life in suburbia, celebrated by conventional ideals of home. This paper was co-authored with PhD supervisor Claus Bech-Danielsen. Subsequently, the third and final paper in Chapter 8 returns inside the dwellings to examine how urban compact living is practiced and experienced. The paper combines the knowledge of Chapter 5 about concrete domestic practices and experiences with the knowledge of Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 about housing choice and the meaning of the city. It discusses the relevance and impact of conventional ideals of home, and explores the translation of these ideals into concrete practices and perceptions.

Finally, Chapter 9 concludes the dissertation by presenting the main overall findings followed by reflections on the methodology of the study and a discussion of the implications for future research, before finally discussing the implications of the dissertation for compact living in future urban housing.

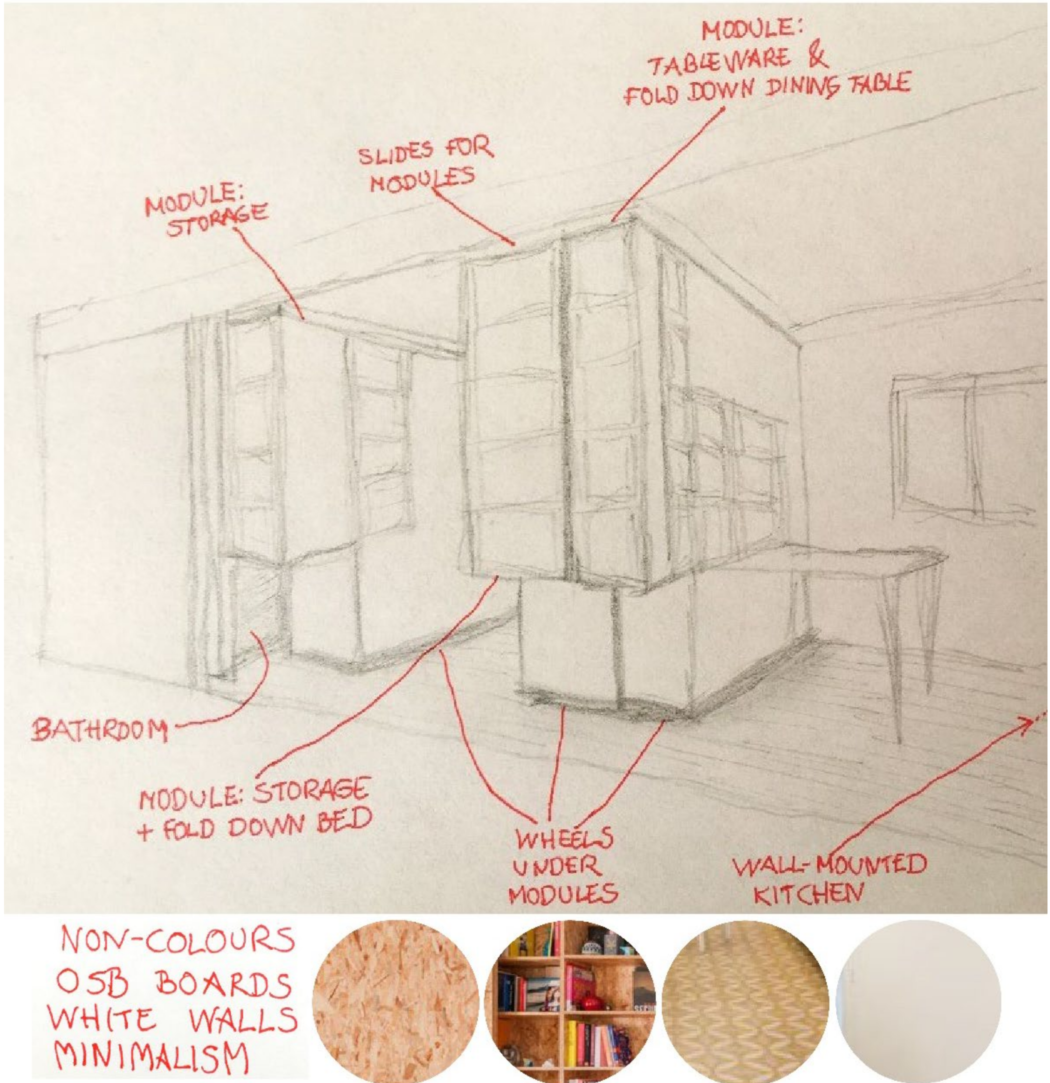

Figure 1. Illustration of typical features of architecture and design targeted at compact living, taking All I Own House, PKMN Architectures, as an example (for photos: Quddus, 2014): Flexibility, multifunctionalism, cubic metres not square metres, minimalism, non-colours, customisation, and all-in-one unit (for more, see sections 1.2, 5.1 and 5.2). Illustration by author.

CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter will first present a review of existing literature on compact living, and second present the theoretical framework on which this study is built. Research on compact living with a focus on lived life is generally lacking, particularly with regards to urban compact living. As an academic field, compact living is new, emergent and accordingly still under development. This results in a rather limited volume of research, as the moderate extent of the review in section 2.1 clearly illustrates. Consequently, the theoretical framework of the dissertation is built up using contributions from other parts of housing research. The carrying structure of the theoretical framework is the concept of home. Home is pivotal for understanding the motivations behind compact living in the context under study, and understanding why it is experienced and practiced in the way it is. While home is commonly understood as a dwelling, this study builds on contemporary home research, arguing for a view of home as a process, as making home, and of home as relational. This chapter will present such an understanding of home. However, as home is an essential concept in all three academic papers of the dissertation (chapters 6-8), independent reviews of the relevant dimensions of the concept will be provided in each of the corresponding chapters. Instead of an extensive review of the concept of home, the purpose of this chapter is to present a coherent overview of its structure with a constant eye on its relevance for urban compact living. This chapter is thus kept concise and to the point. Furthermore, the chapter will link home to other concepts that offer indispensable insights into the field of urban compact living: housing choice, lifestyle, perception of the city, and spaciousness. These too are discussed more elaborately in the analyses making use of them, i.e. through chapters 6-8. Instead of additional aspects or full historical reviews, this chapter focusses on connections and relationships between concepts, on their concrete relevance for the field under study, and on positioning concepts and perspectives relative to one and other within the overall framework.

2.1. EXISTING RESEARCH: COMPACT LIVING AS AN URBAN DEVELOPMENT TOOL OR AS A RURAL REFUGE

Research examining small-sized housing from the perspective of the occupants deals with housing for particular population groups, namely, students (e.g. Hornyánszky, 2012) or vulnerable population groups such as the socio-

economically marginalised (Barratt & Green, 2017) or the homeless (Lancione, 2019). This literature has investigated the meaning and significance of a 'home' and finds that temporality of housing situations plays a key role in modifying dwelling requirements and generating larger acceptance of less space, for example. However, these population groups fall outside this dissertation's demarcation of 'compact living' (see section 1.1) and accordingly, this literature is of limited relevance to the study. The influence of temporality on housing requirements exemplifies the highly different situations of middle-class households and the population groups studied by this literature.

Existing research that *does* study compact living as defined in this dissertation falls into two branches. Both are of limited volume, although more is probably under way, as studies are currently being undertaken. For instance, an anthology on "*shrinking domesticities*" (Harris et al., forthcoming) is underway. The paper making up Chapter 8 of this dissertation will be included in this anthology. The first branch of research primarily deals with the *physical* housing units, often termed micro units, micro housing or micro apartments. It examines the possibility of using this housing type as a contributory answer to new demands on urban housing markets. It discusses the legal and regulatory implications for urban planning and housing unit requirements and takes financial market implications into account. For instance, Infranca (2013) analyses juridical obstacles to developing micro units (his term) in American cities, arguing that current legislation has not kept pace with demographic changes, namely, larger shares of small households, and an increasing lack of affordable housing. Withers (2014) argues for an increased prioritisation of micro housing (her term) when planning for new urban areas, based on arguments that urban sprawl has severe negative environmental consequences. In this argument, she taps into a comprehensive literature on urban densification, which falls outside the scope of this dissertation with its urban planning perspective and its focus on larger-scale dynamics (see e.g. McFarlane, 2016). Withers does, however, point to the clash between micro housing and dominant norms of necessary amounts of space in comfortable homes, arguing for more progressive approaches in urban planning and legislation. While highlighting critical struggles between innovation, on one hand, and established norms and regulations, on the other, these contributions remain on larger scales than the single housing unit, and they focus on market dynamics, regulatory developments, etc. Contrary to this study, they do not explore the motivations behind urban compact living or life as it is concretely and subjectively experienced. Therefore, this literature is of limited relevance to the present study.

The second branch of research deals with rural forms of compact living, namely tiny house living (rural, stand-alone houses). Despite the large differences between tiny houses and urban compact living regarding both housing type and

the surrounding environment, this branch of research offers insights into the life led and the motivations behind one compact way of living, which may be of relevance to another. Here, research agrees that compact living is largely an idealistic project, both on a societal and an individual level: The arguments behind choosing compact living are, on the one hand, ideals of sustainability, resource conservation and moderation of consumption, and on the other hand, ideals of freedom from ownership and responsibility of physical possessions (Shearer & Burton, 2019). Additionally, the idea of financial autonomy, i.e. autonomy from housing market conditions and high housing prices, is an argument (Boeckermann et al., 2019). Linked with the desire for material freedom, this makes ideals of personal freedom and a simpler life pivotal, and according to Boeckermann et al. (2019), these motivational factors have a key impact on the satisfaction of tiny house dwellers with their housing situation. As put by Shearer and Burton (2019: 315), tiny house living has *"some degree of anti-establishmentarian"* characteristics and requires of its residents a readiness to battle regulations and financing limitations and enter on a rocky road of trial and error, as pointed out by Anson (2014). Besides identifying motivations behind this form of compact living as well as touching upon the challenges of breaking new ground, this literature offers another relevant takeaway: It demonstrates that creating a dwelling adapted and customised to the occupant's own ideals does not necessarily require an abundance of space (Boeckermann et al., 2019; Shearer & Burton, 2019). This finding questions the prevailing celebration of domestic spaciousness in society. Tiny house research attending to such dimensions often employs the concept of home to shed light on its emotional and social dimensions and its complex relations to physical and geographical structures (Anson, 2014). Picking up this thread, the remainder of the chapter will establish the theoretical framework of this dissertation built up around the concepts of home and making home.

2.2. A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING URBAN COMPACT LIVING

As the volume of existing, and relevant, research on urban compact living is rather limited, the theoretical framework of the dissertation is built up by contributions from other parts of housing research. The following section will present this framework and its relevance for the study.

HOME AS RELATIONAL AND HOME AS A PROCESS – *MAKING, DOING, PRACTICING, HOMING*

As indicated in the Introduction (Chapter 1), housing in a developed society like Denmark cannot be reduced to simply a place to sleep, store possessions or shelter

from the weather. Especially to middle-class households dealt with in this study, basic functions of housing are not at stake. So how can we understand the housing choice of the case study families? And how can we grasp their actual lived experiences of urban compact living? For this purpose, the concept of home is introduced. Despite, or perhaps because of, the immense familiarity of the concept in everyday life and common language, research has long favoured a perspective on home as a dwelling, although recent research has broadened and nuanced the concept of home substantially. See for instance the recent special issue of Current Sociology (2020)[18] or a comparative anthology on home (Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2013b). This literature illustrates that, although home has strong associations to physical dwellings, home is not determined by this (Kim & Smets, 2020). One only needs to think of how home can be associated with larger places than a dwelling, for instance a neighbourhood, a town or even a country. Literature on migrants and home has demonstrated how the country of origin can continue to be perceived as home even after a lifetime of living far away (Boccagni & Broghanti, 2017). Everyday phrases like 'making oneself at home' or 'feeling at home' further indicate that home can be associated with rituals or aided by objects, for instance in places like hotel rooms (W. Winther, 2013). The reason for this is that home is not a simple, static physical object like a dwelling or a geographical location. Home is about *"the complex social relationships that exist between individuals or groups and certain built environments, social settings and material cultures to which people attach unique meanings and functions"* (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020: 596). Thus, homes are relational. They touch upon significant and highly important relationships[19]. Yet these relationships are, as Boccagni & Kusenbach (2020: 597) write, *"never self-evident or self-produced"*, but require sustained work. Not in the sense of conscious and laborious actions, but in the sense that home is not static, but practiced and re-practiced continuously (Pink et al., 2017; Pink, 2012). People are making home or doing home or simply homing. Think again of the phrase 'making oneself at home'. And while making home is not restricted to a dwelling, a dwelling would not be a home without these practices (Pink, 2012).

[18] This journal issue was published after finishing the paper contained in Chapter 8, and literature originating here is accordingly not included in the paper.

[19] Yet while the idea of home is generally attached to positive feelings of security, control, stability, privacy, sociability and comfort, these are not always fully achieved in the making of home. Home can invoke feelings of fear, discomfort, danger and instability, as highlighted for instance by research on homelessness (Lancione, 2019) or refugees (Boccagni & Broghanti, 2020).

Figure 2. A case study household in their flat (Case #2).

CULTURAL AND SOCIO-STRUCTURAL CONTEXTS OF MAKING HOME – STATUS, BELONGING AND MULTISCALARITY

Making home is thus a process or a practice; undertaken in interaction with the physical, be that an object or a dwelling, a neighbourhood or something else. Accordingly, the physical is not merely a backdrop of human life, but an active part of it. Making homes in spatially restricted dwellings, like in this study, sets a very distinct context for this interaction. Do the spatial restrictions of compact living create harder collisions between the physical environment and humans? How does the physical environment act back on human actions? Chapters 5 and 8 analyse the concrete interactions taking place in the compact dwellings of this study, and examine, for instance, how the organisation and decoration of the dwellings and the everyday life practices in and around them are shaped by the condensity of the physical environment. These chapters tap into the general discussion about the active role of the physical environment that has wavered across the social sciences in recent decades, and which is outlined in Chapter 8. However, in interacting with the physical environment through practices, humans act in subjective ways (Pink, 2012). As Norman (2013) argues, though materialities have their own characteristics or affordances, humans interpret these affordances and do so in their own subjective ways, shaped by their personal and socio-structural resources and conditions. Norman applies the term 'perceived affordances' to capture this. Ways of practicing home are thus shaped by the people undertaking these practices as well as by the physical environment in which the practices are situated. This entails that "*(…) the material form of home is dependent on what home is imagined to be, and imaginaries of home are influenced by the physical forms of dwellings*" (Blunt & Dowling, 2006: 22). Home-making is surrounded by normative imaginaries and embedded in cultural and socio-structural ideas about what 'a good home' is (Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2013a). Home as a dwelling thus becomes a strong indicator of social status, as found by Warren & Williams (2013), for instance, studying feelings of homeliness amongst older people in assisted living, or by Paulsen (2013), demonstrating the sharp socio-structural and cultural hierarchisation of housing types in communication by house construction firms. Yet, as demonstrated in the Introduction, Danish urban compact living deviates from prevailing conventional ideals about the good home. Chapters 5 and 8 examine the role of such conventional ideals and status hierarchies for the home-making processes of the case study households, building on literature of home and imaginaries of home as culturally and socio-structurally contextual, including Boccagni & Kusenbach (2020), Kusenbach & Paulsen (2013a) and Blunt & Dowling (2006).

Cultural and socio-structural norms about the making of home apply on larger scales, as in Sobh & Belk's (2011) account of gendered norms of domestication in

Arab Gulf homes or Meagher's (2017) account of Japanese cultural norms of thresholds of domestic privacy. In both cases, these domestic norms diverge substantially from those typical of Western homes. Yet norms also apply on smaller scales, for instance within social or cultural groups. The account of Kerr et al. (2020) of apartment-living young families demonstrates their acute awareness of being at odds with prevailing norms for proper family homes, and Bech-Danielsen & Gram-Hanssen's (2004) mapping of cultural norms amongst affluent suburbanites demonstrates clear differences in norms of domestic aesthetics amongst residents of 1920s housing and 1970s housing respectively. Human practices of home-making are thus loaded with norms about what a good and appropriate home for *someone like them* is (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020), encompassing both the type of dwelling, its location and its organisation and decoration (Reimer & Leslie, 2004). Through the making of home, individuals or households can signal identity and feelings of belonging. As Savage (2011) argues, by ascribing to something, we distance ourselves from something else. Practices and materialities related to home can act *"as symbols of connection and detachment"*, as Pechurina (2020: 669) phrases it. Through processes of making home, individuals can thus express, narrate and define themselves *in relation to* others. Accordingly, multiple ideals and norms of the home may exist in parallel. The four analytical chapters all examine the socio-structural and cultural embeddings of the urban-compact-living households in the study. Chapter 5 maps expressions of taste and identity in the organisation and decoration of the homes, whereas Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 study spatially materialised practices of connection and detachment, and Chapter 8 examines the influence of the multiscalarity of norms of home.

HOUSING CHOICE AND THE DISCUSSION OF LIFESTYLE

Following this line of thinking, scholars studying the making of home by families with children living in dense urban environments[20] argue for the relevance of the concept of lifestyle, for instance Frank & Weck (2018) or Karsten (2010: 83), holding that housing can be *"a way of life"*. However, housing research disagrees as to the importance of lifestyle for housing choice. Over the years, literature has demonstrated how housing choice is about the prioritisation between different parameters, including features like dwelling size, layout, amenities, plot and location, and weighing these wishes against the opportunities available within the existing context made up of market conditions, settlement patterns, housing stock and financial and social resources (van Gent et al., 2019; Özüekren & van Kempen, 2002). According to much literature on housing choice, households make their

[20] Referring to dense urban neighbourhoods, not dense environments inside the dwellings.

priorities primarily on the basis of their financial capabilities and the demographic profile of the household. Scholars like Jansen (2014) or Heijs et al. (2011) have argued that economic and demographic parameters suffice in explicating overall trends of residential settlement patterns. However, middle-class households like those in this study have a financial and demographic profile that suggests other housing choices than urban compact living. For instance, families with children are generally found to relocate to detached single-family houses, if their financial situation allows (Jansen, 2014). Current Danish settlement patterns support this (Kristensen & Andersen, 2009). Urban compact living households thus deviate from these macro patterns. Some branches of research have recently argued that an increasing diversification of households and their situation is developing, and that this calls for a diversification of parameters considered in housing choice research (see Nijënstein et al., 2015, or van Gent et al., 2019, for quantitative studies and Karsten, 2010, for a qualitative study). Within housing choice research, lifestyle is operationalised in multiple ways. The most prevailing understandings are either in the form of behaviour and activity patterns or in the form of values and attitudes (Jansen, 2014). Chapter 6 taps into this discussion of the relationship between lifestyle and housing choice through the context of the case study.

THE URBAN ALLURE AND THE JUXTAPOSITIONING OF CITY AND SUBURBIA

While lifestyle may be key for understanding the choice of compact living in the city, the city in itself is a focal point in urban compact living, and its role in the home-making processes of the case study households must be examined further. Existing research has demonstrated that the idea of the city is central in narratives of urban residents. Similar to Karsten (2010), Nielsen & Winther (2019) demonstrate how city dwellers in Copenhagen justify their choice of residential location by referring to city life and a particular urban environment. The centrality of the character of the urban environment to such narratives suggests that this character may in itself be key to the choice to live in the city. Within home research, several studies have demonstrated how the location can be the main priority or focus of residents and accordingly how the dwelling, as Ewart and Luck (2013: 41) hold, becomes *"a point of departure, as much as a destination"*. The value of home lies in its location, not in the dwelling unit itself. In literature, concepts like Böhme's (2017) atmosphere have often been applied to capture the distinctive, yet highly intangible and puzzling, allure and ambience associated with urban space. While offering worthy qualities, such concepts rarely offer an understanding of the relationality of such atmospheres, or put otherwise, an understanding of the differences and similarities between individuals or groups in their experiences of the character of an urban environment. Literature on home suggests an understanding hereof by arguing for home as a culturally and socio-structurally contextual relationship between humans and some particular portion

of the physical environment (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020). Along a similar line, the notion of 'sense of place' (Massey, 1994) perceives places as networks of emotional ties between humans and particular parts of the physical environment. Such contributions highlight both the subjectivity and the contextuality in experiences of places like the city or a neighbourhood.

Home is thus about attachment and connection, but as pointed out earlier in this chapter, this entails that home is also about detachment and differentiating (Pechurina, 2020). Detachment from something – or somewhere – can be a way of attaching oneself to somewhere else (Savage, 2011). In support of this relational perspective, research has demonstrated how living in the city has persistently been positioned as contrasting to living in suburbia, and how two opposite versions of this narrative exist in parallel (Mechlenborg, 2012; McFarlane, 2016): In one version, the city is represented as vibrant and progressive, and suburbia is represented as dull and reactional. In the other version, the city is represented as dangerous and frenzied, whereas suburbia is represented as safe and comfortable (Nielsen & Winther, 2019; Mechlenborg, 2012). Despite new theoretical concepts depicting a gradual merging of city and suburbia (e.g. Graham & Marvin, 2001), research examining lived life in the city has found that city dwellers are acutely aware of reverse narratives of city and suburbia, and that these take up central roles in the characterisation of the city voiced by urban inhabitants (Nielsen & Winther, 2019; Lilius, 2014).

These perspectives are elaborated in the analytical chapters: Chapters 5 and 6 discuss home as *a point of departure* by examining the spatiality of home-making practices in the case study. Chapters 6 and 7 tap into the discussion of the contextuality of human emotional relations to a given physical environment and of the way these relations influence perceptions of that environment. In this light, Chapter 6 discusses home as connection and detachment, and Chapter 7 elaborates the role of reverse city-suburbia narratives for perceptions of the city.

FINDING AN UNDERSTANDING OF SPACIOUSNESS

One last concept must be highlighted for the purpose of this dissertation: that of spaciousness. Spaciousness is not an established theoretical concept within literature on home; accordingly, this section draws up an understanding of the notion that is fruitful for exploring and comprehending urban compact living. Spaciousness in this regard is related to living environments, either domestic (inside dwellings) or in neighbourhoods or larger areas. Spaciousness is different from geographical or social-sciences notions of space and place. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.), spaciousness means *"the quality of being large and having a lot of space"*. Yet, while the first part of this definition refers to size or

volume, the latter can refer to multiple spheres, not only physical or geographical. For instance, can a dwelling or a neighbourhood have a lot of space without being physically large? Can a physically small space *feel* spacious? Or conversely, can a physically large space *feel* cramped? In a study applying simulation preference testing, Stamps (2010) argues that objective perceptions of the spaciousness of different physical spaces can be identified by comparing floor areas, ceiling heights, dimensions of openings, wall colours, etc. Fisher-Gewirtzmann (2017) has demonstrated the importance of open spaces in micro-apartment units for enhancing feelings of "*low perceived density*". These studies contribute to, first, a three-dimensional understanding of spaciousness including length, width *and* height, second, an understanding of the impact of shape, light and materials, and third, through the two former, an understanding of the importance of human perception and experience. Nevertheless, these studies view domestic spaciousness as a solely physical phenomenon, and Stamps (2010) reduces the spatial experience to mere observation from one single point, as opposed to a bodily dynamic and mobile appropriation of space, i.e. through moving through space (Bek, 2010).

Understanding the perception and experience of spaciousness as solely dependent on the physical morphology entails disregarding the social and cultural dimensions of perceiving spaces. Acknowledging this does not belittle the severe negative consequences of domestic overcrowding for both mental and physical health conditions documented by a large body of literature (e.g. Morgan & Cruickshank (2014) examining space shortage in UK housing or Gallent et al. (2010) comparing space standards between Italy and the UK). As demonstrated throughout this chapter, however, rooms, buildings, neighbourhoods or other spaces must be understood as continuously produced and experienced in the interaction between the physical environment, human practices and humans themselves with all they bring with them personally, culturally and socio-structurally (Pink, 2012, among others). For instance, Bille (2015) has demonstrated the comprehensive cultural dependency of perceptions of domestic lighting, and Morgan & Cruickshank's (2014) study of domestic overcrowding demonstrates the importance of social and personal dimensions for the experience of overcrowding, such as household size and demographic composition, internal family relations and the social resources of households. Furthermore, Kerr et al. (2020) show the social, emotional and temporal variations in perceptions of density and crowdedness in urban space. Thus, spaciousness is not merely physical, but also emotional and social and not merely observed, but also experienced and perceived through the complexities of lived life. Relating spaciousness to places of residence further enhances the significance of a wider understanding of spaciousness, as it becomes one of several dimensions of imagining and making home. As demonstrated, home-making is embedded in

socio-structural contexts entailing, even for middle-class households in a developed society, that home-making is a matter of degree, not of full achievement (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020; Boccagni & Boghenti, 2017). This is not to disregard that spaciousness might be of importance for urban compact living in the context of contemporary Denmark, but rather it is to argue, first, for perceiving spaciousness broadly, reaching beyond physical and spatial spaciousness, and second, for perceiving it as one of multiple dimensions in making home. Examining spaciousness in this perspective will be undertaken throughout the analytical chapters (5-8), encompassing both concrete physical spaciousness and intangible perceptions of social spaciousness within the dwelling units and the in residential environments.

UNDERSTANDING URBAN COMPACT LIVING AS MAKING HOME

This section has clarified how home-making is a multidimensional and dynamic concept. Home is relational: it deals with the highly distinct relational engagements between humans and the built environment, social settings or material cultures (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020). Home touches upon multiple dimensions including the physical and the practical, but also the personal, the social, the structural and the cultural (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). Home is both attachment and belonging as well as detachment and distancing (Pechurina, 2020). Home is a process rather than a state of things; home is practiced or made continuously (Pink et al., 2017). While home is not restricted to a geographical place like the dwelling or its surrounding area, a dwelling or a neighbourhood would not be home without the practices of making home. This dissertation argues that urban compact living in the context studied here is about much more than square metres or flats versus houses, it is about *making home*. Grasping and comprehending this relational process is the aim of the study.

Having completed this presentation of the theoretical framework of the study, the dissertation moves on to a presentation of its methodology and subsequently the empirical cases.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The point of departure of this study's methodology consists of two parts: The first is how urban compact living is neither a solely physical nor solely social (human) phenomenon. Rather, it is continuously in the making in the interaction between the physical and the social. The second part is how of the approach of the study is explorative, and the purpose is to capture, comprehend and understand urban compact living. This chapter will establish the study's methodology by taking this point of departure, accounting initially for each of the two sides, subsequently demarcating the empirical field in the third section, and presenting the concrete methods applied in the fourth section, before rounding off with a presentation of the analytical approach of the study in the fifth section.

3.1. A DELIBERATE COCKTAIL OF THE SOCIAL AND THE PHYSICAL

The overarching framework of the study clearly demonstrates why urban compact living is neither a solely physical nor a solely social or human phenomenon. Human beings and the social, cultural and structural environments, in which we live, contain physical, material and spatial elements. These act upon each other and shape each other (Pink, 2012). In fact, to some extent, it can be argued that creating a division between the human or social and the physical is artificial and pointless, as suggested by actor network theory (Yaneva, 2009; Latour, 2005). Whether this is too radical is an ongoing dispute, yet it points to the fact that understanding something social or human cannot be done while disregarding the physical elements interacting with it. Following this line of thinking when aiming to understand compact living – a phenomenon in which the social/human and the physical/non-human are so intricately entangled – makes clear the importance of including the physical environment and the application of methods, which can capture this. Accordingly, combining architectural and social science methods has been a core element in the research design. Conducted judiciously, these continuous shifts in perspectives have the potential of strengthening the analytical reflexivity and shedding light on new angles of the field (Højring, 2018). While the most basic footing of the study is the ethnographic case study and fieldwork, it combines this approach with architectural or design research, operationalised in visual or spatial methods like photographing, mapping, drawing etc. Section 3.4 will elaborate the methods. Yet

the errand of this research design is not to build up two separate spheres of data. Rather, it is to establish communication between them. For one, classical ethnographic data such as interviews or logs contain bundles of spatial and visual information, if one looks for it. Conversely, valuable information about the human and the social is contained in classical architectural data, like drawings or maps. Thus, perceived from traditional disciplinary stances, this study takes an experimental approach, yet different versions of combining architectural and social-science methods in research are increasingly emerging, as in architectural anthropology, for example (Stender et al., in press).

3.2. EXAMPLE KNOWLEDGE – EPISTEMOLOGICAL APPROACH

The second part of the offset for this study's methodology is how it takes an explorative approach aimed at capturing, comprehending and understanding urban compact living. This requires knowledge that is attentive to context, details, coherence, complexity and ambiguities. The purpose is to gain knowledge about the character and the workings of compact living – and these demand an approach, which allows the unexpected to depict itself, rather than simply for a measurement of the predefined. Accordingly, the empirical process is designed to produce a body of knowledge that gains its quality from its depth rather than its breadth.

The study is built up around an ethnographic case study. Whether based on one single case or on a hundred cases, a case study is an immensely fruitful and sensible methodological approach for a purpose like the present one. As demonstrated by Flyvbjerg (2015) or Thomas (2010 and 2011), a widespread perception about the social sciences, and thus a comprehensive challenge to be met by social scientists, is that their purpose is to produce evidential knowledge which can be applied universally to predict actions of the social world. However, contrary to the research objects of natural sciences, those of social sciences will always contain "*radical contingency*" creating a "*systematic unpredictability*" (Thomas, 2010: 578). In other words, the only predictable feature of human actions is that human actions are never fully predictable nor fully replicable. Similarly, Flyvbjerg (2015) argues that compliance with universal rules is rare, if not non-existent, in the social world. Thus, all situations of the social world are unique and particular. This includes, as Pink (2012) argues, the interaction between humans and the physical environment around them. Consequently, perceiving situations of the social world as particular, and accepting their context-dependency, their ambiguity and paradoxicality, as well as their complexity and thickness of detail is paramount for capturing and understanding them, instead of trying to squeeze them into predefined perceptive categories to make it possible to measure and compare isolated features. This is not to say that quantitative methods are useless

within the social sciences, but simply that they are not the way forward when the aim is to explore, grasp and make sense, as it is in this study.

But if all situations of the social world (again: within their physical contexts) are unique and particular, why should we then bother to examine them? What can one situation teach us, if it is qualitatively different from everything else? Of course, a resigning answer could be to state that, given the inherent contingency of the social world, no other form of knowledge is producible. Yet another approach could be to recognise the potential in the example or the case for identifying patterns and connections that recur in other situations. The unique is not a detached satellite, it relates to the rest of the social world. Thomas (2010) discusses this by quoting legendary novelist Milan Kundera on the limitations of interpreting from something that only happens once:

> *The history of the Czechs will not be repeated insofar as the particulars are concerned. This is not to say, though, that patterns and connections do not exist between the history of the Czechs and that of others. […] It is the specifics in which Kundera – and the social scientist – are interested, and these specifics are understandable only in terms of their particulars. (Thomas 2010: 575)*

These particulars are only accessible via the meticulous in-depth study of the case, and with attention to internal coherence and chronology, to ambiguities, deviances and complexity. In the end, this project asks a question, which is both open and concrete: What is the motivation behind urban compact living, and how is it practised and experienced? On the one hand, this is an open question aiming to explore, to understand something new and *to learn*. At the same time, the question begs a concrete, detailed answer based on the subjective, the contextual, the experienced, and the perceived. For this dual end, the qualitative, ethnographic case study is applied.

3.3. ESTABLISHING THE FIELD

The next step is to establish the field in which the case study is to be conducted. However, the empirical field of this study is not constituted in the classical ethnographic way, as described by e.g. Hastrup (2010), in that the field is not a defined community of which its members are aware. By contrast, the households in the different cases do not know about each other or each other's living conditions; nor were they necessarily aware of fitting this study's definition of 'urban compact living' before being introduced to the study. Thus, the field is constructed *for* the study; and in a sense, the empirical data is thus based, not on a singular field, but on fields in plural – one for each selected case. This is not a weakness, as the approach of the case study is precisely to see each single case as

an internal whole in its own right (Flyvbjerg, 2015; Thomas, 2010). In addition, connections, links and differences between the cases as well as between cases and the surrounding society can be identified by undertaking a thorough analysis of the material (see paragraph on analytical approach below). Interestingly, however, urban compact living may very well come to constitute a coherent field in the future, as the rapidly growing public attention to compact living makes it is worth considering whether a lot more self-awareness amongst compact living households as well as more social awareness about other households is developing. The field may in fact currently be under formation.

The cases selected for the study will be presented thoroughly in the next chapter, but a factual overview is presented in Figure 3. Each case consists of a dwelling, its occupants and the life led in and in relation to it – that is, the life led by the household inside the dwelling and in the surrounding area. Thus, the empirical case is not restricted to the physical environment, but also includes the social or the human as well as practices. As accounted for in Chapter 2, home is created, continuously, within this interaction between people, practices and the physical environment (Pink et al., 2017; Pink, 2012). Nor is the empirical case geographically limited to the actual dwelling unit, but also includes the neighbourhood it is located in to capture perceptions and experiences of the surrounding city and to examine the role of these in choosing urban compact living. The lives led inside and around the dwelling respectively are of course different from each other, but they both matter in an understanding of home. Home is not necessarily restricted to the dwelling, but relates to a portion of the physical environment to which unique meanings are attached (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020). In some cases, the dwellings can be simply departure points for appropriating the neighbourhood, the city or other places, as Ewart & Luck (2013) argues.

As established in section 1.1, compact living in the context of this study is defined as middle-class households living on much less space than conventionally for the household type and household size in question. Operationalising this definition into a concrete demarcation of which cases constitute compact living, this entailed the following criteria: First, that the households are middle-class. As pointed out in section 1.1, the definition of middle-class is to be pragmatically understood, since the purposes of this criterion are 1) to ensure that compact living is not an emergency solution caused by severe financial precariousness, and 2) to capture the kinds of households debated in current discussions about economic segregation in cities. For the case study, an individual estimation of the households was made to ensure that they fit this purpose. All adult individuals

are in employment[21] and have stable professional and educational trajectories behind them, while none of them have either very high or very low incomes. Figure 3 and the case descriptions in the next chapter depict the professional situations of all adult study participants. Some are self-employed and have run their businesses for several years; some are employed in the public sector and some in the private sector. Their exact incomes have not been registered, as the important point is simply that the households can be described as middle-class. One study participant needs an extra comment, however. Majbrit of Case #4 is in seasonal employment, but being a gardener, this is standard practice in her profession, and she is in stable employment with the same business every season. The second criterion for defining cases as compact living is that the households live in much less space than conventionally for a given type and size of household. As established in section 1.1, this entails a relational assessment based on specific contextual factors, namely the sizes of the dwellings as well as the relationship between dwelling size and household size compared with current housing norms in the surrounding society. Living in small-sized dwellings is much more common for certain specific population groups like students and the elderly. Accordingly, these are not included in the study. As pointed out above, Denmark has the second highest average for floor space per person in the EU, namely 53 square metres (Eurostat, 2018), yet in the largest cities, averages remain around 40 square metres per person (KL, 2018). The average dwelling size in Denmark is 112 square metres, yet the average size of flats is only 79 square metres (Gadeberg, 2020). Living in much less space than conventionally thus entails areas substantially below the averages shown here. Accordingly, in the cases selected for the study, household members have a floor area of maximum 29 square metres available, and the largest dwelling in the study is 65 square metres[22] (Gadeberg, 2020). Figure 3 depicts the household type, the dwelling sizes and the available living space per person for each of the selected cases. Thus, as an example of the unconventionality in the housing situations of the selected cases, the mother and two daughters in Case #3 each have 17.7 square metres available to them, whereas the average floor area in Danish single-parent households is 40 square metres per person (KL, 2018). Likewise, 82% of adult Danish couples without children live in detached housing (Kristensen & Andersen, 2009), and the average floor area per person amongst couples without children is 60 square metres (KL, 2018). By

[21] With one exception: Johanne in Case #2. However, this person is highly educated, she obtained employment shortly after the data collection, and she is married to a person in stable employment. Thus, this household still meets the criterion.

[22] This flat is occupied by four people, and thus, the argument still holds that this household has substantially less space than conventionally within a Danish context.

comparison, the 50 year-old couple of Case #6 live in a flat in the city and have 24.5 square metres each.

While compact living exists in rural forms too, this study focusses on urban compact living. Accordingly, the cases are located in highly urbanised areas in Denmark's two largest cities, Copenhagen and Aarhus. In Copenhagen, the urbanised area is larger and more densely populated, housing prices are higher, and pressure on the housing market is more intense than in Aarhus. Accordingly, there is an overweight of Copenhagen cases in the sample (although representativity is not intended, see below). One case, however, is an exception to the focus on urban forms of compact living, as it is set in a rurally located tiny house (Case #4). This case is included in the study, because it offers unique information difficult to find in urban compact living. In Denmark, urban compact living is generally situated in existing conventional flats, as applies to the rest of the selected cases. In such situations, the existing physical structures will restrict the occupants' attempts to adapt their dwellings to their own preferences and imaginaries of home. As the dissertation will show, this can have quite extensive implications (cases #1, #2 and #5 are especially illustrative examples hereof, see case descriptions in Chapter 4 and analyses in chapters 5 and 8). Tiny houses, on the other hand, are often designed and constructed by the occupants themselves (Anson, 2014). Accordingly, they become direct materialisations of the ideals, preferences and dreams of their occupants regarding 'home' and regarding compact living. Of course, they are subject to constructional, financial and regulatory restrictions, but as existing research on rural compact living shows (see Chapter 2), and as this study's tiny house case will confirm (see case description in Chapter 4), the degree of customisation is very high and the feeling of self-determination and independence is essential. Thus, to explore compact living within such less restricted settings, and hereby qualify the data collected in the settings of existing physical structures, this case is included in the study.

Identifying cases that meet the established criteria of urban compact living has been highly challenging. Compact living is still a new and not very widespread phenomenon in Denmark, making the empirical field very small. Consequently, the recruitment process has consisted of an arduous combing of the field. Complicating the task further, urban compact living households do not form an established social community, as mentioned above, and consequently, a snowballing method has proven utterly ineffective. Instead, cases were sought via a variety of channels, from public press material over social media to professional or private networks. Locating suitable cases was difficult amongst one population group in particular: middle-aged adults without children living at home. Amongst middle-class households in this demographic group, the majority are settled in rather spacious homes (finances play a part in comparison to younger

age groups). Obtaining the households' acceptance to participate in the study, once they were contacted was, by contrast, remarkably easy. They seemed to perceive majority housing trends as focused on rigid assumptions about good housing and accordingly they saw this research project as an opportunity to have their say. This did not entail that they uncritically praised compact living, as the dissertation will demonstrate.

In total, six cases were chosen. This number was not set from the beginning, instead, the aim was to create a collection of carefully selected cases containing as much variance as possible in terms of household size and composition, age of household members, type of dwelling, type of neighbourhood, and way of organising and decorating the dwelling. For instance, the study includes Agnes, a woman living by herself in a 1960s high-rise at the edge of the city, organising her home with focus on airiness and openness. It also includes Case #1, a family of two adults and two teenage daughters living in an early-20th century flat in a central, high-density neighbourhood, having divided their home into several smaller rooms packed with furniture and trinkets. Again, the table in Figure 3 provides an overview of the cases. The recruitment process was not made easier by setting up this aim for variety in the data material of course, but it was key in avoiding a highly biased sample. In particular, one type of case was recurrent in the field; namely, families with children living in older flats in high-density areas, especially younger families with small children. In the study, Case #2 represents this type. It is crucial to clarify, however, that the data sample is not to be perceived as either representative or exhaustive of the general landscape of urban compact living in Denmark. The case study method neither can nor should attempt to state any such things. Rather, it takes each case as an example in its own right, to be understood and interpreted as a whole within a specific context and experience (Thomas, 2010). Consequently, the cases are systematically and comprehensively described in depth and in detail, case by case, in Chapter 4.

3.4. METHODS

In this section, the concrete methods for collecting data in the six selected cases are presented. Data was collected between August 2018 and December 2019. All adult household members participated in the data production process. Children only participated to a minor degree, especially the younger ones, given the nature of the study (hour-long conversations about abstract themes). The oldest children took part in the photographing and mapping tasks and partially in the interviews.

	Household type	Professions	Neighbourhood	Housing type	Dwell-ing size	Floor area per person	Lived in dwelling
Case #1	Family. Couple with two teenagers.	Communication + didactic development, both in private sector	High-density central urban neighbourhood	Flat in old building block	65 sq.m.	16.3 sq.m.	12 years
Case #2	Family. Couple with two small children.	Urban planner + scientist (biology), both in public sector	High-density urban-fringe neighbourhood	Flat in old building block	56 sq.m.	14.0 sq.m.	11 years
Case #3	Family. Single mother with two teenagers.	Self-employed fashion designer	High-density central urban neighbourhood	Flat in old building block	53 sq.m.	17.7 sq.m.	4 years
Case #4	Single-person. Adult female.	Gardener, seasonal employment in private business	Countryside	Tiny house on wheels	28 sq.m.	28 sq.m.	2 years
Case #5	Single-person. Adult female.	Public-sector officer (academic)	Lower-density urban-fringe neighbourhood	Flat in mid-century high-rise	29 sq.m.	29 sq.m.	3 years
Case #6	Couple. Adult couple with no children.	Owners of a small theatre (trained actors)	Lower-density urban-fringe neighbourhood	Flat in 1930s' building block	49 sq.m.	24.5 sq.m.	25 years

Figure 3. Overview table of the six selected cases

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE CASE STUDY HOUSEHOLDS

The data collection on each case commenced with the case study households performing three tasks on their own. The first was a photographing task consisting of taking photos of the following: things they were fond of in their dwelling; things they were not fond of in their dwelling; things they made use of in their neighbourhood; and things they wished were different in their neighbourhood. Each resident took three photographs of each type, and these were subsequently discussed in the interview sessions for explanations, elaborations, etc. The purpose of these photographs was, first, to capture the visual, non-verbal elements of urban compact living. This illustrates the value of architecture and design methods, particularly in environments like dwellings and neighbourhoods, which to a large extent are visual. Photographs are thus ways of capturing small elements of these environments. Second, the purpose was to capture the positive and negative elements *as perceived by* the study participants, regarding their living environment. Third, and in connection to the first and second, the purpose was triangulation, that is, to apply multiple methods to help avoid perspectives being overlooked. Being both visual and performed-in-real-time, photographs differ substantially from methods like interviews, which are verbal and performed-in-retrospect. Finally, the photographs were to function as stimuli for the interviews, as visual and spatial data contains valuable information about the social and the human. One example from the case study is how a photograph by one of the teenage daughters in Case #1 depicting her least favourite part of the dwelling surprised her mother at the subsequent interview. *"I didn't know that bothered her so much"*, the mother said. The approach is inspired by Barratt & Green (2017), who found photo elicitation to be a way of accessing otherwise intangible elements of home-making of people in vulnerable conditions, by Madsen (2017), who used photographs to draw attention to processes conventionally perceived as generic parts of everyday life, and by Marling (2008), who used photographs as ways for city dwellers to better show their perceptions of urban space. All photographs taken by the case study households that are included in the dissertation will be marked as such.

LOG KEEPING

The second task conducted by the households before the interview was to keep a log of all activities in the dwelling within a period of seven full days (see Figure 4). The residents received a printed template (with a table cell for each day of the week) on which they were to write these activities down, including which persons were involved, when the activities took place, and where. The study participants were instructed to include small as well as larger activities in the logs, routine activities as well. Furthermore, they were instructed to be detailed and precise.

The purpose of collecting this data was twofold: First, to obtain information about what the residents do, rather than what they say they do. As put by Boccagni & Kusenbach (2020), what people actually *do* in the making of home is no less important than what they *mean* by home. Asking the households to keep a detailed log day by day was thus an attempt to reach beyond the reflections and narratives of the residents. As clearly established earlier in this dissertation, both humans, practices and the physical environment are key in studying daily life and the making of home (Pink, 2012). If the households were simply *asked* what they usually do on a regular day in their home, their answers would have been filtered by memory, intellect, language, etc. This is not to say that such narratives are irrelevant; in fact it can be argued that spoken practices like interviews, talks, conversations, are actions too – social, performative actions (Atkinson & Coffey, 2001). Understood in this way, focusing on interviews alone would mean focusing on only one type of practice and leaving out non-verbalised ones (Madsen, 2017).

The second purpose for including the log keeping was to shift the perspective from the human, i.e. the study participants, onto the material, i.e. the dwellings, and the interaction between dwellings and occupants. One could imagine the log as the dwelling's own diary, i.e. what the dwelling would see, if it had eyes (Jensen, 2012). Along the lines of following the actor, as proposed by actor network theory (Latour, 1988), the log is a way of following the dwelling, not the people in it. This is not to disregard the agency of the study participants, but simply a way of situating their practices of making home and shedding light on the ways in which the material affects these practices (Pink et al., 2017). In the ideal world (in terms of the fieldwork), the ethnographer would have taken on the role of the dwelling and been its eyes, so to speak, producing the log through participant observation in the dwelling. However, homes are the most private of places, and conducting fieldwork in domestic space can be difficult, both in terms of gaining access hereto, in terms of ethical considerations, and in terms of validity, as it is unlikely that the study participants will not alter their practices in the home due to the presence of a stranger (Pink, 2012). In the context of compact living in particular, the idea of the researcher resembling a fly on the wall is unrealistic, to say the least. Another approach, namely that of temporarily borrowing one of the case dwellings to experience urban compact living in this way, would also miss the point of capturing the making of home. As Pink et al. (2017) suggest, home-making activates and connects past, present and future, it is

not a detached momentary downstroke in a physical place[23]. Thus, instead of participant observation, methods like log keeping, visual ethnographies (like photographing) and home tours (see below) constitute meaningful and fruitful attempts to *"reconstruct home experiences from within"* (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020: 601).

The logs particularly contributed to the analyses by challenging verbal narratives or pre-fieldwork assumptions. For instance, the logs challenged assumptions that making unconventional housing choices was an indication that the households led unconventional lives within their homes, for instance that they relocated practices like eating, lounging or studying outside of the dwellings, or that practices were not spatially structured into conventional rooms like kitchen, bedrooms, etc. Illustrative hereof, the study participants generally found the content of the logs dull and generic; see excerpt in Figure 4.

MAPPING OF MOVEMENTS IN THE AREA

Following the lines of the log keeping, the third task for the residents was to register their activities and movements in the neighbourhood surrounding the dwelling. Here too, the purpose was to capture what the households do rather than what they say they do, yet in this task, focus was on their actions in the surrounding neighbourhood. While the logs mapped movements *inside* the dwellings, this task mapped movements *outside* the dwelling. Through the course of four whole days, each household member drew his/her movements in the area on a printed map, adding time and purpose of the activities. If they stopped somewhere, the purpose of stopping was to be noted too. The residents were asked to choose two weekdays and two days-off to capture the variance between these. It is however acknowledged, that the method does not capture variances over time and variances according to other circumstances, e.g. summer compared with winter, today compared with five years ago, etc. To accommodate this, care has been taken in the analysis process to treat the maps as snapshots of daily life rather than life-long accounts, and the drawn maps were all discussed with the study participants in terms of such possible variations and unusualness. Research has shown how the delimitations of a given neighbourhood, that is, how it is experienced, are highly subjective (Nielsen & Winther, 2019). Consequently, the

[23] As presented in the Preface, I had my own personal experience of compact living simultaneously with conducting this fieldwork. However, this was not set within an urban context, and it was a temporary solution from the start. Furthermore, introducing an auto-ethnographic perspective would entail a substantially different research design.

residents' usage and perceptions of areas outside the predefined neighbourhood (i.e. the area included on the printed maps) were discussed as well.

As with the log keeping, the purpose of the mapping task was to reach beyond residents' reflections and narratives and instead obtain information about what they actually did in their neighbourhood (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020). Thus, the aim of the neighbourhood mappings was to capture the urban neighbourhoods *as perceived by* and *experienced by* the study participants, i.e. getting a feel of the lived subjective neighbourhoods. Figure 5 depicts two examples of such maps, showing how the activities of Case #5 are primarily located outside the neighbourhood (in other parts of the city), whereas the activities of a teenage girl of Case #3 are rooted in the close surroundings of the dwelling. Discussing these maps with the respective study participants, and combining this information with other sources has shown the substantially different feelings of attachment towards the neighbourhood between the two study participants. Inspiration was found in Marling's (2008) so-called "*urban songlines*", with which she links urban geography to a sociological and anthropological framework of everyday practices. Mapped patterns of movements are linked with emotional and social narratives to create spatialisations of the city as it is perceived and experienced subjectively. Along these lines, the case descriptions in Chapter 4 each include a visualisation of the case study households' relationship to their neighbourhoods. Rather than all visualisations following the same legend, the particular context of each case was allowed to guide the design of these visualisations, resulting in widely differing visual outcomes. The purpose was for these visualisations to support the narrative of each of the case descriptions in intuitively meaningful ways. Furthermore, they had a methodical purpose, in that the process of designing and constructing them is analytical and interpretative (Marling, 2008). Accordingly, they were adjusted as the analyses of the study progressed.

INTERVIEWS

The fourth part of the fieldwork was an interview with the households conducted in their dwellings and combined with a home tour (see below) and a discussion of the tasks undertaken beforehand (photographing, log keeping, mapping). The purpose of the interviews was to study the meanings, perceptions, attitudes, emotions, narratives, senses and reflections of the study participants on their daily lives *in* the home, *around* the home and *in relation to* the home. Narratives and storytelling are key elements in making home – talking about home is also part of practicing home (Pink, 2012), and as Atkinson & Coffey (2001) point out, analytically (and methodically) distinguishing indispensably between the verbal and the bodily or the physical does not warrant reliability. Instead, the goal of this research design is to establish communication between all methods employed.

Rather than following a precise questionnaire with pre-formulated questions and categorised answers, interviews were semi-structured following a guide organised in themes and in a format resembling conversation (Hastrup, 2010). Thus, the interview guide was simply organised in themes: housing choice, housing trajectory, daily organisation and use of the dwelling, use of its surroundings, perceptions of the dwelling and of the surroundings, social life and family life, privacy, lifestyle and taste, perceptions of other types of housing and other approaches to compact living. These should not be understood as direct questions posed, but as themes that were covered in the interviews. Some themes were approached indirectly, like lifestyle. For instance, talking to Case #1 about their experiences with living in a provincial town, and why they moved back to Copenhagen revealed their preferences for a certain kind of neighbour culture and its role in them feeling like outsiders in one place and at home in another. Such approaches are possible in qualitative research designs as opposed to quantitative designs (raising the question of the suitability of e.g. surveys in the study of topics like lifestyle (e.g. Jansen, 2012)). Besides the themes, a certain number of pre-defined interest points were added to the interview guide beforehand, simply to avoid missing them during the interview, for instance "*how would you feel about moving out?*". Throughout the interviews, any further questions arising were allowed for. To obtain the detailed, descriptive type of data aimed for, focus was on asking very concrete, rather than abstract, questions like "*what was the last thing you changed in your home?*". During the data collection process, experience from the preceding interviews was allowed to inform the following ones, for instance by restructuring the interview guide, by including new topics or angles or by discussing findings from previous interviews in later ones. For instance, residents in the first interviews expressed a certain dislike towards standard-house residential areas, and consequently, the following interviews also examined whether this aversion could be identified there as well (see Chapter 7 for more on this).

A discussion of the previously performed tasks (log keeping, mapping and photographing) was integrated into the interviews, where it seemed to fit the flow of the interview. In this way, they functioned as stimuli, as in the above-mentioned example of the teenage daughter's photograph in Case #1. Additionally, other photographs were used as stimuli to feed and qualify the interviews (like e.g. Bech-Danielsen & Gram-Hanssen, 2004). For instance, photos of different design solutions targeted at compact living stimulated fruitful discussions about fancy eye-catching designs versus solutions that work in practice (see e.g. Case #4's opinions about loft beds in compact dwellings) and about minimalistic designs that, according to the case study households, lacked homeliness, cosiness and personality. Such discussions contributed to shedding

light on matters such as taste and lifestyle, the meaning of home, everyday life and practices.

The interviews (including the home tours and a discussion of the tasks) lasted approximately 2-3 hours each. All interviews were recorded on tape and subsequently transcribed into text.

HOME TOURS

As described above, a tour of the dwellings was included in each of the interviews. The homes were systematically gone through element-by-element (which of course was not that comprehensive, given the small sizes of the dwellings). Everything was marked on printed dwelling plans, and the sound was recorded in the same way as in the interviews. The purpose of the home tours was, first, like the methods described earlier, to triangulate the data and allow new perspectives to surface. Second, the home tours functioned as opportunities to make field observations, as Madsen (2017) highlights. Third, since conversation went on during the home tours, they became extensions of the interviews; extensions in which the insistent presence of the physical environment stimulated new aspects in the interviews. Finally, the home tours provided information for the production of drawings depicting the use of dwellings on a descriptive level (e.g. regular floor plans or cross-sections) and at an analytical level, i.e. where does social life take place, how does the dwelling change during the course of day, which areas are wasted space, etc. See more on the use of drawings in the following section.

Additionally, the dwellings were photographed during the home tours. As with the other visual data, these photographs have functioned both as communication tools for the dissertation and as tools for the analytical process.

Together, the collection of methods accounted for in this section was applied to create a coherent, detailed and rich set of data for the case study. The last section of this chapter describes the approach to analysing this data.

3.5. ANALYTICAL APPROACH

As with the organisation of the data collection process, the analytical process was both explorative and context-sensitive. A deductive approach aiming to objectively test a hypothesis is not the way forward for a study aiming to understand and explore. Accordingly, the analytical approach was to combine findings appearing in the data (surprising or expected) with theoretical concepts and existing knowledge. Inspired by Thomas (2010) advocating an abductive

approach and by the hermeneutical approach advocated by Gadamer (2013), the analytical process developed as an ongoing interplay between empirical knowledge, theoretical knowledge and what could be termed phronesis, in the definition of Thomas (2010): the tacit knowledge or skills of the researcher. Inherent in such an approach is also the ongoing shifting between and comparison of small particular details with crosscutting themes and findings or theories and knowledge reaching beyond the present study.

In terms of coding of verbal data (i.e. transcriptions of the interviews, including the discussion of tasks and the home tours), this entailed a combination of predefined categories, typically covering factual topics and traditional housing research topics (e.g. housing paths), and ad-hoc coding, so to say, allowing the data to speak: Through thoroughly reviewing the data, categories (or codes) were created on the basis of the patterns arising in the data, i.e. determined by what was meaningful given the content of the data material. The codes were treated dynamically, meaning that they have regularly been restructured, renamed, merged, divided and so on. All verbal data was coded using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo.

Another tool for analysis was drawings – and drawing. Information about the physical layout and organisation of the dwellings was used to produce two types of drawings: a plan of each dwelling and an elevation of a selected cross-section. Subsequently, notes about functions of rooms and furniture, the location of different items, etc. were added. These are depicted in the case descriptions in Chapter 4. Such drawings are of course a valuable way of communicating findings from the different cases in the dissertation. However, the drawing process in itself has functioned as a valuable analytical tool. As Højring states, carefully and meticulously drawing each of the homes under study allows the researcher to "*work their way into things, get them under your skin*" (Højring 2018: 132). Besides this, drawing allows you to concretely look at the physical dwellings from different angles and perhaps get a view of something new. Accordingly, the aim of producing these drawings has not been to produce technically correct architectural drawings. Exactly the opportunity of 'getting a view of something new' is a key motivation for choosing to combine ethnographic fieldwork methods with methods borrowed from architecture and design research, as established earlier in this chapter. Finally, the drawings were used as canvasses for another way of analysis, namely spatialisation of findings, themes, puzzling inconsistencies, etc. through diagrammatic drawings. For instance, the changing locations of social life and private spheres within the dwellings over the course of the day are spatialised by depicting them with coloured clouds on the dwelling plan (see Chapter 5); and the topic of in-between space or wasted space in the

dwellings is depicted spatially by muting furnished space (see Chapter 5)[24]. This too is a way of exploring the data further, more in-depth and studying it from new perspectives.

This chapter has presented the methodology of the study. It has argued for an explorative, reflexive and qualitative approach based on the premise that urban compact living must be grasped and understood in the interaction between the physical environment, the people inhabiting it, and the practices of these people. Accordingly, the chapter has argued for the application of an ethnographic case study and demarcated the empirical field of this; it has presented a multi-faceted selection of methods for collecting the data, and it has outlined an approach for analysing the data in a fruitful way to explore compact living in an urban Danish context.

[24] An inspiring take on such analytical spatialisation can be found in the collages of Laura Højring (Bech-Danielsen & Højring, in press).

Lørdag. Hvad har fundet sted i boligen i løbet af i dag?

8 sept
spise morgenmad sm, (█)
pakke til Hundested (█
hygge m. venner, popcorn mv. (█) + overnattende gæster

Søndag. Hvad har fundet sted i boligen i løbet af i dag? tøj hænger til tørre

9. sept
spille guitar (█)
lave aftensmad
udpakke indkøb
█ ser DR serie i tv.
læse bog (█)
se ting på computer + skype (█)
~~rydde~~ støvsuge + rydde op efter weekenden

Figure 4. Top: Example excerpt of logging of activities taking place within the dwelling, Case #1: Breakfast, packing for a weekend trip, film night with popcorn, playing guitar, cooking dinner, unpacking groceries, watching TV series, reading a book, watching series on the laptop, vacuuming, tidying up after the weekend. Names removed. Above: Example of photo elicitation. Here, Tanja of Case #6 has photographed nearby churchyard as a favourite feature of the area, because she finds it a scenic, peaceful place for strolling.

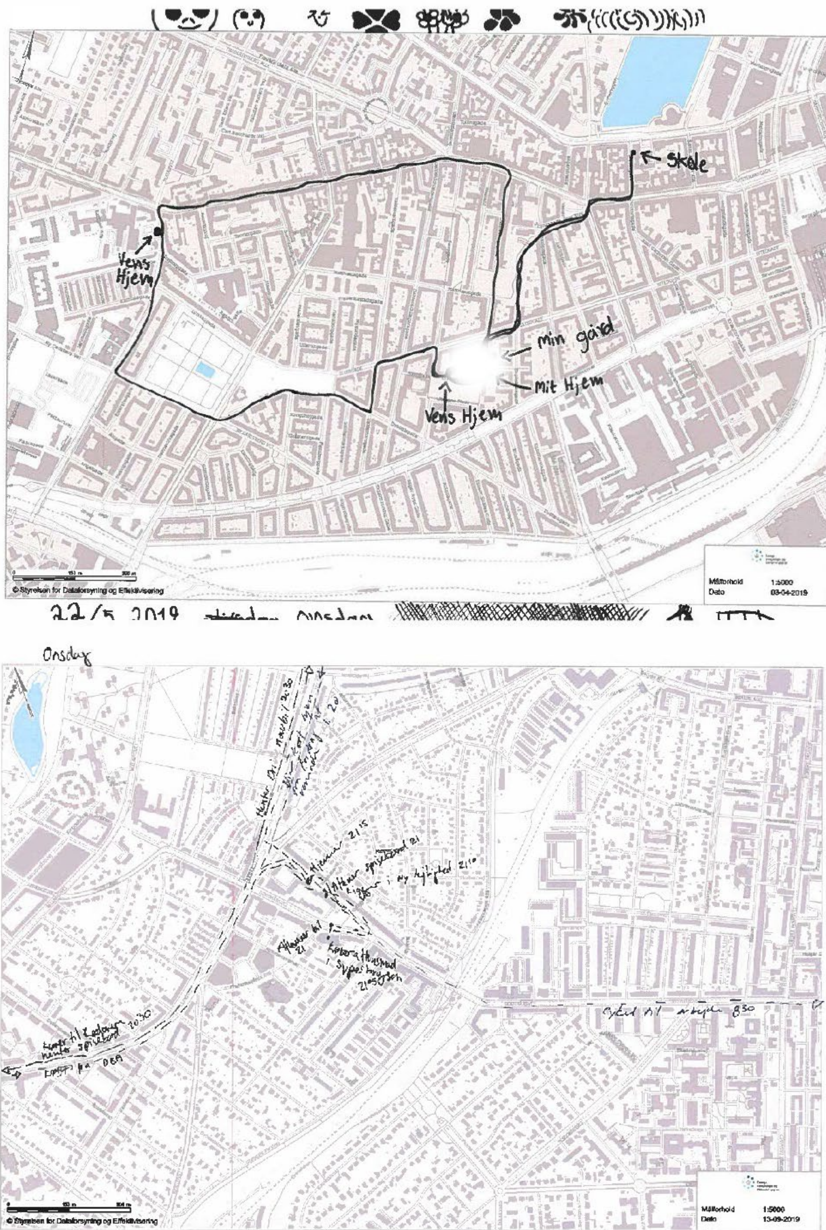

Figure 5. Examples of mapping of routes and activities in the neighbourhood. Top: Nicely decorated map of teenage daughter Barbara (Case #3). Her social network, school and leisure activities are situated within the neighbourhood. Precise housing location blurred. Above: Agnes (Case #5) locates her daily life outside the neighbourhood. This map shows that she was away from early morning until nine o'clock in the evening and only ran two short errands at the supermarket and to collect a table she bought.

CHAPTER 4. THE CASES

The cornerstone of the analyses of this dissertation is the empirical case study. To sufficiently fill out this role, the case study is comprehensive in depth and level of detail, and each of the selected cases constitutes a coherent story of connections, ambiguities and complexity. Capturing the coherence and depth of each case is necessary to comprehend that particular case of urban compact living, but also to grasp similarities and differences between the cases and hereby identify links, chasms and transverse findings. In brief, providing thorough, meticulous, detailed and in-depth descriptions of each of the selected cases is necessary to activate the information contained in the empirical data for the analysis of this study. The following chapter provides six such case descriptions. Each case description contains, first, a factual description of the household and of the dwelling; second, a detailed plan and cross-section visualising the dwelling, its organisation and its topology; third, a description of the relationship of the household to the neighbourhood they live in, including a visual illustration of this relationship; fourth, an account of the process of housing choice behind the current housing situation; and fifth, an account of the concrete organisation and usage of the dwelling, focussing particularly on the choices and prioritisations made by this particular household.

The household members are all presented under pseudonyms for reasons of discretion. However, anonymity is impossible to uphold in this study, as photographs, layouts and approximate whereabouts of the dwellings are published along with age and occupational facts about the household members. All participants in the study were informed about this beforehand, and they all consented by signing a document accounting for the above as well as for the intended publication channels of the project results and the purpose of the project. Case #4 is an exception to this, as it represents a housing unit located in violation with local municipal regulations. Due to fear of eviction, its occupant required anonymity in order to participate in the study. Accordingly, no details about the location of her housing unit are given.

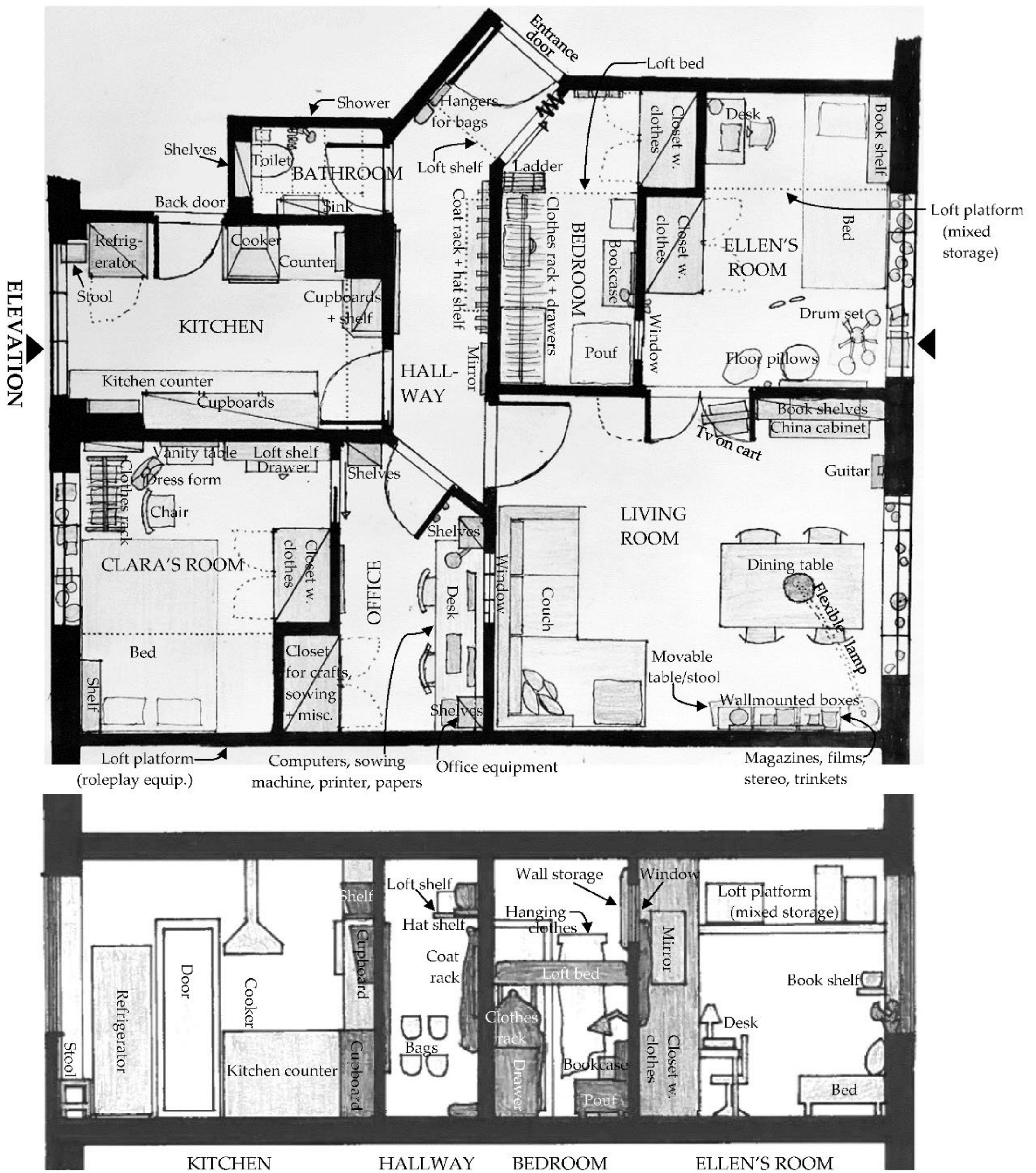

Figure 6. Plan and cross-section of dwelling in Case #1. Illustration by author.

4.1. CASE 1

Household: Mette, 43, communications consultant in a small Copenhagen company. Anders, 43, produces educational material for the medical sector. Clara, 18, in secondary education. Ellen, 14, in school. The family also owns a weekend cottage in a village about one hour from the city.

Dwelling: Cooperative housing flat covering 65 square metres (thus 16.3 square metres per person). Typical building block from early 1900s. Previously, the flat had two rooms facing the street and one facing the courtyard on the back, a small entryway accessing a tiny bathroom and a kitchen. Since then, the family has altered the layout to allow for separate rooms for the daughters, as they grew older. Consequently, the room facing the courtyard is now divided into a bedroom and a walk-through office with a window to the living room. The living room has been left unchanged, and the last room facing the street is divided into a bedroom accessed through the living room and a parents' bedroom accessed from the entryway and consisting in a bedloft mounted above a wardrobe area. A small window between the two rooms has been added to allow for daylight and airing of the bedroom. Bathroom and kitchen are unchanged.

LIVING IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

The flat is located in Vesterbro, one of Copenhagen's inner neighbourhoods. It was constructed in the decades around 1900, and the vast majority of buildings in today's Vesterbro are from that time. Thus, the neighbourhood consists in a dense network of narrow streets lined with neo-classical building blocks of around five stories forming a square around a residents' courtyard. In some streets, the ground floors house businesses, primarily retail or service businesses. After being a poor working- and underclass neighbourhood for a century, comprehensive urban renewal work was undertaken in Vesterbro during the 1990s. This caused housing prices across the neighbourhood to rise, the population composition to change (economically and socially), and the physical density to lower. Subsequently, the businesses and facilities in the area changed too. This development has only accelerated since then. While elements of the old neighbourhood are still present today and without doubt visible in urban space, the changes of the past thirty years have generated significant gentrification in the area, as Vesterbro today has some of Copenhagen's highest housing prices. More than a third of the flats are cooperative housing, and while these may be slightly more affordable than owner-occupied flats, competition for acquiring them is exceedingly fierce. Vesterbro is a very active neighbourhood; partly due to its dense physical environment, partly due to its busy traffic of bikes, pedestrians, cars and buses, and to an extensive business life in the streets, including

everything from tiny craft and design boutiques to adult shops, and from cutting-edge restaurants to smoke-filled dive bars.

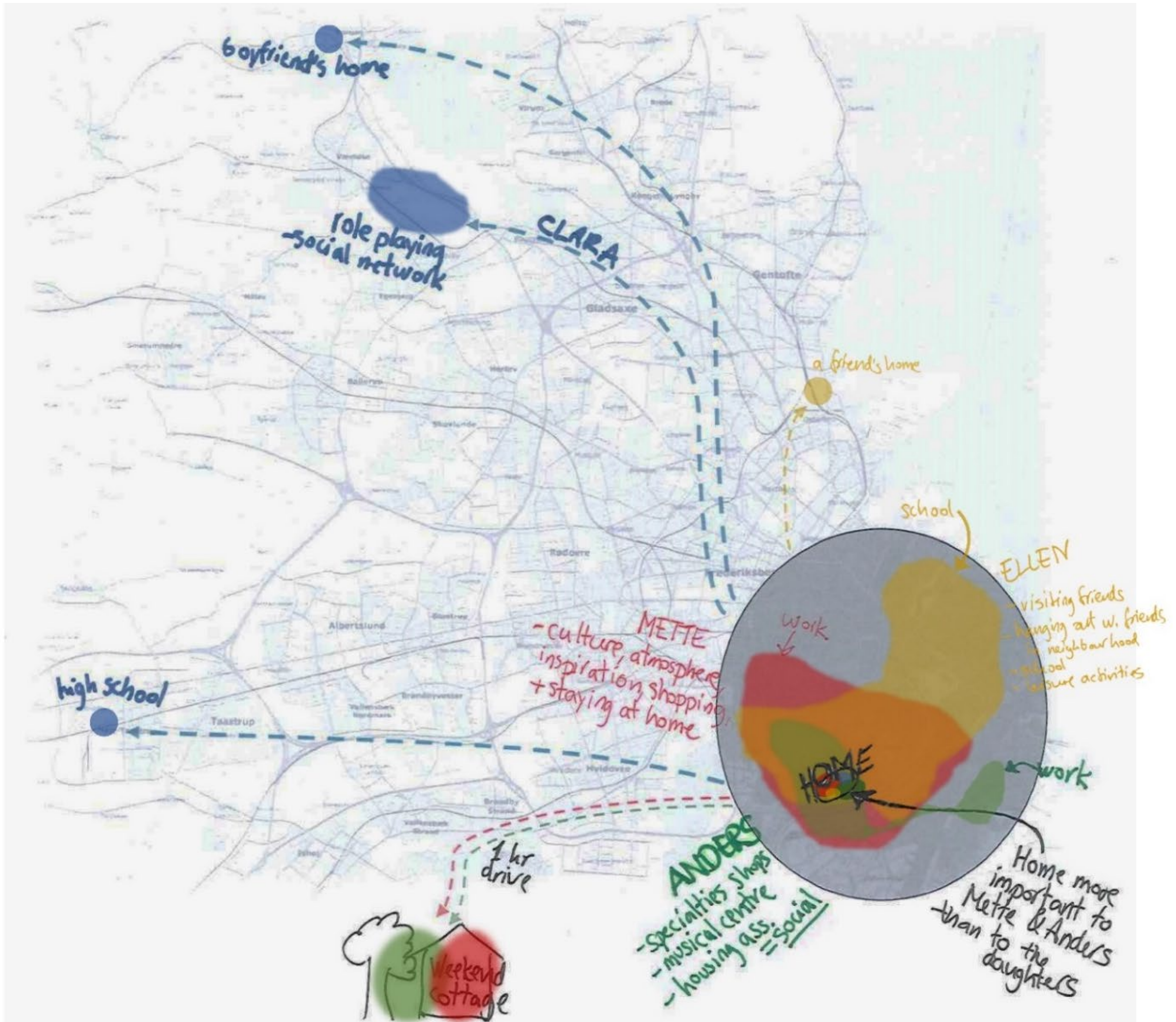

Figure 7. The illustration depicts the spheres of importance of the four household members in Case #1. It shows how Clara's life is primarily led outside the neighbourhood, even outside Copenhagen. To Anders, the social atmosphere in the building is highly important, to Mette, the home itself means a lot along with the atmosphere of Vesterbro. Additionally, the countryside cottage is important to the pair. By contrast, Ellen's life is based on her social network sited in the neighbourhood and the inner city. Figure contains data from Styrelsen for Dataforsyning og Effektivisering [Agency for Datasupply and Efficiency], "*SDFE-kort*", downloaded November 2020. Illustration by author.

The different family members of Case #1 each have a different relationship to the neighbourhood. The oldest daughter Clara's everyday life is structured around high school, spending time with her boyfriend, attending role playing and spending time with friends, which she primarily knows from the role playing club. Yet all these activities are based in suburbs around Copenhagen, entailing that Clara's life is predominantly located outside the neighbourhood. The situation is very different for the youngest daughter, Ellen. Her social network is widely rooted in the neighbourhood and accordingly, so is her daily life. Several of her friends live in the neighbourhood, and a theatre club, which is a key foundation of her social network, is located here too. Thus, she very often spends time hanging out in the streets or in local squares with her friends, or they visit each other at home. Her school is located in the city centre, however, widening her school-based network to cover most of Copenhagen. For both daughters, however, their daily lives revolve around the Copenhagen region, entailing that enthusiasm for the family's countryside weekend cottage is mainly from the parents.

Despite the importance for Anders and Mette of experiencing the bolt-hole effect of weekends in the country (see below), their daily lives are also strongly rooted in the city. To Anders, the sociable atmosphere in their building is the most important part of living where they do. He is on good terms with all the neighbours and often socialises with them. Besides the social, attending a local music club for choir, singing and guitar lessons means a lot to Anders. To Mette, her favourite part of living in Vesterbro is the daily soaking up of its particular atmosphere. Only occasionally does she make use of cultural or leisure facilities, and Vesterbro is primarily a scene, she fleetingly passes through on her daily journeys and errands. However, this fleeting encounter with the ambience, especially that of quirky and cock-eyed local spots like tiny second-hand shops or non-mainstream clothes shops, is very valuable to her.

HOUSING CHOICE

The family has lived in the flat for twelve years. Originally, Mette and Anders lived together in a tiny student flat in Copenhagen. When they had children, they decided to leave the city – they wanted a garden where they could just open the door and let the children out to play on the lawn, and they wanted more space within their home. Given the high housing prices, they relocated to a provincial town 100 kilometres away, where they could get more for their money and bought a terraced house with a small back garden. However, they never settled in their new house or socially in the neighbourhood, and after only 18 months, they decided to move back to Copenhagen. They did not feel they fitted in with their neighbours or shared their values and ways of life. They found them

unwelcoming, egotistic and bad mannered. Especially Mette felt misplaced, and to her, this social mismatch made their newfound qualities of the dwelling fade:

> *I felt like every square metre of space became a chasm between us and the good life. And for my part, this was in Copenhagen. The house couldn't make up for us living in a place, where I wasn't comfortable in the community.*

Accordingly, the sociable environment of the building they live in today is one of the things they value most, and they engage in it both informally and by participating in common tasks, events etc. When moving back to Copenhagen, prices forced them to make do with a two-bedroom flat, which at the time did not pose a problem, as their daughters were still young, and alterations have thus been made later on. Still, the move was a substantial downsizing, and their housing choice was a clear-cut matter of prioritising location over floorspace.

ORGANISATION AND USAGE OF THE DWELLING – CHOICES AND PRIORITISATIONS

The substantial downsizing on moving into the small Copenhagen flat entailed sorting out the family's belongings and disposing of some. However, three factors made the process relatively easy for them: first, letting go of equipment for garden, terrace and conservatory was self-evident, second, they replaced large furniture with smaller versions, and third, they realised that most of their living space in the terraced house was in-between space, i.e. space between furniture, cleared floor space, etc. Given their experience from the terraced house that such in-between space seemed valueless, physical compressing became their main approach to organising their new home in Copenhagen. By compressing their home, both in terms of creating smaller rooms, and in terms of moving furniture, functions and objects closer together, they sought to allow for all the well-known rooms and items associated with a conventional family home. As the daughters grew older, the question of privacy for the different family members has increasingly arisen and accordingly been a supplementary reason for sub-dividing the flat into no fewer than eight separate rooms. They have created not only separate bedrooms, but also a separate office and a separate kitchen. Yet by prioritising privacy very highly, they have compromised on airiness and light, in particular, access to daylight, fresh air and headspace in the parents' bedroom. Like a large number of Danish city flats, this one is located in a neo-classical building with large, but few windows, all gathered on two sides of the building. Subdividing rooms in such types of flats can thus quickly entail poorer access to windows and thus to natural daylight and fresh air. As put by Lawson (2001: 11), *"space that facilitates display may not be good at providing for privacy"*. In choosing such approaches to organising their home, the family of Case #1 goes against the

prevailing approach to compact living in design and architecture. The prevailing approach is to dissolve the traditional home by creating fewer, but larger rooms to allow for openness – often making the bathroom the only separately enclosed room – and to reduce the sense of compactness and risk of messiness by limiting the amount of objects, materials and colours in the dwellings. Instead of such approaches, the family in this case has chosen to retain a conventional family home, yet in a shrunken and compressed version.

In the end, downsizing turned out to be relatively easy for them by approaching it in the manner described, and because it generated a sense of uncomplicatedness – like Mette says, "*we don't have 24 table cloths anymore, we can manage with two, and that's quite neat really, not having to decide between 24 table cloths whenever we have people over*". The trouble, however, has become keeping the amount of objects limited in the long run, as four people generate a lot over the course of time, and as some of the family members have something of a collector in them – to the mild dissatisfaction of others. On the other hand, the family connects this clutteredness and messiness with a sense of cosiness, atmosphere and personality as opposed to stringently minimalistic spaces. Here again, their approach contrasts compact-dwelling solutions in architecture and design.

An absolutely crucial element for the family is to have access to places which can give a sense of air and spaciousness in their everyday lives in a compact home. Luckily, the family has access to two places offering such a bolt-hole effect, yet in two different ways. First, the family uses a terrace deck in the corner of the communal courtyard as an extension of their flat. This is where they have dinner, as soon as the weather allows (and covered in coats and blankets in cool weather too), making it feel like an extra dining room. Furthermore, they use the terrace with the other residents for social events and communal eating, making it key for the local sociable environment. This semi-private area provides them with more privacy and more calm than the hectic public street scene of Vesterbro, yet it is easily accessible in their busy everyday lives in the city. Conversely, their newly acquired weekend cottage in the countryside provides a complete change of scenery and an escape from everyday life; yet primarily for Mette and Anders, who spend nearly all their weekends there, while the daughters prefer to remain in the Copenhagen region, where their lives are led. Financially, the family prioritised purchasing the cottage over obtaining a larger everyday home, because this solution provides them with a highly valued reciprocity between city life and rural idyll, whereas a larger flat would only be more of the same, not a contrasting bolt-hole. See Chapter 5 for an elaboration of the role of such bolt-holes and extensions of the home.

Figure 8. The household prefers clutter and messiness over minimalism, they connect it with cosiness, atmosphere and personality. Furthermore, they prioritise privacy and have subdivided their flat into eight smaller rooms. Above left, a view from the living room through the window into the office. Above right, a packed cupboard in the living room.

Figure 9. Case #1 is set in Vesterbro, a centrally located, high-density neighbourhood in Copenhagen.

4.2. CASE 2

Household: Emil, 32, urban planner at city hall. Johanne, 33, currently job seeking, qualified biologist. Karla, 5, and Lauge, 1, attending kindergarten and nursery in the neighbouring district. The family also has no fewer than three cats.

Dwelling: An early 20th-century flat located on the third floor in a cooperative-housing association. It covers 56 square metres (14.0 per person) and is built around a long narrow hallway from which a small kitchen, a bathroom and a parents' bedroom can be accessed, all facing the back of the building block. To the other side, the flat previously contained two equally sized rooms with windows facing the street, yet recently, the family has altered the layout and created a smaller children's room and a larger living/dining room separated by a wide floor-to-ceiling sliding door, allowing the rooms to merge when it is opened. The children's room is equipped with a loftbed for the older child, Karla. Finally, the flat has a balcony facing the communal courtyard behind the building, accessed from the parents' bedroom.

LIVING IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

The flat is located in the centre of a Copenhagen area known colloquially as Nordvest (an area covering parts of two official districts). Nordvest is one of the most mixed areas of Copenhagen in terms of, first, population: for instance, it has the city's largest share of non-ethnic Danish residents, and it has a mix of both affluent and economically marginalised residents, and second, physical environment: its business life includes both retail, service businesses and production industries, there are large public institutions, cultural institutions, the buildings are a mix of old industrial buildings, traditional neo-classical building blocks, large high-rise estates, newly-built blocks of flats and very close by, the suburban belt of detached-house neighbourhoods begins. The flat of Case #2 is located close to the centre of the Nordvest area; a very busy nodal point with intersecting arterial streets full of cars, buses, bicycles and pedestrians, a train station, numerous retail shops, a shopping centre and a small square.

Johanne is born and raised in Copenhagen (though not in Nordvest), and Emil grew up in a central suburb. To them, the city is home. Nordvest is one of the most affordable neighbourhoods, and this is part of the reason for them living here. However, they have come to identify quite strongly with living in Nordvest – they prefer the neighbourhood to 'posh' parts of Copenhagen that they find conservative, boring, stuck-up and uniform. By doing so, they locate themselves, and their lifestyle, in a more cock-eyed, quirky, informal and community-oriented place. Their use of the neighbourhood consists mainly in practical errands

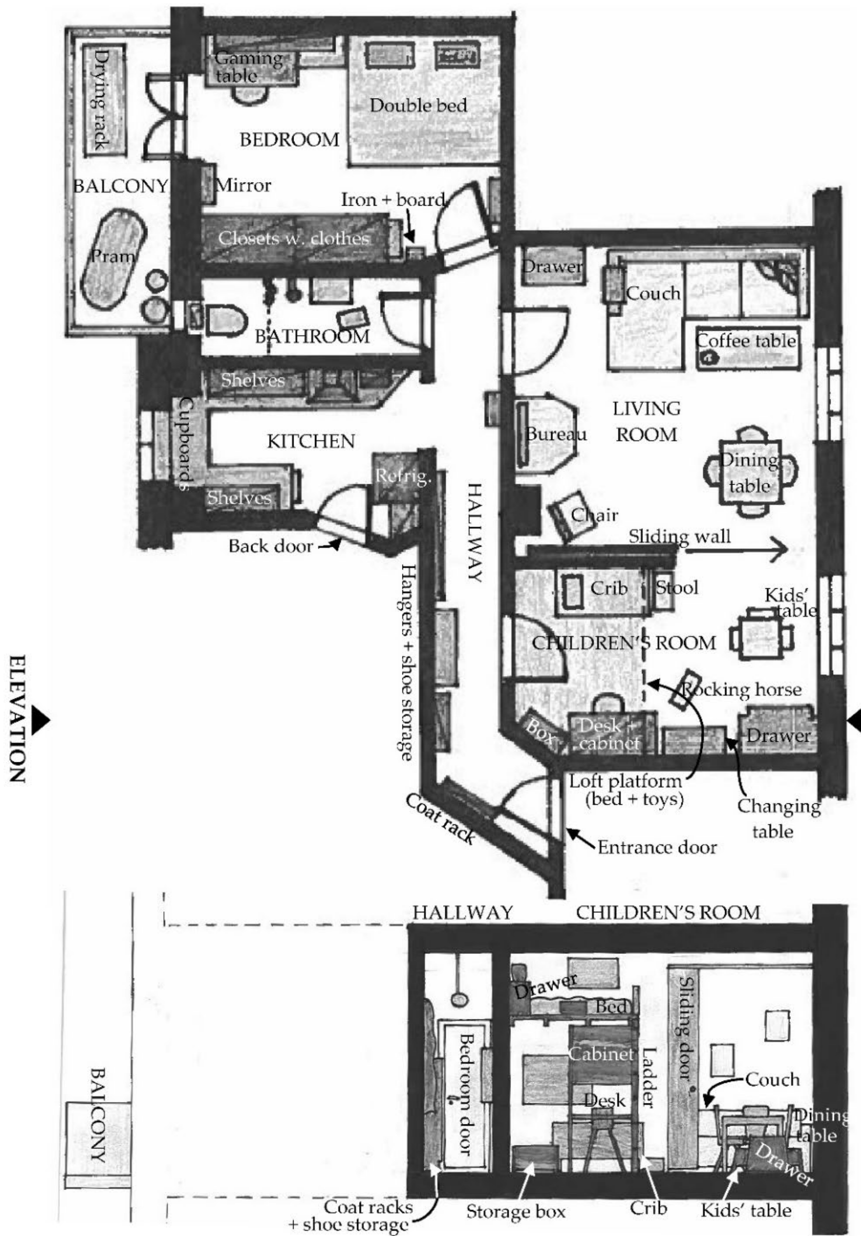

Figure 10. Plan and cross-section of dwelling in Case #2. Illustration by author.

(shopping in the supermarkets or the bakery, picking up takeaway food, etc.) and transportation to or from work, kindergarten, leisure activities, their parents, etc., all located elsewhere in Copenhagen. In other words, their daily life activities and routines are city-wide, whereas living in Nordvest to them is about soaking up the buzzing, cock-eyed atmosphere and identifying with it.

HOUSING CHOICE

Johanne is born and raised in Copenhagen and would not want to live anywhere else. Emil is from a centrally located suburb, and while he dreams of living in a house with a garden, he wants it to be in close proximity to the city. However, the high housing prices prevent this, and consequently he too prefers a flat as their family home. Johanne originally bought the flat eleven years ago. She was able to afford it as a student, if she sublet one of the rooms to a friend. Later, she and Emil became a couple, and he then moved in. After a few years, they had their first child and subsequently their second 18 months ago. The family expansion has meant substantial reorganisation of the flat; as Johanne says, "*we have had our bedroom in all three rooms over the years*". Recently, they have looked for a larger flat, and as both Johanne and Emil appreciate the particular neighbourhood, they live in, and perhaps even more the neighbouring (but more expensive) district. However, weighing up the prices and quality of different flats in the area, they have not yet found a better option than their current home. Additionally, they like the flat, the social environment in the building, and they are friends with their neighbours, so instead of moving, they decided to construct the new flexible room division and the new children's room in an attempt to make the flat more "*liveable*", as Emil says. Their plan currently is to remain in the flat, until their children grow old enough to need separate rooms.

ORGANISATION AND USAGE OF THE DWELLING – CHOICES AND PRIORITISATIONS

The organisation and usage of the flat predominantly reflects that it houses a family with small children, and that they prioritise sociability, within the family unit and with guests. Making room for the four members of the family to be close together is important, as is making room for entertaining, play dates, birthday parties, etc. This is prioritised spatially, for instance, they have a large, wide couch to allow for lounging and watching TV. The new sliding door between the children's room and the living room is key for allowing for such sociability. The merging of the children's room with the living room by way of the new sliding door allows for the children to be in close contact with their parents when playing in their room and to expand the playing space to the actual living room too. Their dining table can also be expanded when they have guests, because the new flexible

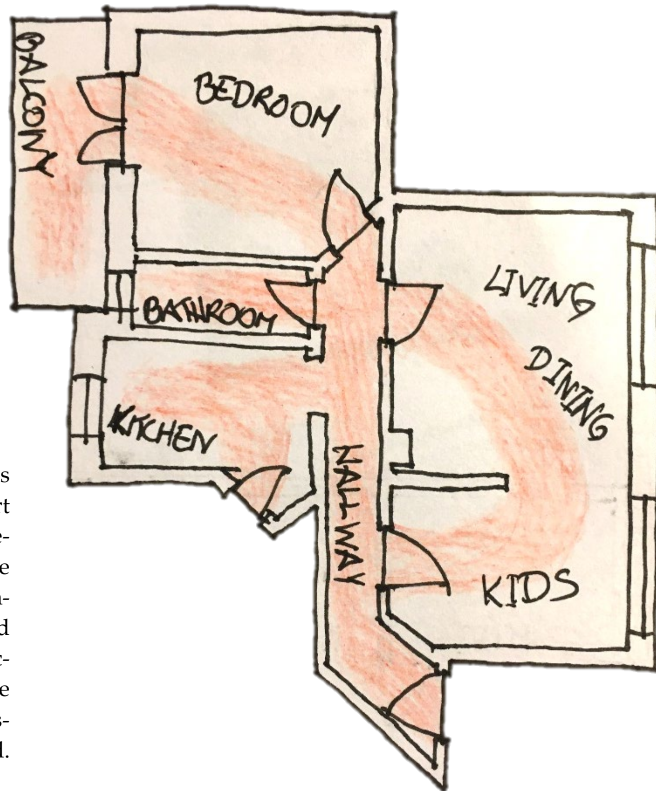

Figure 11. Walking lines take up a substantial part of the dwelling, especially in the hallway, the kitchen and the bathroom, leaving limited space for usable functions. Changes would be very costly, as the physical construction is rigid. Illustration by author.

room division makes space for this. However, the flat also holds small pockets of privacy: First, while the family regrets the separation of the kitchen from the living room for sociability reasons, it bears with it advantages in terms of privacy, and Emil and Johanne sometimes use cooking as time off for one of them in their hectic everyday life. Altering this layout would be very costly due to the flat's physical construction. Second, while the new sliding door allows for sociability in some situations, it also allows for separation or privacy in others – it can be closed when the children have playmates over and want privacy or the adults want quietness, or it can be closed in the evening, when the children go to bed while the parents are still up. Thus, the flexibility of the sliding door by merging two rooms into one and separating them again has become a key tool for the family in creating privacy while preserving the possibilities for sociability. In fact, Johanne and Emil intended for the door to be "*a moveable wall*" (in their own phrasing), not a sliding door.

> *Johanne: That wall has really, really done something for the flat, it's crazy actually; it really is a huge improvement.*

Emil: It feels like a completely different flat.

However, such flexibility is quite limited in the rest of the flat due to a rigid physical construction. Removing the long narrow hallway would entail tearing down a carrying wall, and this limits the layout options for the flat. Especially in the hallway, the kitchen and the bathroom, walking lines take up a substantial part of the dwelling, leaving limited space for actual usable functions, as illustrated by Figure 11. Furthermore, the physical construction is rigid in that all pipes and drains are located on one side of the flat, and these are costly to move in a multi-storey building. Finally, the flat only has windows on two sides, limiting the access to fresh air and daylight to these. Altogether, this locks the flat's layout a great deal, and this is the source of much irritation for Emil and Johanne. First, given the small size of the flat, they are irritated that walking lines take up several square metres. Second, the long, narrow shape of the bathroom gives people wet feet when using the toilet after someone has showered. Third, creating a family room combining lounge, dining area, kitchen and access to the balcony would be costly, as this would require moving the bathroom. And fourth, connecting the kitchen to the current living room would be, as mentioned, very costly.

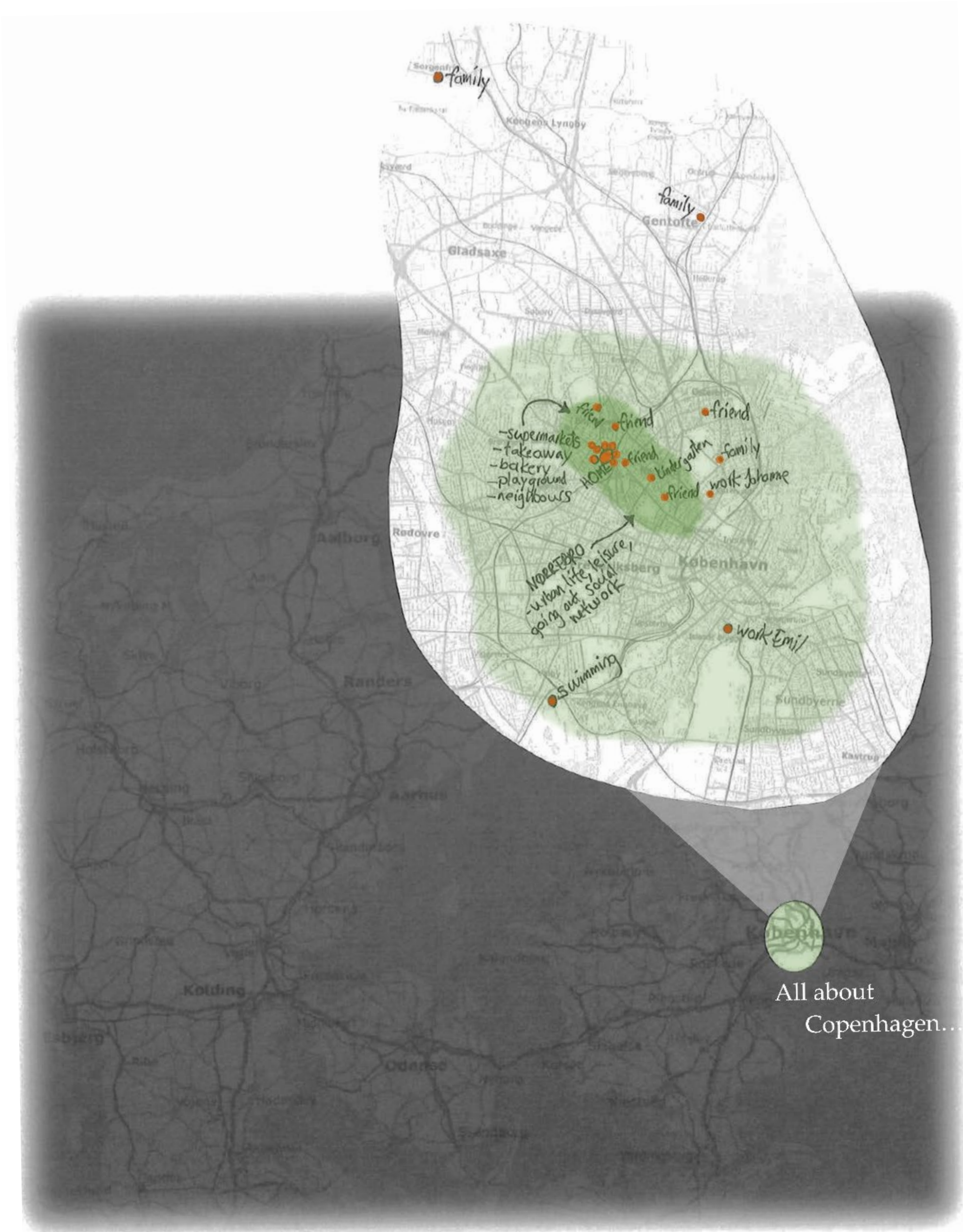

Figure 12. Emil and Johanne's life is all about Copenhagen, as this illustration shows. Their network, the places they use, and the areas that mean something to them are all located in Copenhagen (apart from each of their mothers who live 15 min. away). Figure contains data from Styrelsen for Dataforsyning og Effektivisering [Agency for Datasupply and Efficiency], "*SDFE-kort*", downloaded November 2020. Illustration by author.

Figure 13. Left: The new loft bed in the children's room allows a private sleeping and playing area for 5-year old Karla as well as a built-in desk under the platform. Next to this, little brother Lauge sleeps. Both parents and Karla have chosen the loft bed as one of their favourite features of the flat. Right: The long narrow hallway is one of the least favourite features of the flat, as it takes up a lot of space while being too narrow to use properly. Photos by Emil.

4.3. CASE 3

Household: Stine, 42, self-employed fashion designer based in a studio located within the neighbourhood. Barbara, 14, and Ursula, 12, in school. They live in the flat every second week, and during the other weeks they live with their father in a flat a few minutes away.

Dwelling: Cooperative housing flat. The flat is located in a typical neo-classical building block, with the street on one side and a communal courtyard on the other. The flat is on the ground floor and covers 53 square metres (leaving 17.7 square metres for each household member). The family has lived there for four years. Originally, it contained a tiny entrance hall, one room facing the street and a bedroom facing the courtyard along with a separate kitchen and a tiny bathroom. Before moving in, Stine tore down inner walls to obtain an open plan. Today, the flat contains one main room combining hall, kitchen and living/dining area with a sofa bed on which Stine sleeps. The large room facing the street was until recently a shared children's room, but has now been subdivided into two to allow the daughters to have their own separate rooms. The bathroom has been left unchanged. Finally, the flat has a balcony accessed via large glass doors in the main room.

LIVING IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

This flat is located in the Vesterbro neighbourhood very close to the flat in Case #1; a neighbourhood description can be found under that case.

To Stine, an extensive social network, both private and professional, along with an appreciation for the special ambience she identifies in Vesterbro are her favourite parts of living where she does. Stine has lived in the neighbourhood for several years, and it has come to form the social and professional basis of her daily life. Additionally, she finds the area to have a special atmosphere, which inspires her, which fits her tastes and lifestyle, and in which she feels she belongs – shaped by the composition of people using the area, the activities and events taking place, the local shops, studios, eateries, and so on. Chapters 6 and 7 will examine such perceptions of neighbourhood ambience. Finally, and not least, a key reason for Stine to live in the neighbourhood is the strongly rooted social networks of her daughters. Both daughters go to school in Vesterbro, the home of their father is located here too, and their friends and leisure activities are located here. Altogether, the key driver behind this family's housing choice is to live in this particular neighbourhood.

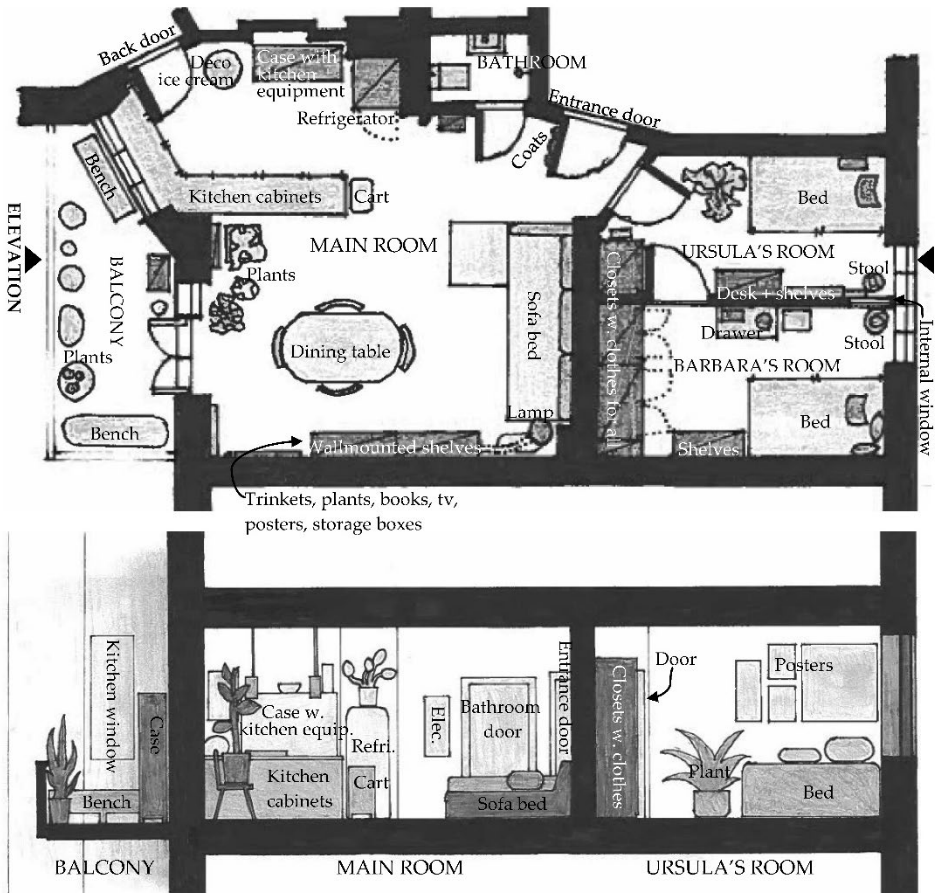

Figure 14. Plan and cross-section of dwelling in Case #3. Illustration by author.

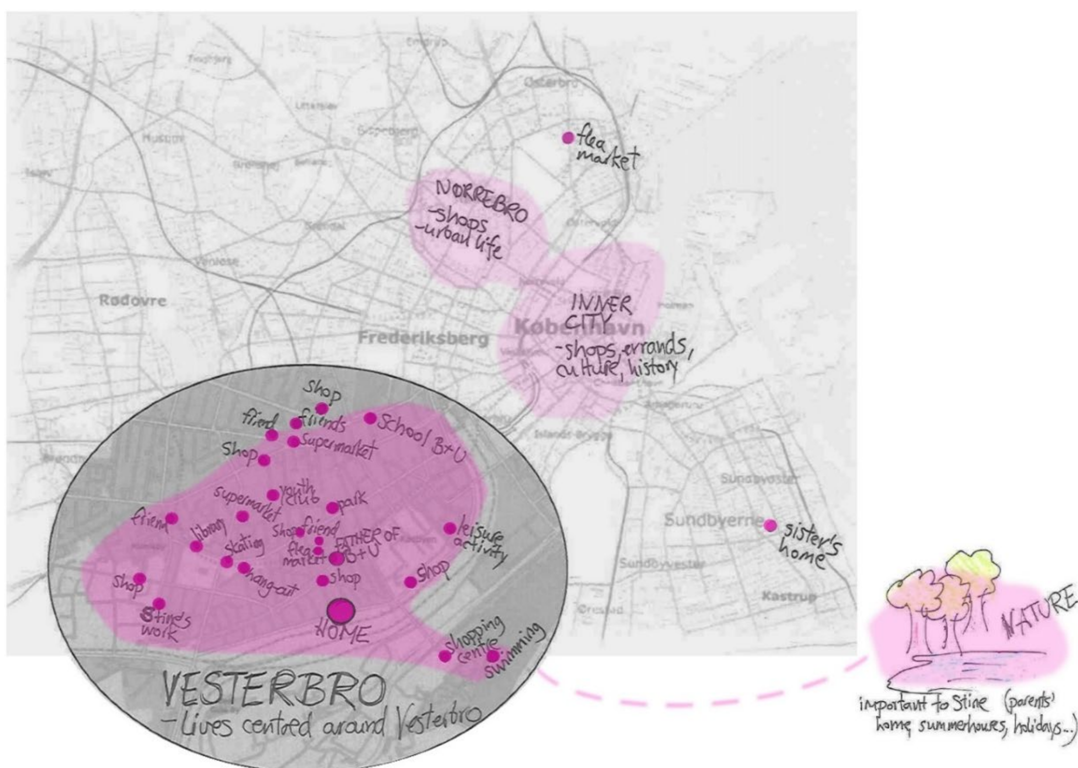

Figure 15. Visualisation of the way, Stine and her daughters perceive their neighbourhood and the city. Their lives are centred around Vesterbro, and this is where their networks are located and their daily lives take place, with occasional visits to other parts of the city. It is clear how they all have a connection to numerous places in the local area (and of course, they are in touch with more places over the course of time, this is not an exhaustive account). Besides this, nature and the open countryside means a lot to Stine, and in some way, she feels at home there too. Figure contains data from Styrelsen for Dataforsyning og Effektivisering [Agency for Datasupply and Efficiency], "*SDFE-kort*", downloaded November 2020. Illustration by author.

HOUSING CHOICE

Stine used to live with her partner (the father of her daughters) in another flat in Vesterbro. During this time, she and the family developed a strong social network in the neighbourhood: they were friends with other families living in the same building, Stine started a company with a partner who lives in Vesterbro, and their studio is located here, several of her friends live in the neighbourhood, and finally, her daughters developed their own social networks based in the neighbourhood. Additionally, Stine has a strong appreciation for the neighbourhood – she finds it inspiring and full of atmosphere, and she feels she fits in with the people inhabiting the neighbourhood and the life being led in urban space (see Chapter 6 for more on this). Accordingly, when Stine and her ex-partner split up, she was determined that her new home should be located in Vesterbro too. However, Vesterbro is a very popular area on the housing market, causing high prices for flats and severe competition for affordable units. By cutting down on the size of the home, Stine was able to afford a flat in the area, and she got her current home because it was owned by an acquaintance of hers at the time. Downsizing was not an issue to her, for several reasons. First, obtaining a place of her own within the neighbourhood she wanted, especially upon divorcing and splitting up the family, was a great success to Stine, and this caste a positive light on the new home. Secondly, her daughters were young at the time and did not need their own separate rooms. Thirdly, she only had half the amount of interior and furniture with her from her old home, so there was no need to dispose of anything. Finally, homes in the neighbourhood, and accordingly in Stine's social network, are generally relatively small, making it less unusual to live compactly.

ORGANISATION AND USAGE OF THE DWELLING – CHOICES AND PRIORITISATIONS

One key argument lies behind how Stine's flat is organised: it must have airiness, light and openness. This main priority has been implemented as much as possible while also allowing enough privacy for each family member. The different cases of the study clearly demonstrate the different assessments of the need for privacy (see for instance Case #1). In this case, privacy for the two daughters is functionally rather than quantitatively perceived, i.e. focused on *having* private rooms rather than their sizes. Furthermore, privacy is moderated in favour of practicality: three shared closets are located in Barbara's room, and to enhance light, the partition wall between the children's rooms has a window in it. Privacy for Stine is temporally perceived: she has complete privacy half the time, when her daughters live with their father, but the other half of the time she has no privacy, as she has no secluded private space, but sleeps in the main room. Especially the choices regarding her own spaces in the home shed light on her

prioritisation of light and openness over privacy. To her, the main room is the core of their home life, and creating a welcoming atmosphere here has been crucial for Stine:

> *Now this is the best room in the flat, there is so much light now. And since the balcony has come up, it's just light, light, light. It meant a lot more to me to create a room we thrive in, than for me to have a separate bedroom. […] This room simply works. And especially when the weather is nice and you can go outside, and you have a view to greenery. But basically I just like being in this room. Oh, and I like looking over at my kitchen.*

The children's rooms were only recently installed. Until then, the daughters shared a room which also functioned as a wardrobe for all three family members. As the daughters reached adolescence, their need for separate private rooms grew larger, and Stine built the partition wall. This has changed the usage of the flat:

> *It has helped that you both got your own rooms, now you actually want to be in there. Previously it really wasn't used, and we all had our clothes in there, so it was basically just storage. We'd go in here and be here – together. And now you both go in there – and you shut the doors…!*

Aesthetics is a central factor for Stine, and interior design, home decoration, art, crafts, colours and light matter a great deal. This is reflected in her profession of course, but also in her home. There are clear references in her style to both up-to-date interior design trends and the classical Scandinavian design tradition, the interior is curated regarding shapes, colours and proportions, and crafts and arts are allowed lots of space in the flat. This means that for Stine, a room is more than functionality and a collection of items. It is a spatial entity in itself, where smaller fragments are connected to the whole, and where every choice made by her has an impact in this. Thus, the sofa is not only chosen and placed with a view to functionality or comfort, but also to visual appearance and the connection of this to the rest of the room. The same goes for the kitchen, the burgundy trolley, the tiny ceramic sculpture, or the living room as a whole: aesthetics, ambience, texture, style, light, colours, shape, functionality and practicality are all interconnected in the design and organisation of the flat. Consequently, the choices and priorities made are the realisation of Stine's image of the home as one entity in which smaller parts communicate with the whole. In this way, Stine's approach parallels architecture and design targeted at compact living that is often aimed at "*understanding the whole space at once*", as put by Zeiger (2016). However, Stine's home is much less minimalistic, much less conceptual and much less disruptive.

Figure 16. Case #3. Left: Barbara and Ursula photographed the internal window between their rooms as a favourite feature of the flat, because it makes them feel connected to each other. Centre: Stine’s has prioritised airiness and light higher than her own privacy, and accordingly, the flat has one main multifunctional room in which she sleeps on the sofa bed. Right: The flat has a large balcony, which Stine decorates with indoor furniture to connect it to the flat. Both photos are by Stine, depicting her favourite features of the flat.

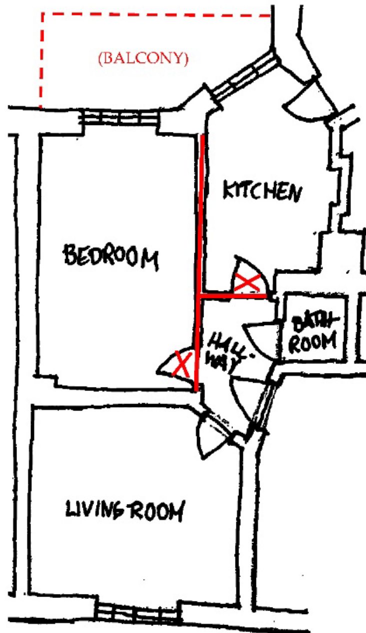

Figure 17. Above: Plan of the flat before the renovation. Illustration by author. Right: Photo of main room today, photo by Stine. The flat contained various small rooms, and the tiny hallway had no fewer than five doors, which to Stine seemed like a waste of space. Nor did the flat have a balcony (or double glass doors leading onto it). A key purpose for Stine was to make the flat more bright and airy. Until recently, the daughters shared a room (the former living room), making this and the bathroom the only closed-off spaces of the flat.

4.4. CASE 4

Household: Majbrit, 44, landscape gardener, in seasonal employment and thus often unemployed during the winter months.

Dwelling: Tiny house (see Chapter 1 for a definition of this concept) constructed by rebuilding an old circus wagon. Majbrit has renovated the wagon herself (with help from a friend). The wagon can be towed by a car, when it is to be moved. The dwelling area is 28 square metres, and in addition, Majbrit has access to workshop and storage facilities at the farm where the wagon is currently located. The wagon consists of three rooms: a main room with direct access from outside, containing a full kitchen, a small table with chairs, case furniture and a wood-burning stove; a bathroom at one end of the wagon; and a bedroom which can be converted into a lounge by folding up the bed to access two built-in couches. Outside, Majbrit has stacked pallets into a staircase at the entrance door, and built-in storage boxes accessible from the outside are integrated into the wagon floor. Electricity, water supply and sewage are managed via external connections to the host's property, the wagon is heated solely by the wood-burner. The wagon is insulated (yet external pipes are not).

LIVING IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

At the time of the data collection, the tiny house was located on a rural estate in the Eastern part of Jutland. The owner of the estate is an acquaintance of Majbrit's, who lives in the farmhouse. The wagon is located behind the farm buildings at the edge of a small forest. Majbrit has access to parking, extra storage and facilities for craft work, wood chopping, outdoor activities, etc. Until very recently, the wagon was located on another plot in the same region, but because she was breaking municipal housing regulations, Majbrit had to abandon this site. This is a general issue for occupants of tiny houses in Denmark, and thus, Majbrit's current location for the wagon is also against regulations. Consequently, she attempts to stay under the radar, and her choice of location is limited, as she is dependent on the willingness of a property owner to let her place the tiny house on their land. However, the current location suits her relatively well, as it meets her main criteria: 1) To live within reasonable distance from the city of Aarhus, as all of her social network, her friends and family, as well as her professional network is located in this area. Being single, Majbrit feels that being strongly connected to her social network is particularly important. 2) To live in the countryside. Having grown up in the countryside, Majbrit perceives herself as an inveterate nature lover, who loves camping in the forest, hunting, etc. and who feels completely out of place in the city and the suburbs. As she says jokingly, *"living in a deep Swedish forest located close to Aarhus would be ideal [laughs]. I'm*

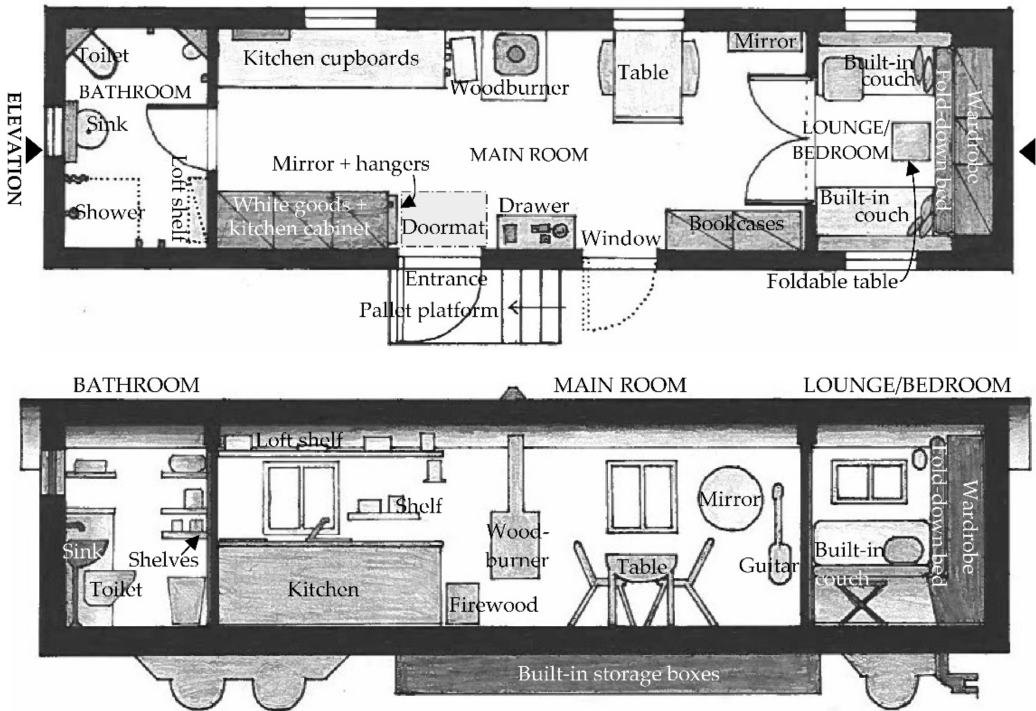

Figure 18. Plan and cross-section of dwelling in Case #4. Illustration by author.

talking about untrimmed, original, natural nature, not a park." Currently, the wagon is located in a rural area surrounded by fields and a small forest with a distance of approximately half an hour to central Aarhus and approximately fifteen minutes to a relatively large provincial town, where Majbrit does her grocery shopping and runs her errands. At the time of the data collection, she was still finding her feet in the new location, but was beginning to make use of the surrounding facilities, i.e. the barn and the workshop, for storage, woodworking projects, repair work, car washing, etc. Going for a walk in the small forest on the property was also becoming a daily routine.

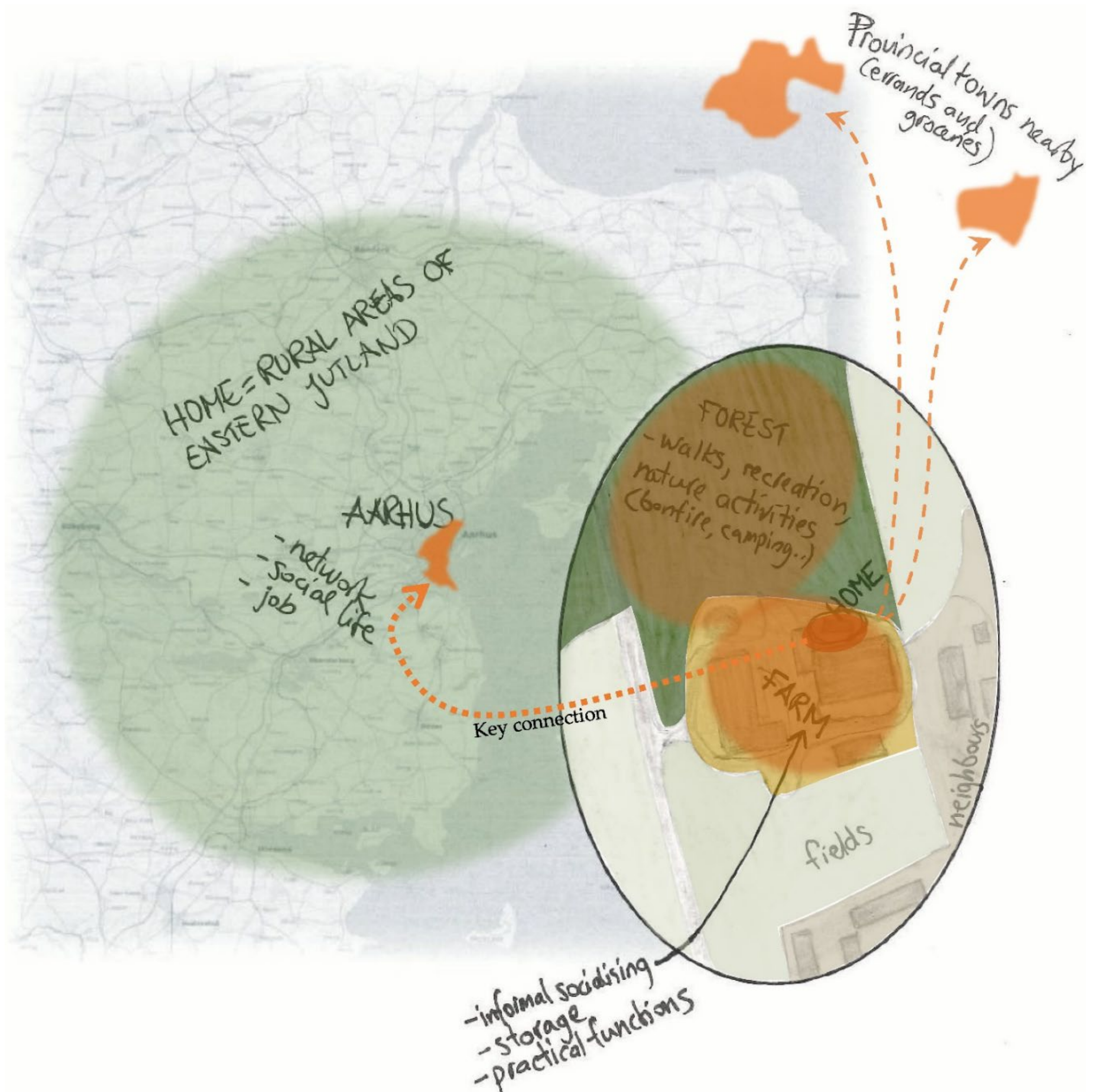

Figure 19. The illustration depicts how the connection to Aarhus is highly important for Majbrit, but also how she would not want to live there, but instead in rural settings in the surrounding region. The nearby provincial towns are unimportant to Majbrit, they merely fulfil practical functions and could be replaced by any other town. The illustration further depicts Majbrit's use of the practical facilities on the farm as well as her daily walks and activities in the small forest area next to the property. The precise location of Majbrit's home is anonymised. Figure contains data from Styrelsen for Dataforsyning og Effektivisering [Agency for Datasupply and Efficiency], "*SDFE-kort*", downloaded November 2020. Illustration by author.

HOUSING CHOICE

Over the years, Majbrit has lived in a number of very different places: She has lived in a flat centrally located in the city of Aarhus, she has lived in an owner-occupied house in the countryside, and she has lived in a terraced house in suburbia. However, she feels at home in the countryside. To Majbrit, living in the tiny house is primarily a question of freedom, geographically and financially, and of self-determination. Of course, the regulatory challenges limit Majbrit's possibilities for locating her tiny house, although they do not limit the actual mobility of the wagon, and this allows Majbrit to settle in a dwelling without having to tie herself to a given geographical location. Currently, for instance, she is new to the area, but not to the dwelling. She perceives her life situation as unpredictable, and this geographical independence is thus important to her. Financial freedom is too, partially due to Majbrit's employment conditions and partially because she previously contracted debt on a house she owned with a partner, making the financial restrictions restrict her personal life too. Altogether, these experiences have increased Majbrit's need for a place of her own, a place where she is in charge, and a place which fits her preferences and her way of life – including its unpredictability – and a place that can be located in the middle of nature. Even her choice to install a washing machine in the wagon shows her need for self-determination: *"I can take care of myself; I don't have to knock on somebody else's door to borrow their washing machine"*. Being able to literally build a house herself, for her savings, without raising a mortgage, and to design it herself, tailor-making it to fit her own wishes, needs and ideas has been key – firstly, for the feeling of self-determination and freedom, but also for the feeling of settling, putting down roots and feeling at home:

> *The feeling I have, when I climb those steps that I've installed myself, when I enter the door that I've chosen myself, when I enter this wagon where my bloody fingerprint is on literally everything – that's me. It's not some rental flat or something I'm completely indifferent to, it feels like a home-home, like a home for real, you know. I remember how something happened mentally when I moved in here, like I landed. All of this is mine. On a fundamental level too. And that's a feeling I can bring along with me.*

She bought a former circus wagon converted in the 1970s into a residential caravan and renovated it to modern standards inspired by novel ideas of tiny houses. Two years ago, the house was ready, and Majbrit has lived in it ever since.

Figure 20. Top left: View through kitchen to bathroom, entrance door on the left. The dishwasher is a favourite feature to Majbrit. Top right: Combined lounging/sleeping area. The green pattern is the back of a fold-down bed. Behind it is an open-front closet for clothes. Above: The tiny house has wheels and can be towed.

ORGANISATION AND USAGE OF THE DWELLING – CHOICES AND PRIORITISATIONS

When designing and constructing her tiny house, Majbrit had substantial freedom to completely tailor-make it, and the opportunity to do things *her way* was essential to her. At the same time, she was subject to sharp restrictions by the predefined dimensions of the wagon, especially if she wanted to preserve its mobility – and this was paramount to her. Majbrit took lots of inspiration from international examples of tiny houses and their numerous ideas for space optimisation: First, she has consciously sought to avoid wasted space like walking areas or unused space between functions. For instance, the kitchen floor also functions as the walking line to the bathroom. Second, she has applied an open plan to optimise space use and to make the tiny house appear larger and more airy. Thus, only the bathroom is fully separated – the combined lounge-bedroom can be closed off via double glass doors, yet these are nearly always opened. The vast majority of the wagon's 22 square metres thus appears as one room divided into different zones by its furnishings. In fact, Majbrit has noticed how such zones sometimes have the same effect as walls, for instance, visitors never step outside the entrance door doormat with outdoor shoes on, as if there were invisible walls around the doormat. Third, Majbrit has maximised the light intake by using glass doors and installing lots of windows, one of them reaching from floor to ceiling, in order to make the rooms appear larger and more airy, and finally, she has installed a wall bed that folds down over two built-in couches, to reveal her wardrobe.

However, Majbrit was also very conscious about constructing a home, which functioned in practice in real everyday life. Accordingly, solutions such as a loft bed accessed by a ladder were discarded: *"I'm not fond of lofts in tiny houses. What if you break a leg for instance, so you can't climb a ladder, then you don't have anywhere to sleep. Not clever. Cosy, yes. And how do you make the bed without bumping your head on the ceiling?"* Interestingly however, she hardly ever folds up her wall bed. Instead, she lays a large throw-on blanket over her bed sheets to draw the appearance away from a bedroom feeling and towards a living room feeling. She only folds up the bed when having guests over, and recently she put frosted foil on the glass doors to create privacy in this way instead. Thus, the degree of complexity of innovative solutions targeted at compact living has a big say in terms of their practical smartness. Similar reservations are voiced by other case households, see Chapter 5.

A key priority for Majbrit was to avoid the tiny house appearing filthy or shabby. Having chosen tiny house living was a question of freedom for her, not a compromise in comfort or quality of living. Similar to other case households,

keeping a decent appearance of her home matters a lot. (Chapter 8 will develop this further.) Consequently, she has made a point of keeping modern-day standards in terms of facilities: she has a full-sized shower, a proper flushing toilet, a dishwasher, an oven, a microwave oven, a washing machine, a wood-burning stove to ensure a comfortable indoor climate, a full-sized bed, comfortable upholstered chairs, etc. In connection to upholding a decent appearance of her home, avoiding clutter was important to Majbrit. This entailed that she had to downsize tremendously before moving into the tiny house. This turned out to be a difficult process, because she had no previous experience with living with a minimum of possessions, yet today, she perceives her limited amount of possessions as granting her a feeling of freedom and ease:

> *I had read about it and watched You Tube videos with people who had downsized and were all 'you're going to feel so free, because you don't have all these possessions', and I was all 'yeah right!'. But, erm, it's true! That truly surprised me. I couldn't understand why I would feel freer, just because I only have three pairs of trousers instead of five, but it actually is so. And I still have things that I haven't used for two years, so I'm still in an ongoing process of pruning. I could do with much less space. If I could make my wagon smaller, I would.*

4.5. CASE 5

Household: Agnes, 31, works as a project manager in the City of Copenhagen. For the past year, Agnes has been in a relationship, and her partner often stays at the flat too.

Dwelling: The flat covers 29 square metres. It is located on the fifth floor in a high-rise constructed in the 1960s in modernist style. Originally, it was a social housing estate targeted at marginalised population groups, but some years ago, it was converted into a cooperative housing association, which is gradually changing the resident composition towards particularly students and young adults. Agnes' flat contains a hall accessing a bathroom and a living room with a sleeping alcove. The living room provides access to the kitchen and to a large balcony, which was installed shortly after Agnes moved in (the planned balcony was part of the attraction for her in buying the flat).

LIVING IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Agnes' flat is located in the intersection between three different districts in Copenhagen: Vanløse, Nordvest and Frederiksberg, and interestingly, in the intersection between various types of environment. It is located in an inner suburb of Copenhagen dating from the first half of the 20th century and consisting of a mix of detached-housing neighbourhoods, low-density blocks of flats, scattered green areas and in some places industrial districts. Agnes' building is located on a local high-street with a mix of small retail shops and low-rise blocks of flats. This is where Agnes runs errands now and then, for instance to the supermarket, the pharmacy or the bakery. She perceives the area as having a certain extent of local environment, which she likes, however she orients her attention and activities elsewhere in the city. Surrounding this area is a range of suburban residential neighbourhoods, and amongst these are some iconic examples of Danish residential architecture. Right next to Agnes' building, a classic 1920s example of a Danish "*garden city*" neighbourhood of English inspiration (Howard, 1898), constructed in the "*Bedre Byggeskik*" tradition (Floris 2005); behind this, the terraced-house area of "Bakkehusene" (also inspired by Howard) from 1921-23; and further north, the 1950s modernist high-rise estate of "Bellahøjhusene" towering over Copenhagen. Yet to the east and south, Agnes' neighbourhood adjoins two dense, urban districts: to the east, the district of Nordvest, Copenhagen's most mixed area in terms of socioeconomy and ethnicity and to the south, the district of Frederiksberg, one of the absolute wealthiest and poshest parts of Copenhagen. A main road leads from Agnes' neighbourhood to the central part of Frederiksberg, which is an urban environment with high density and a high activity level. This is where she likes the ambience: she finds the

physical environment charming, she likes the social scene, the shops and facilities suit her taste, and she finds the neighbourhood urban – as opposed to the relatively more suburban character of her own neighbourhood. Accordingly, Frederiksberg is where Agnes goes for both daily grocery shopping and for pleasure activities like visits to coffee shops and eateries, clothes shopping, picking up takeaway food, taking an evening stroll or simply seeking an urban vibe.

HOUSING CHOICE

Agnes is originally from a village in the north-western part of Denmark. She moved to Copenhagen to finish her studies at university. When Agnes bought the flat three and a half years ago, she had lived in Copenhagen for four years, yet in several different homes, e.g. a shared house with friends, a rented room in a private flat and a traditional boarding house. Upon finishing her studies, Agnes wanted a stable home and a place of her own. The Copenhagen housing market is one of severe competition and high prices, so when the opportunity arose (after a long search) of a relatively centrally located, affordable flat in a decent condition, Agnes accepted at short notice. She accessed the flat via a friend who was living in the building already. She was not happy with the location of the flat, but decided to compromise (in the light of the housing market conditions), as after all she would be within cycling distance of the reasons she lives in Copenhagen: an extensive social network in the city, her job in the city and the city's cultural life, i.e. cinemas, events, eateries, shopping. As she has moved to Copenhagen from the other side of Denmark, having to relocate to a remote suburb would be meaningless her. The size of the flat was another compromise, yet a much easier one for Agnes: Her previous homes had all consisted in a small bedroom in a shared dwelling, so the idea of living in a tiny studio unit did not pose a problem:

> *I didn't find it that small actually. Well of course, on the face of it, obviously it was a small flat, but the excitement of finally getting my own place just exceeded that. I used to live in a closet, really, so this flat is like five times bigger. And the neat thing is that even though the living room may be small, and it's a combined bedroom-living-room, I have a proper kitchen and a proper bathroom, so I've never thought 'oh, it's so cramped and messy here, it doesn't fit all my stuff'. But I have taken my time to come up with good solutions and smart solutions to make room for everything and do some customising. I've thought a lot about how to do it in the best way.*

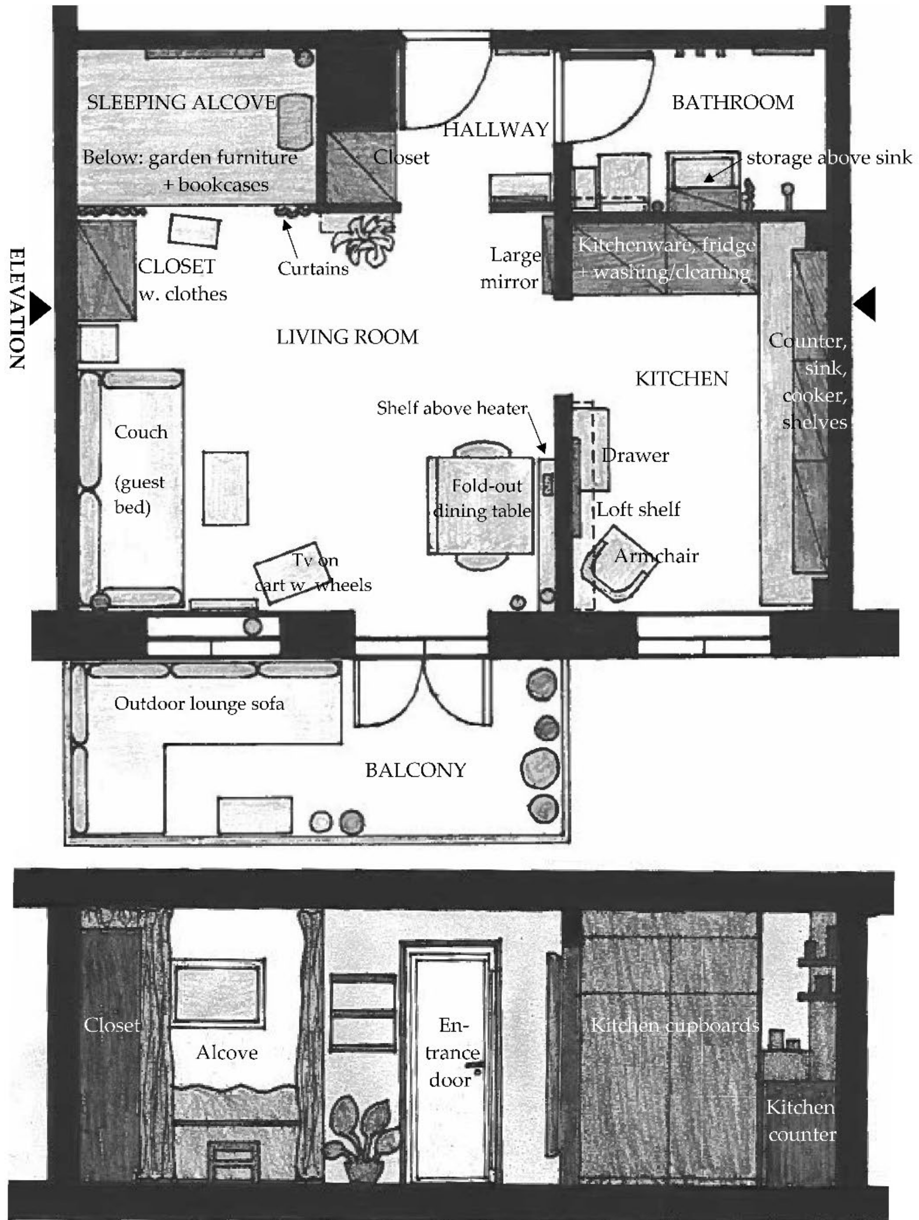

Figure 21. Plan and cross-section of dwelling in Case #5. Illustration by author.

Figure 22. Left: Agnes appreciates the occasional local flea market in the high-street. Behind it, another example of Danish residential architecture, designed by Thorkild Henningsen (who also designed the mentioned Bakkehusene) and Karl Larsen in the 1930s. Photo by Agnes. Right: Agnes' flat is located in a 1960s building originally designed as social housing for Copenhagen's marginalised population groups.

ORGANISATION AND USAGE OF THE DWELLING – CHOICES AND PRIORITISATIONS

Agnes' flat has three key characteristics: 1) The abundance of natural daylight flowing into the living room and the kitchen. Besides its two windows, the flat had a set of double glass doors inserted when the balcony was installed. Furthermore, the flat is located on the fifth floor, with no other buildings in front of it and facing west. Agnes highly appreciates the inflow of light and has accentuated it by painting the walls white and using mirrors here and there, yet the importance of this abundance of daylight has surprised her – both in terms of making the rooms pleasant to be in and in terms of making them appear more spacious. 2) The flat's storage-smart layout, so to speak. Being originally designed for low-income population groups, the flats were intentionally made compatible with standard-sized furniture like closets and bedframes. Now, fifty years later, Agnes could simply buy a standard closet in IKEA and make it fit perfectly into the niche in the hallway. Similarly, her new kitchen cupboards fit where the old ones had been, and her bed fits exactly into the alcove. However, the fifty-year-old layout acts in another, less favourable, way as well. 3) The layout is locked in its original topology of a combined living room and bedroom and a separate kitchen. The wall between the two rooms is a carrying wall, making it immensely costly for Agnes to tear down. Even though Agnes lives alone, which makes an exposed sleeping area more acceptable, it bothers her when having guests over, as she would have liked to keep her bedroom private, and when her partner stays at the flat, as their circadian rhythms are very uneven. Instead of an open bedroom, she would have preferred an open kitchen, both to eliminate the wasted space of the multiple walking lines in the two rooms and due to her distaste for a tiny dining table in the kitchen:

> *The layout of this flat is old-fashioned. It would be much more durable with an open kitchen and a separate bedroom – especially if a couple was to live here. … And a small kitchen with a tiny table and two chairs is just so dreary. A bit sad to look at somehow.*

Avoiding her home becoming shabby or sad is important to Agnes; she is highly conscious of the conventional association between small homes and marginalised population groups in society. Accordingly, maintaining a certain level of comfort and aesthetics in her home is of great significance to her, and she has thus prioritised time and money – to a certain extent – on decorating and renovating the flat after she bought it. Chapter 8 will develop this discussion of perceptions of decency and shabbiness in relation to small homes. Nevertheless, the open-plan

Figure 23. The different functions of Agnes' home expand and contract depending on the practices being performed. Thus, sometimes the dining room function, so to speak, takes over most of the living space (green cloud), and at other times, the bedroom function (blue cloud) expands beyond the actual alcove and adjacent closet, and equally the living room function (yellow cloud). Illustration by author.

living room has the advantage of flexibility: Agnes has noticed how each of the three functions in the living room (i.e. sleeping area, dining area and lounging area) expand and contract over the course of the day:

> *Which room [does air quotes] you are in depends so much on the activities. I mean, right now it's very much a lounge. But while we're sleeping, most of this room turns into a bedroom – the closet is in play, clothes are left on the floor… Yet when we're having a meal, we tend to put down dishes here and there, so it all becomes very dining room-ish. Things are sort of inflated in size.*

Thus, a form of zoned flexibility is created, as illustrated in Figure 23, though not by way of a custom-made design concept like in the examples mentioned in section 1.2. This is an unplanned, practiced kind of flexibility. However, the heritage from minimalistic modernist architecture is evident in the design of Agnes' 1960s building. The square open-plan topology of her flat thus did not occur by accident.

Figure 24. Left: Agnes loves the large inflow of light into the flat, and that it sits high above the rest of the neighbourhood. (Note that Agnes has rearranged the living room after taking the photographs, especially to avoid the kitchen arrangement that she dislikes, as described. Her current organisation of the flat corresponds to the depicted plan and cross-section.) Centre: Agnes likes the cosy alcove, which has lots of storage underneath the raised bed. Right: She dislikes the poor space organisation of the kitchen. All photos by Agnes.

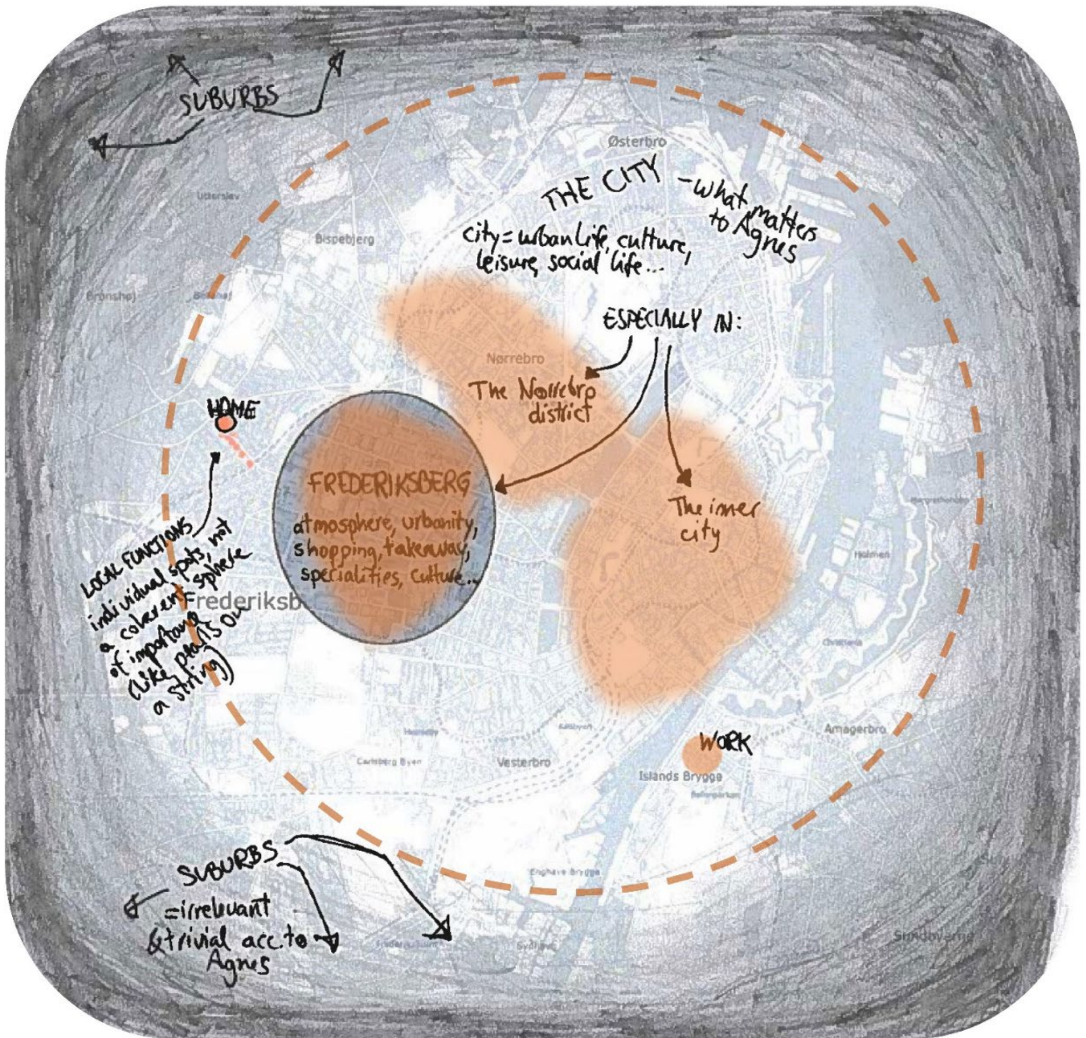

Figure 25. The illustration depicts how the city is what matters to Agnes – the surroundings and suburbs of Copenhagen are unfamiliar and irrelevant to her. Furthermore, it shows how other parts of the city than her home neighbourhood is where she has her focus and to which she feels a connection. This especially goes for the district of Frederiksberg. Her home neighbourhood, by contrast, is merely a collection of individual practical functions. Figure contains data from Styrelsen for Dataforsyning og Effektivisering [Agency for Datasupply and Efficiency], "*SDFE-kort*", downloaded November 2020. Illustration by author.

4.6. CASE 6

Household: Tanja, 50, and Frank, 50, married. Both are trained actors, and together they run a children's theatre based in the city of Aarhus, where they live. They also have a dog, which is allowed lots of space in the home.

Dwelling: A second-floor flat in a cooperative housing association. The flat is located in a 1930s building block next to a large road. On one side, there are parking spaces, and on the other, a shared courtyard with a lawn and seating areas. The flat covers 49 square metres (thus 24.5 square metres per person) and contains a bedroom, a living room, a kitchen, a tiny hall, a tiny wardrobe in the former toilet and a new bathroom. Recently, the housing association had two tower-shaped extensions constructed on the back of the building containing new bathrooms for the flats. Until then, showering took place in the shared bathroom facilities in the basement. The basement also contains a shared workshop, a combined guest room and hobby room, washing facilities and storage areas. Finally, the flat has two small balconies.

LIVING IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

The flat is located in the city of Aarhus. It is in a building located on the main arterial road leading into the city from the west, on the border between the denser urban neighbourhoods and the suburb of Aabyhøj. Tanja and Frank are very fond of Aarhus, and they especially like the more central neighbourhoods due to their atmosphere and cultural life. They like the historical layers, the diversity of impressions, the liveliness and the cultural facilities. Their own neighbourhood, on the other hand, appeals much less to them, because it caters most for motorists and through-traffic rather than pedestrians. Accordingly, they orient their activities towards the inner neighbourhoods, and their home neighbourhood has primarily become a point of departure. To the south and east, Tanja and Frank's building is surrounded by other blocks of flats as well as retail shops and industry in low-density environments catering for customers or employees arriving by car (large-scale supermarkets, home improvement centres, offices, wholesale dealers etc.). The area was constructed in the 1930s and 1940s as a new industrial district to service the growing city. The iconic local brewery Ceres was located adjacent to the area. Today, the old factory area has been redeveloped into a new mixed-use neighbourhood named after the brewery. Yet with the high-rise character of the area's new buildings, this neighbourhood only adds to the "*corridor*" feeling of the area, as Frank terms it. To the north, Tanja and Frank's building adjoins an area of allotment gardens, one of which Tanja and Frank own. During the summer months, they live in the small pavilion on the plot. However, the area of allotment gardens is an extension of their home neighbourhood for them all year, and they

highly appreciate this small pocket of greenery and cock-eyed houses. To the west, their building neighbours the upper-middle-class residential suburban neighbourhood of Aabyhøj, which Tanja and Frank also find charming and use as a nice place to go for a walk with their dog. It is an old neighbourhood with detached houses in the traditional Danish early 20th-century style, similar to those depicted in Case description #5. Similar to the inner city neighbourhoods, Tanja and Frank like the historical layers and the cultural heritage of this neighbourhood. Chapter 7 elaborates on such perceptions of different types of urban and suburban neighbourhoods.

HOUSING CHOICE

Tanja was born and raised in Aarhus and has a strong attachment to the city. She met Frank, who is American, while living in the US. When they moved to Denmark 25 years ago, they purchased the flat they still live in today. They chose to live in Aarhus due to Tanja's strong roots here and due to the extensive cultural scene here, particularly in terms of theatre. The small flat was very cheap at the time, fitting their financial situation. As their finances improved, they bought a cottage in the countryside, approximately one hour away, and later an allotment garden with a pavilion, located only two hundred metres from their flat. Like the household of Case #1, they wanted recreational qualities and a change of scenery to balance their daily lives in the flat. They love spending time at the allotment, yet they never use the cottage and have thus put it up for sale. From time to time, Tanja and Frank have considered purchasing a house instead of the flat. Yet the freedom granted by very low housing costs and very little housework and maintenance, alongside the advantages of living in the city as opposed to the countryside (as they had their eyes set on rural properties) weighed heavier. Tanja and Frank have come to terms with being perceived as the odd ones out with regards to their housing choice, as they have generally been conscious about choices on how to lead their lives:

> *Frank: Our family and friends know that this issue is off the table [laughs].*
>
> *Tanja: They know we're not millionaires, and they know that we're all about theatre and that's where our focus is. We've also chosen to not have children, and they know how that was a very conscious choice. It's mostly people that don't know us who ask about these things, because we've made a break with conventionality, but that's life – I mean, we're also vegetarians, people always have questions about that too [laughs].*

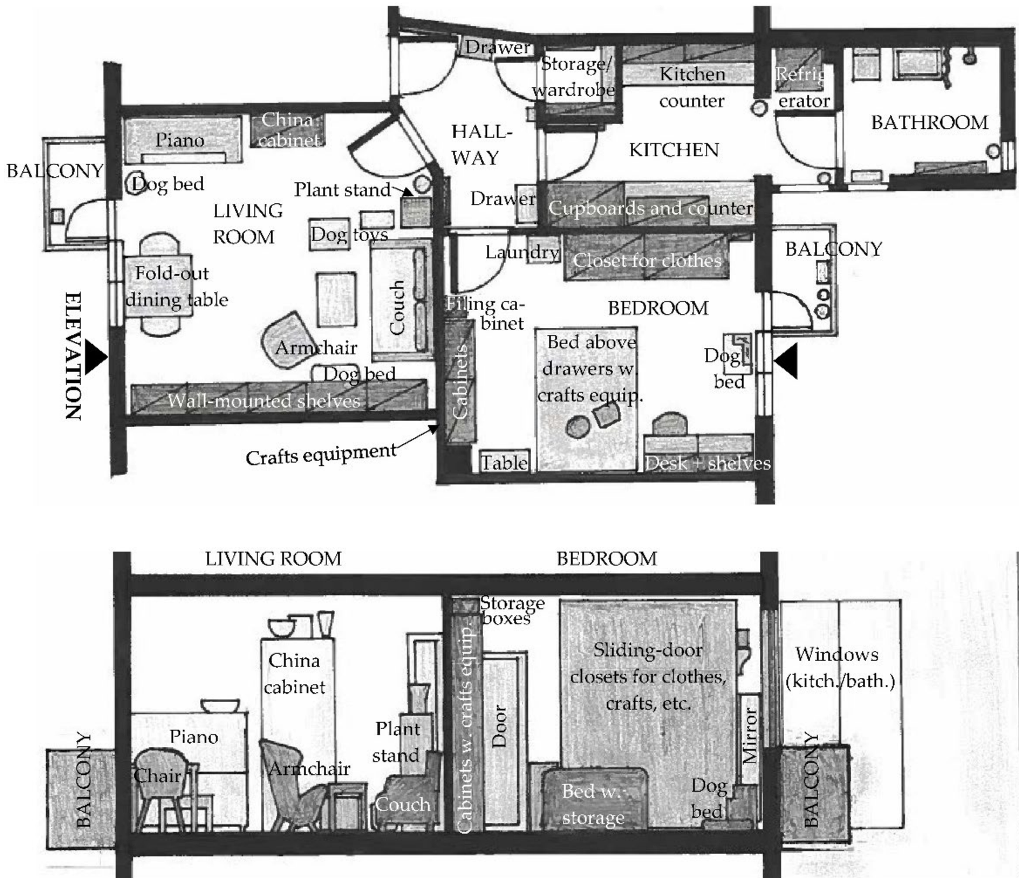

Figure 26. Plan and cross-section of dwelling in Case #6. Illustration by author.

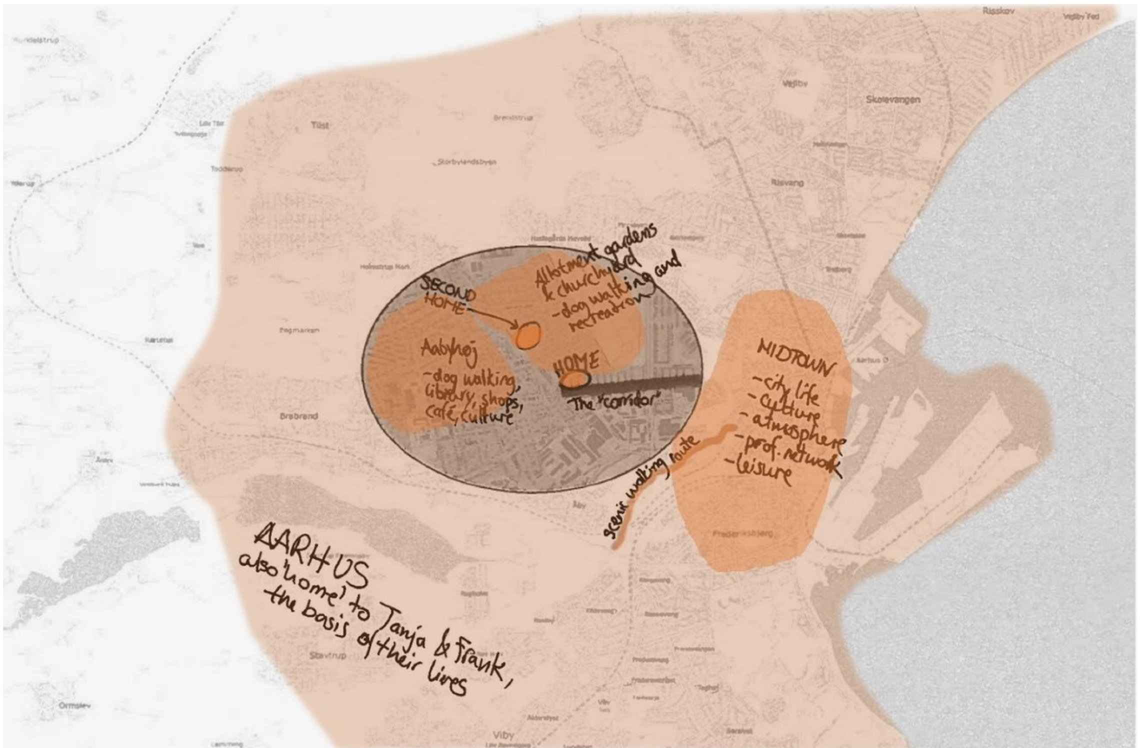

Figure 27. The illustration marks in orange the spheres, which mean something to Tanja and Frank. Home is a central place to them, as is their allotment, and the urbanised area of Aarhus in general is important to them too. The map also illustrates how the suburb of Aabyhøj and the natural area containing the allotment gardens and a churchyard are spheres, which mean something them, whereas they find the rest of their neighbourhood unappealing, especially the 'corridor-like' space along the main road. The central part of Aarhus, on the other hand, is a sphere of much more significance to them. Figure contains data from Styrelsen for Dataforsyning og Effektivisering [Agency for Datasupply and Efficiency], "*SDFE-kort*", downloaded November 2020. Illustration by author.

ORGANISATION AND USAGE OF THE DWELLING – CHOICES AND PRIORITISATIONS

Tanja and Frank's flat is a materialisation of the fusing together both of two people and of private life and work life. Their home is a place for storing things, for doing activities and for socialising (with guests or occasionally with their neighbours). Consequently, being able to expand their home is absolutely crucial for compact living to suit Tanja and Frank, and they use the shared facilities in the basement of the building and their allotment garden, nearly as if they were actual extensions physically attached to the home.

Tanja and Frank are definitely materialists. Not in the sense that they go for high-end design or expensive home gadgets, but in the sense that their physical possessions matter to them. It matters to be surrounded by the objects that mean something to them; either because they use these objects for work (i.e. theatre props), for hobbies, for housework, or because the objects have sentimental value to them. A clear feature of their flat is the abundance of arts and crafts equipment for producing costumes, scenery, props etc., which is stored and systematised in cabinets, closets and drawers reaching from floor to ceiling. Besides this, kitchen cabinets are packed with utensils and tableware, closets hold large amounts of clothes, and moreover Frank and Tanja have chosen to consciously prioritise space for items of emotional or cultural value: a wall piano, as many as three baskets for their pug, and a tall china cabinet filled with heirlooms. The latter is a source of disagreement between Frank and Tanja, as he would happily see these items go. For Tanja however, they hold substantial sentimental value and are necessary for proper entertaining. The compact storage of items in their flat gives it a cave-like feeling, almost as if spaces for moving about or spaces for a lounging arrangement or a dining set were carved out of the rock mass. Besides the items stored in the flat itself, Tanja and Frank have additional storage in a depot in the shared basement of the building, in their allotment garden pavilion, and in a rented warehouse elsewhere in Aarhus (the latter is for storing large-scale theatre sets).

A contributory reason for the abundance of items surrounding Tanja and Frank is without doubt that they run a firm from their own home – an equipment-heavy sort of firm. However, the key reason is that Tanja and Frank simply feel at home with their objects, their objects are pivotal for the flat to become their home. Conversely, the flat itself, i.e. the dwelling unit as such, is not that important to them. This is clear, firstly, in their housing history, secondly, in their prioritising of items and storage over airiness or a more minimalistic feeling in their home, and thirdly, in their prioritising of other activities over renovation or maintenance. Tanja and Frank are tired of their kitchen, which they find worn down and impractical (it is in fact the flat's original kitchen from 1939), and they are tired of

feeling cramped by furniture and items, e.g. a drawer blocking a door or the continuous accumulation of objects both in the flat and at the allotment. However, they do not allocate time or money to change these things, but focus instead on the theatre, their hobbies and being sociable. This is not to say that they dislike their new bathroom, on the contrary, but they have not had to build it themselves. And as it has turned out, they actually miss the occasional chit-chats with neighbours when queuing for the shared bathrooms in the basement.

The basement of the building generally offers highly valued facilities, which are perceived by Tanja and Frank as key for compact living to work for them:

> *Tanja: A key reason why we're not thinking of moving out is that our living space isn't just this flat, it includes the basement too. Our communal room, the workshop, the laundry room – and our nice courtyard too.*
>
> *Frank: If we had only had the flat then…*
>
> *Tanja: Yeah, then we had moved out long ago.*

These facilities are highly valued by the couple due to their evident relevance. Conventionally, such shared residents' facilities contain laundry rooms, communal rooms equipped to host private parties, or workshops for bike repairing or woodworking. In Denmark, social housing estates, co-housing and student housing are usually equipped with such facilities, whereas they are only found occasionally in conventional building blocks in the cities. Tanja and Frank's building is one of these few, and additionally, its facilities are unusually extensive: The residents have decided between them to develop their basement communal room into a multifunctional room with space for social gatherings, hobby projects (Tanja uses it a lot for sowing projects) and overnight guests. Additionally, they have a shared laundry room and a workshop equipped with tools and a work bench. Interestingly however, they rarely use the communal room for social gatherings. In fact, when they invite guests, they prefer to squeeze together in the flat. This is partly due to practical issues, i.e. having to carry tableware, food and drinks up and down the stairs, and due to the limited size advantage of replacing their own living room with the communal room. Yet it is clear that hosting means a lot, especially to Tanja, and that cosiness and homeliness are key parts of opening her home to people.

Figure 28. Left: The living / dining room. The couple's beloved pug has three baskets, yet in this photo, she is lying on the sofa. Right: The original 1939 kitchen is supplemented by self-built shelves. It is packed with kitchenware and needs renovation, but although Tanja and Frank would like to fix this, they prioritise their time and money on other things.

CHAPTER 5. INITIAL ANALYTICAL FINDINGS

The following chapter takes the first analytical steps of the project. After systematically describing the six cases in the preceding chapter, this chapter constructs the first transverse and analytical layers onto the case descriptions. It presents concrete, grounded and case-proximate findings, and it remains close to the concrete making of home in the case study dwellings – the ways of conduct, the choices and priorities made, and the concrete interaction between the physical environment and the human practices. The chapter is organised into five sections presenting five different analytical themes. These make up relatively independent themes rather than one coherent account, but all themes are highly relevant for the overall purpose. Given the multifaceted body of knowledge produced by applying an explorative approach, allowing for analytical findings that fall outside the scope of the three main analytical strands of the dissertation (i.e. the academic papers in chapters 6-8) is important for grasping and comprehending this emergent phenomenon of urban compact living in all its complexities and ambiguities. Furthermore, the analytical findings presented in this chapter provide building blocks of importance for the three academic papers providing satisfactory answers to the research question posed. Note that as chapters 6-8 are stand-alone papers submitted for publication independently of this dissertation, no direct references to the present chapter are made in the papers.

5.1. HOME AS WELL-KNOWN ESTABLISHED BOXES

The first analytical theme explores how the case study households seek to create a home that fits into a set of well-known established categories or 'boxes', so to speak. A fair assumption would be that the households have sought to revolutionise the home by recasting traditional topologies into a brand new compact-living understanding of the home, as this is the prevailing approach to compact dwellings in international architecture and design (see Chapter 1), and as rural tiny house living is considered to have an anti-establishment character to it (Shearer & Burton, 2019). However, the case study shows how the households instead uphold conventional home topologies, that is, they organise their dwellings into well-known, well-established room types, and functions conventionally associated with these. Furthermore, the study shows that the households deliberately prioritise to do so. Case #2 provides an illustrative

example: The household has prioritised establishing a separate bedroom, a separate children's room, a separate living room, etc. and locating the functions conventionally associated with these rooms accordingly. Typical examples of dissolving traditional domestic categories found in international architecture and design solutions for compact living are those of merging multiple functions into one room, either by eliminating partition walls in favour of open plans, or by relocating functions from the rooms in which they are conventionally located. The solution typically is to construct zones within a room, for instance by sleeping on a sofa bed or a fold-down bed in the living room or creating children's zones instead of children's rooms, e.g. on inserted mezzanines or behind curtains. Yet to the Case #2 family, these alternative solutions are not appealing. Part of the reason has to do with practicality; as Johanne says:

> *We've tried considering lots of different solutions, but… For instance, a sofa bed or a fold-down bed, but we're not the kind of people who make their beds. I just know that it would be completely chaotic, the bed would only be folded up every now and then, and instead, our living space would be full of messy sheets and blankets… No way. It would only be made when there were guests coming over.*

The well-established topology of a home provides a tried-and-tested solution to basic domestic needs. Storing overcoats near the front door makes sense, as does comfortable seating in eye's view of the television, and – put bluntly – the separation of sanitary functions from cooking functions. Though architecture and design work on compact dwellings demonstrates how unconventional, yet functional, topologies can be created, breaking with conventionality in this sense was not a purpose behind choosing compact living for the cases of this study. As indicated in the case descriptions, their housing choices were driven primarily by location preferences and conditioned financially by the housing market. This will be elaborated in Chapter 6. The findings presented in this section support the absence of revolutionary ideals as motivation factors behind choosing urban compact living for these households. The households are trying to create homes that fit their imaginaries of home, as put by Blunt & Dowling (2006). The process of organising and adapting the physical environment is thus part of this work, and the findings presented here suggest that conventional perceptions or imaginaries of home are widely adopted, underscoring the deep influence of such norms of the home (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020; Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2013a). Chapter 8 will examine precisely the role of conventional norms for home-making by the households under study. This is not to say that the households disregard of all unconventional solutions. The latest reorganisation of the flat in Case #2 (the sliding wall) bears witness to this. Yet to the case study households, the well-known and the well-established generates assurance and calm. As Emil's quote

below demonstrates, creating a home-as-we-know-it, so to speak, provides him with a feeling of certainty, comfort and ease:

> *You don't necessarily have to think all traditionalistically, and I'm generally in favour of sometimes thinking outside the box, but I mean, particularly regarding this, I'm quite satisfied that every box has its own function. Like, that there is a kids' room, so you know where to put the toys, and you know that this is where the children sleep, and then you have the living room, which has another function, and the bedroom and so on. I think it produces calm to know about the functions of the different rooms. (Emil, Case #2)*

Looking across the six cases, it is evident how none of them deviate substantially from the layout scheme of a conventional Danish (or Western) home. Comparing them with a conventional detached house, which could easily look like the example sketched in Figure 29, demonstrates this traditional topology: One enters through the front door into a hallway with clothing storage; sleeping is in more or less private rooms, couples together and wardrobes located in the sleeping rooms; children have their playing areas in the rooms they sleep in[25]; kitchens are separate if the original construction demands it, otherwise they are combined with an area for eating and an area with a sofa and a coffee table; and finally, bathrooms are in a separate room, often the smallest one of the home. The main differences between the six case study homes and larger dwellings, as they conventionally appear in Denmark today, lie in 1) the quantity of each of the conventional room types, i.e. the number of bedrooms, bathrooms or perhaps living rooms, 2) the size of each of the conventional room types, translating into the size of furniture and the amount of space in between, and 3) the addition of utility rooms, offices or guest rooms etc. Even larger dwellings only rarely contain other room types, like a games room or a studio or something completely different, or present a radically unique dwelling layout (examples at HusCompagniet, n.d.). In other words, compact living has not caused the case study households to turn home-as-we-know-it upside down. Of course, it could be argued that tried-and-tested solutions simply function better in practice, or it could be held that the case study households simply lack the creativity to revolutionise the concept of home. However, the study strongly suggests that complying with a well-established understanding of home creates a sense of reassurance and meaningfulness in the households, and that this sense is strongly founded in cultural and socio-structural ideas about what a good home is (Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2013a).

[25] However, smaller children often sleep in the parents' room and have their toys in the living room, for instance, this is how the Case #2 family organised their home, when the children were younger.

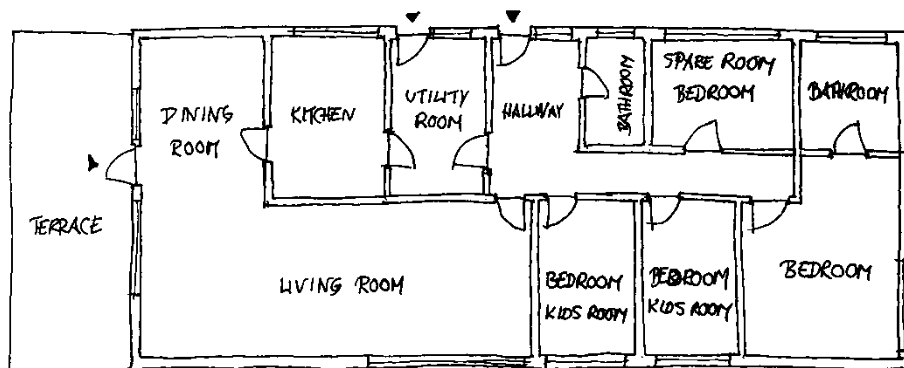

Figure 29. Typical layout of Danish single-family houses in the style of 1960s and 1970s detached standard houses, which are in fact the most common housing type in Denmark today. Countless versions of a plan like the one sketched here can be found across the country. Illustration by author.

5.2. COMPARING THE CASES WITH DESIGN SOLUTIONS FOR COMPACT LIVING

The second analytical theme compares more generally architecture and design solutions targeted at compact living with the approaches of the cases. As described in Chapter 1, architecture and design has presented examples of quite radical views on ideas of the home[26], for instance by dissolving the permanence of physical solutions in favour of flexibility, by discarding divisions between rooms, by radically minimising the volume of physical objects and furniture, or by minimising the use of colours in the dwelling units (Klanten & Kurze, 2017; Zeiger, 2016). Even though the households have not chosen to disrupt conventional understandings of home, they have applied some techniques similar to those found in these conceptual versions of compact living. The following section will examine the techniques applied by the six cases, showing both differences and similarities.

Tailor-made or customised solutions perceiving spaces in cubic metres instead of square metres (to activate all three dimensions of a room), is a key characteristic of current architectural and design solutions for compact living (Klanten & Kurze,

[26] While all the households of the case study are familiar with such approaches, their degree of interest in them varies, ranging from Case #6 not paying much attention to them at all, to Majbrit (Case #4) studying them in detail when designing her tiny house from top to bottom or Stine (Case #3) and Agnes (Case # 5), who both have a general interest in interior design.

2017; Zeiger, 2016). Amongst the cases, cases 1, #2 and #4 have made most elaborate use of custom-built furniture and focus on cubic-metres, mainly in the form of loft platforms or a wall bed with integrated storage. In all three cases, these techniques have allowed space reserved for sleeping to double as a play area, a lounge or storage space above or underneath the beds. Still, compared with examples of compact living solutions in architecture and design, the use of custom-made integrated furnishings making effective use of all cubic metres is highly limited in the cases. An illustrative example for comparison is that of the so-called service core as seen in Klanten & Kurze (2017): a freestanding module containing kitchen, bathroom and storage amenities and often with an area for sleeping on the top. One overriding reason for this limited unfurling of custom-made furnishing is voiced by all the cases: While they acknowledge the beauty and smartness of such tailor-made solutions, being able to realise them for ordinary households with layman skills is questioned emphatically[27]. As Johanne of Case #2 puts it: *"Seriously, we're nowhere near the carpenter-joiner skill level!"* Additionally, the case study households are critical in their assessment of design solutions, like Majbrit's criticism of ladder-accessed loft beds (see description of Case #4) or Johanne's discarding of fold-out furniture (see section above). While the designer may perceive the affordances (Norman, 2013) of a ladder-accessed loft bed as space optimising and functionally efficient, Majbrit perceives it as bodily and sensorially tiresome and uncomfortable. The households' questioning of the in-practice functioning of such design solutions highlights the way home-making happens in an interaction between the physical environment, humans in their subjective character, and the concrete practices of these humans in daily life (Pink, 2012).

Extensive use of a cubic-metre approach can only be identified in the case studies for storage solutions. Large closets and tall cupboards are lined along the walls to make room for as much storage as possible. Keeping the arguments above in mind, this technique does not require craftsman skills. The technique is applied most extensively by Case #6, in which the household makes thorough use of all spaces and niches from floor to ceiling to store the extensive amounts of items in their home. In some cases, namely #3, #4 and #5, a highly different approach is employed: Instead of making room for more things, these households have cut back on the amount of possessions in their homes in favour of a lighter and more airy interior style. Their use of the cubic-metre approach thus aims to enhance this

[27] The same applies to the usage of flexible furnishings, like movable kitchens or raisable bath tubs (see Klanten & Kurze, 2017; Zeiger, 2016 for examples), these are highly difficult and costly to construct. In the cases, flexibility is primarily used in more conventional ways: sofabeds and expanding dining tables, as well as in the sliding door of Case #2.

airy style rather than make room for more things. Thus, these cases take minimalism into account by limiting the amount of furniture and trinkets, particularly visible ones, and using slender interior and light colours. In contrast to this approach, the household of Case #6 gains a feeling of homeliness and wellbeing from tucking themselves in, so to speak, with objects they value (see this case description). The choice of decoration style is thus not simply veneer, but an integrate part of making home; of creating a place that fits and expresses the identity of the occupant and instigates a feeling of homeliness, attachment and control (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020; Reimer & Leslie, 2004). However, compared with examples of minimalism found in architecture and design, even the households of cases #3, #4 and #5 make use of minimalism to a much lesser degree and in a much less radical way. The compact flat *Appartement Spectral* (Betillon & Dorval-Bory, n.d.), a radically minimalistic all-white unit that nearly comes across as a blank canvas, provides an illustrative example hereof. In this view of a dwelling as merely a physical space effectively arranged to provide for sleeping, eating, using the bathroom and storing certain objects, the heritage from Le Corbusier's subsistence dwelling (Le Corbusier, 1924) is evident. Yet such radical minimalistic approaches do not resonate with the cases of the study. As Agnes (Case #5) puts it: "*That's just not cosy, there's no personality to it*". Such housing units are perceived as sterile, cold, anonymous and alienating – they are perceived as highly un-homely. This underscores clearly that a dwelling is not automatically a home – this requires the emotional and relational work of making home (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020). Furthermore, it suggests that the motivation for choosing urban compact living should be found elsewhere than in a desire to create radical new dwelling topologies or interior solutions. Chapters 6 and 7 will explore these motivations.

Two other techniques used in architecture and design working with compact dwellings can be identified in the case study, namely those of using openness and using light (i.e. brightness) as ways of enhancing the feeling of physical spaciousness. Openness and light are of great importance to the three cases seeking an airy and slender style in their dwellings, cases #3, #4 and #5. The households of these cases enthusiastically discuss their preferences for an open-plan solution, the use of zones and ways of enhancing the flow of daylight and sense of spaciousness in their homes. To them, the brightness and airiness of their homes is of great significance, and light and openness are thus closely connected to the choices of these three cases to downsize on possessions and opt for slender furniture. For instance, Case #3 has torn down interior walls in the flat to enhance openness and flow of light and thereby enhance the feeling of physical spaciousness. In Case #5, mirrors and light wall colours are used to enhance the inflow and reflection of daylight, and the flat's balcony lets in light through its glazed doors and helps dissolve the borders between the inside of the flat and the

open air and unblocked view outside. This is of great significance to the occupant, Agnes: "*It adds so much spaciousness, simply just being able to take two steps outside and then go back in*", she says. Finally, to make the flat appear more spacious, Agnes (Case #5) has reduced the number of visible objects and trinkets, downsized on objects in general and kept the colour choice relatively consistent by using blues for contrasting the whites and wooden shades throughout the flat. These examples show the importance of considering physical and sensorially perceived spaciousness (Fisher-Gewirtzmann, 2017), even when arguing for the inclusion of social and cultural aspects in the understanding of domestic spaciousness. But the differences between the aesthetic and decoration preferences of the households simultaneously underscore, first the importance of considering social and cultural aspects of spaciousness too. For instance, to the household of Case #1, social spaciousness understood as a laid-back and informal atmosphere is opposed to a stringent and controlled decoration style. Second, the differences underscore how the feeling of homeliness does not rest solely on the feeling of spaciousness, but involves multiple dimensions (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2013a). In fact, to households like that of Case #6, homeliness comes in a large part from being surrounded by objects of sentimental and practical value. The three papers (chapters 6-8) examine further the role of spaciousness, understood as reaching beyond the physical, in relation to urban compact living.

5.3. CHOREOGRAPHIES OF COMPACT LIVING

The third analytical theme explores what could be termed as the choreography of compact living. The case study shows how compact living can generate the creation of a certain way of conduct agreed upon by the household members – nearly as an embodied choreography. Shared routines and norms are of course common parts of life in any type of home, spacious ones too. The development of a choreographical character to such routines and norms depends on the configuration of dwellings in relation to the practices being performed in them. The physical compressing of multiple functions, a sort of compact functionality, can spatially intensify and compress activity. The configuration of human practices can further this intensification, for instance through large convergences of activity patterns within the household (Pink et al., 2017). Such choreography resemblance stands out very clearly in the case study. At times, household members must literally bend their bodies in certain angles to avoid collision with each other or with the physical environment. The weekday mornings in the kitchen of Case #1 illustrate this very well:

> *Then someone will be brushing their teeth, while others are preparing their breakfast, and someone might be emptying the dishwasher and... then you like do a kind of dance around each other, you know. It's not something we've ever*

> *talked about, but I think we've developed some sort of choreography of moving around each other. Like on a submarine or a boat where everything has a designated place and is adapted, and people have to follow certain patterns, or pass each other in a certain bodily way. (Mette, Case #1)*

The spatial and temporal bundling together of people, practices and materialities makes weekday mornings in the kitchen and the adjoining hallway and bathroom resemble the inside of a submarine. When compact functionality is in play, it becomes acutely evident how the physical environment of the home 'strikes back', as scholars like Norman (2013) argue, and how humans always interpret its affordances in their own ways. In Case #1, the compact functionality is particularly outspoken, because the household has purposely compressed the functions of their home and eliminated in-between space (see the case description), which could otherwise dilute such compact functionality. As described in the section above, they prefer this solution to a more minimalistic and airy style in their home. Instead of adapting the materiality of their home, the household members have adapted their practices to this compact functionality by embodying a certain way of conduct, as the above quote illustrates, and by adjusting their daily schedules to dilute compact functionality through time. While the kitchen, bathroom and hallway are highly active places on weekday mornings, causing the father Anders to refer to them as *"køkken-bugt-motorvejen [the kitchen-hallway-bathroom motorway]"* in a humorous reference to a particular Danish motorway, they become quiet places later in the day. Figure 30 depicts the social and active spaces in the flat on mornings and afternoons/evenings, respectively, and shows how the morning motorway areas shift into some of the quieter parts of the home later in the day. To make use of this, some family

Figure 30. The pink clouds depict the social and active spaces in the Case #1 flat on mornings and afternoons/evenings, respectively, and show how the morning 'køkken-bugt' highway shifts into a quieter part of the home later in the day. Illustration by author.

members get up earlier in the mornings or shower in the evening, and the family has a rule that only one person at a time is to cook dinner. The family members also use time as a diluent of compact functionality in other ways, for instance, when Anders makes sure to only practice singing or guitar when other family members are not home. The notion of a choreography of compact living sheds light on the challenges to realising imaginaries of home, because these at times collide with the concrete physical environment. Chapter 8 explores such collisions further.

5.4. THE PRIVACY CHALLENGE

The fourth theme examines the challenge of creating individual privacy in the context of compact living. The choice of some family members of Case #1 to get up earlier in the morning to avoid the motorway traffic jams in the kitchen bears witness to the significance of creating such private spaces. According to Lawson (2001), the point of intersection between privacy and community is an utterly critical component of human space, and homes are by no means an exception to this. However, homes are not necessarily able to provide privacy within the home, that is, privacy for the individual household members from each other or from visitors. Sobh & Belk (2011) identify this need for individual privacy as a culturally relative[28] component having a key role in modern Western societies, linked to individualism and inviolable autonomy. The case study clearly demonstrates this importance of individual privacy in the home, but it also demonstrates that accommodating such needs can be highly difficult in compact living and collides with imaginaries of a decent and appropriate home. Chapter 8 will explore the influence of such perceptions of appropriateness and decency. The case study shows how attempts to accommodate the needs for individual privacy prompt various alternative takes on privacy. As shown in the section above, time is one of them. Another alternative way of creating privacy is to construct small shielded-off islands of privacy within the social space. For instance, the daughter of Case #1 often crawls into a small nook between the kitchen window and the refrigerator. This nook is one of her favourite features of the flat (see Figure 31). Agnes in Case #5 lives in a studio and uses curtains and a large closet placed in front of her sleeping alcove to create a sense of bedroom privacy within the living room. Another technique is to use practices as a sign, that is, by signalling one's need for privacy through behaviour or by the use of physical objects affording

[28] And temporally relative, they argue, stressing the considerable novelty of the idea of individual privacy, even in the Western world – for instance, the idea of individual children's rooms only reaches back one or two generations (Sobh & Belk, 2011).

social distance. Tanja (Case #6), who has lived in a small apartment with her husband for twenty-five years, explains how the couple create zones of practiced privacy within the social space by using signs they both understand:

> *Each of us just withdraws when we need to. Turns on the TV or a tablet or sits back with our phone. Occasionally, I can say aloud that I'm gonna withdraw for a while, but usually we're just able to sense it, really – we're together all the time, after all. Frank will sit down with the computer, I'll start painting or drawing, we don't really say it aloud. (Tanja, Case #6)*

As Tanja's example shows, using this technique (with success) takes comprehensive and embodied mutual knowledge between the members of the household, in some ways similar to the everyday choreography described above – you need to know the rules of conduct, you need to be able to read the signs. Accordingly, bodily behaviour and practices of humans in interaction with non-human elements shape the performance of individual privacy in shared spaces (Pink 2012)[29]. Creating such privacy-within-social-space by using either shielding effects, time or bodily signs and behaviour does not require space, and accordingly, it helps obtain individual privacy in the home.

However, the need for privacy cannot be grasped solely through the perspectives above. As put forward by Pink (2012) and Pink et al. (2017), the sensorial plays a great part in the making of home, and visibility and audibility, or more correctly invisibility and inaudibility, are key to the feeling of privacy and perception of privacy in different spatialities (Lawson, 2001). Through distance, space can thus provide for this; however, the compact dwellings of this study do not offer such space. Consequently, the households must look to other features than distance in pursuing invisibility and inaudibility. Materiality can modify the effect of distance: walls, curtains or furniture can to different degrees create visual privacy between two spaces that are only centimetres apart. Similarly, walls, screens or sound insulating features can improve acoustic privacy between two contiguous spaces (Lawson, 2011). Yet applying such features successfully in the cases is not straightforward. A lack of flexibility in the physical structure of the dwellings can substantially complicate topological alterations targeted at improving the possibilities for individual privacy. While Agnes (Case #5) regrets the lack of an actual closed-off bedroom out of sight from the living room, her flat only has windows on one side and a bearing wall in the middle (see plan in case presentation, Chapter 4). Consequently, alterations will be both complicated and

[29] This applies outside homes as well, for instance in crowded public spaces where the avoidance of eye contact can perform spaces of privacy within the social space (Yaneva 2009).

costly. In contrast, the dwelling of Case #2 does provide the necessary flexibility for the family to accommodate five-year-old Karla's incipient need for privacy. Not wanting to isolate the children's room too much, the family has subdivided their living room by a large sliding door and created a children's room that allows for some privacy while remaining in close connection to the social space (see case presentation, Chapter 4). Furthermore, the construction preserves existing floorspace and the level of daylight in the living room. The physical structure thus influences opportunities for accommodating privacy needs substantially. However, the relation of the physical to the composition of the household is just as influential. In Case #2, the children are very young and their needs for privacy less absolute, while in families with older children, the need for private spaces is much more profound. Accommodating this entails making compromises in other regards. In Case #3, the privacy of the mother Stine has been deprioritised, as she sleeps on a sofa bed in the living room, while her two daughters each have their own room. However, Stine has the flat to herself every second week and thus uses time as a substitution for space in obtaining her privacy. A schism thus arises between favouring airiness, on the one hand, and privacy on the other. As mentioned earlier in this chapter and in the case description of Case #3 (Chapter 4), creating openness and airiness in the home is vital for Stine and accordingly a key motivation for compromising on privacy, whereas in Case #1, condensity and clutteredness in the home are associated with cosiness as opposed to minimalistic spaces. Combined with the substantial needs for individual privacy, the household has prioritised the privacy of the parents *alongside* the privacy of the two daughters. Instead, the access to daylight, fresh air and headspace in the parents' bedroom has been deprioritised (see Case #1 presentation in Chapter 4). These findings clearly illustrate how home is a matter of degrees and approximations rather than accomplishment (Boccagni & Boghenti, 2017). They thus bear witness to the complex weighing up of priorities in meeting the challenges of realising imaginaries of home, embedded as they are in personal, cultural and socio-structural contexts (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020). Chapter 8 explores such challenges of prioritising, for instance between aesthetics and privacy considerations, as in Case #3.

5.5. THE BALANCING EFFECT OF BOLT-HOLES

The fifth and final theme to be presented in this chapter of initial analytical findings deals with the role of places that function as a sort of bolt-hole for the case study households – bolt-holes referring to a place to breathe freely and a contrast to the bustling, compact city life. Accordingly, these are often quiet, relatively private places with recreational qualities. Yet while some bolt-holes are located far from the home, for instance the weekend cottage of Case #1 located in

the countryside (see case description in Chapter 4), others are so easily accessed that they function as direct extensions of the home. For instance, Tanja and Frank of Case #6 have their very own allotment garden with a cottage-like pavilion located only a two-minute walk from their flat. Accordingly, it has a strong extensive effect and nearly doubles their home. In fact, during the summer months, the allotment practically becomes their home. The idea was originally to use the allotment for work-related storage (i.e. for theatre items), yet Tanja and Frank have grown very fond of spending time there. As Tanja says, if hypothetically they were to relocate from Aarhus, they would regret the loss of the allotment much more than of the flat:

> *We've grown so fond of the allotment, we've become garden people, actually. I just love that garden. I'd be much more sad about losing the allotment than selling this flat.*

They perceive the area as a green pocket with a laid-back atmosphere contrasting with busy city life. They go there nearly every day throughout the year when walking their dog, attending to the garden or when looking for peace, quiet and fresh air. Furthermore, when having overnight guests, Tanja and Frank often divide the flat and the allotment between them and the guests. The allotment thus functions as a practical daily-life extension of the home by extending the physical space and as a bolt-hole and change of scenery by fulfilling sensory and cognitive needs that their flat cannot fulfil. These functions underscore how home touches upon multiple dimensions of Tanja and Frank's lives including practical ones like storage, and sensory, bodily and cognitive ones like quietness, being outdoors or attending to plants (Pink, 2012). In this way, the allotment is a small hub of physical spaciousness offering nearly suburban qualities like private gardens, detached houses, natural surroundings, quietness and open air. Yet instead of living permanently outside the city, Tanja and Frank have chosen to dose their intake of physical spaciousness in small bits and locate their base in high-density compact surroundings. The importance of living in the city indicated here will be examined in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7. The contrast-filled shifts between physical compactness and physical spaciousness resulting from this temporal dosing of spaciousness create a balance for Tanja and Frank, similar to the reciprocal relation between privacy and sociability (Lawson, 2001) touched upon earlier in this chapter.

The importance of such extensions of the homes offering bolt-hole effects is evident in other cases too, most obviously in Case #1, where their countryside cottage fulfils the same functions of temporal bolt-holes of physical spaciousness. To this household too, the contrast between the intense city life and quiet cottage life is paramount and of much more importance than obtaining more physical

spaciousness within their dwellings. Being able to afford an actual second home is not possible for all the case study households, however. Instead, balconies provide some of the qualities: an outdoor green spot for recreation, a private space (or perhaps semi-private, as neighbours can see and hear each other on the balconies), an easily accessible space, and a space of a highly different character than the flat. Another example is provided by the shared courtyard terrace used frequently by the family of Case #1; despite not being all-private, it offers bolt-hole qualities contrasting with their compact home.

Besides places functioning as bolt-holes, the case study households have access to another type of extension of the dwellings, namely shared facilities in their buildings. However, they are used to highly varying degrees. Case #6 have access to more comprehensive facilities than most urban dwellers, and they use them for arts and craft projects and as accommodation for overnight guests. Whereas the latter represents something the other case study households long for, such guest rooms are not available in their buildings. In these cases, shared facilities primarily consist in communal rooms available for social gatherings. However, the households do not make use of these. The study indicates that unless the households experience these facilities being *practiced* as social places, they prefer squeezing together with guests in their own dwellings for birthday celebrations or dinner parties. The feelings of cosyness and homeliness created through the continuous practicing of places as social are essential elements of social gatherings in the eyes of the households. Confirming this is the finding that the households frequently use their shared courtyard facilities for communal eatings with the households of their buildings and thus experience these as social places in practice. By example, the couple of Case #2 had their wedding reception in the courtyard.

This chapter has cast five thematic building blocks for the further development of the analysis: the assurance and calm in creating home as well-known established boxes; the non-revolutionary approach of the cases compared with approaches of conceptual design solutions targeted at compact living; the choreographies of compact living arising in the spatial-temporal condensation of people, practices and materiality; the trade-offs of accommodating privacy needs; and the balancing effect of temporal bolt-holes on urban compact living. These themes have shown how the physical environment can act back, so to speak, on humans in the spatially restricted context of compact living; how balances between social/private or quiet/bustling are important dimensions of home; and they have challenged assumptions that urban compact living is motivated by desires to revolutionise well-known, well-established perceptions of home. These findings will function as an initial analytical layer on the empirical data and will qualify the further analyses presented in the next three chapters.

Figure 31. Left: Daughter Ellen (Case #1) creates a nook of privacy on this stool in the kitchen between the refrigerator and the window. Photo by Ellen. Right: The allotment garden area functions as a bolt-hole for the household in Case #6. Photo by Frank.

CHAPTER 6. PAPER: CHOOSING URBAN COMPACT LIVING. A CASE STUDY OF AN UNCONVENTIONAL HOUSING CHOICE OF FAMILIES IN CONTEMPORARY DENMARK

by

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Abstract: In a welfare society like Denmark, deliberately downsizing on dwelling space is at odds with prevailing norms of good housing. Furthermore, the city is perceived as a place for youth or younger single adults, whereas family life is perceived as belonging to suburbia. Yet this paper explores the housing choice processes of urban compact living: middle-class households living in the city in much less space than conventionally. Existing research on this is lacking. Taking an explorative approach, the study is designed to allow this new empirical field to unfold and aims at grasping and understanding the themes and narratives at play. The study focusses on families with children living in Copenhagen, a city lauded for its liveability and high housing conditions, and in which urban compact living is thus very controversial. The paper identifies living in the city as a paramount part of imaginaries of home to an extent that dwellings are deprioritised. However, living in the city and compact living are both attributed features such as progressivity, social awareness, unruliness, and anti-materialism. Introducing a cultural and social understanding of spaciousness, the paper argues that in such narratives, the city and compact living are perceived as physically compact, yet socially spacious.

6.1. INTRODUCTION

Housing sizes conventionally increase almost proportionally with the economic capabilities of their occupants. This applies to a society like contemporary Denmark too (Statistics Denmark, 2020b). Furthermore, the city is perceived as a place for youth or younger single adults, whereas especially family life is perceived as belonging to suburbia (Karsten, 2020; Kerr et al., 2020; Lilius, 2014). This too applies to Danish society (Mechlenborg, 2012; Kristensen & Andersen,

2009). Yet recently, Denmark's larger cities have seen examples of middle-class households choosing to live on much less dwelling space, than this household type conventionally does. The spiralling housing prices in cities currently entail that middle-class households may not be able to afford larger dwellings in the city, but they *can* choose to move out of the city and obtain a much larger dwelling at the same cost, as the majority still does (Statistics Denmark, 2020b; Booi, Boterman & Musterd, 2020). Middle-class households living in very little space in the city is thus an unconventional housing choice. This paper terms it 'urban compact living'. In recent years, an increasing interest has been emerging internationally in deliberate downsizing of physical belongings and ideals of anti-consumption, based on arguments that this generates feelings of personal freedom and satisfaction. Research into non-urban forms of compact living, so-called tiny houses, has identified such motivations to be the drivers behind this particular housing choice (Boeckermann, Kaczynski & King, 2019; Anson, 2014; Shearer & Burton, 2019). However, research into the motivations behind choosing *urban* compact living is lacking. And though urban compact living still only makes up a small fraction of the urban Danish housing market[30], there is an increasing interest in it from policy makers, developers, architects and the media, suggesting that it might remain a part of urban housing in the future. Even worldwide interior giant IKEA has developed a *"small spaces"* line (IKEA, 2020). Therefore, solid knowledge about urban compact living is necessary to ensure that it is developed on qualified and informed ground. The present paper thus aims to contribute to filling this knowledge gap and accordingly asks *how the housing choice of urban compact living in a Danish context can be understood.*

Across the world, cities are currently experiencing increasing growth, to the extent that it has caused crises of housing shortage and severe lack of affordable housing (European Commission, 2020). These patterns recur in Danish cities too, especially in the capital, Copenhagen. A century ago, Copenhagen was filthy and overcrowded with poor housing conditions. Improving the general living conditions was a central part of the development of the welfare state, and suburbia was a key part of providing better housing conditions in healthier surroundings for the wider population (Andersen & Winther, 2010). However, Copenhagen was still a dilapidated and poor city until the end of the 20th century. Since then, massive investments in physical renovation, construction and infrastructure, centralisation of the public sector and strategies to strengthen the private sector turned round the development of Copenhagen. Gradually, the population composition changed, demographically (towards higher shares of youth) and economically (towards higher shares of middle- and high-income groups) (ibid.).

[30] How small has not yet been covered by research; this is a indeed new phenomenon in a Danish context.

This development tapped into international tendencies of urbanisation, yet in Copenhagen, the strategic developments combined with the welfare-state context has created a city with very high living conditions in terms of housing, health, education, social security, environment, and safety. In 2014, Copenhagen was lauded as *"the world's most liveable city"* (Brûlé, 2014). Furthermore, a general popularity of urban life seems to be at play, internationally and in Copenhagen. A significant body of literature has discussed how to conceptualise the intangible, yet very distinct, character of the urban environment that seems to have an alluring effect to it; and other contributions to research have examined the influence of this character on home-making and housing choice. However, the increasing urbanisation has caused a severe housing shortage in cities internationally, generating spiralling housing prices and competition for affordable housing (European Commission, 2020). In Copenhagen, these developments have accelerated due to the city's increasing share of high-income inhabitants. This challenges housing conditions, even for the middle-class, and gives rise to concerns that Denmark's high housing standards will be squandered. Dwelling sizes play a key role in this regard, as physical spaciousness has been a core element in ideals of good housing from the offset. City of Copenhagen has set minimum size requirements for housing units in new developments (City of Copenhagen, 2019), and Denmark has the second highest average for floorspace in the EU (Eurostat, 2018). Thus, introducing urban compact living is highly controversial, as experienced in many countries (Waite, 2015), but extensively in a Danish context. This paper aims to explore the role of the city for housing choice processes in the field of urban compact living, where macro-scale norms of good housing as spacious housing are on the table.

To pinpoint the unconventionality of urban compact living, this study focusses on families with children. Only one in eight Danish households with children live in flats in urbanised areas[31] (Statistics Denmark, 2020f), and families with children make up the demographic group most likely to live in suburban single-family houses (Kristensen & Andersen, 2009). These patterns reflect persistent discourses of suburbia as the appropriate environment for families. Thus, urban compact living is highly unconventional in a contemporary Danish context, but for families with children, it is even more unconventional. New housing choice research has suggested a diversification of analytical parameters due to increasing household diversification, for instance by introducing lifestyle, while however calling for further examination of the concept. Picking up this thread, this paper takes an

[31] Of the remainder, approximately 70% live in single-family houses, and 15% in flats outside urban areas (Statistics Denmark, 2020f).

explorative, ethnographic approach aiming to grasp and understand housing choice processes in urban compact living.

6.2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The following section reviews literary contributions to analysing housing choice and obtaining a nuanced, in-depth understanding of the complex relationships between the various dimensions at play in such processes. Given the existing gap in knowledge about motivations for choosing urban compact living, the section thus builds up a framework for grasping and understanding it.

HOUSING CHOICE IN A DIVERSIFYING WORLD

A core finding of housing choice research has been how economy and demography are key factors (Jansen, 2014; Heijs, van Deursen, Leussink & Smeets, 2011). Regarding tendencies of young families remaining in cities to a larger extent than previously (as opposed to moving to the suburbs), Booi, Boterman & Musterd (2020) argue for explaining this by the fact that cities today house more high-income families, and that these are generally more likely to live in cities. Furthermore, they identify a clash between spiralling housing prices in cities and families' aspirations for larger dwellings. These studies clearly underscore why choosing urban compact living is unconventional. Yet as the concept is defined as middle-class families living on much less space than households of their type and size conventionally do, financial and demographic factors alone cannot explain this housing choice. Some parts of the housing choice literature, however, have widened the scope. Van Gent, Das & Musterd (2019) have demonstrated the influence of ethnicity on the resources of different population groups and access to the housing market. Booi & Boterman (2020) demonstrate how highly educated households are more likely to live in cities, and Boterman (2012) identifies high levels of cultural capital as driving forces behind urban settlement. In different ways, such contributions introduce social and cultural factors in housing choice research.

Other branches have looked into the possible additional influence of lifestyle. However, applying this concept to housing research has entailed challenges. First, quantitative studies have questioned a substantial additional explanatory power in lifestyle, as pointed out, for instance, by Jansen (2014) or by Heijs, van Deursen, Leussink & Smeets (2011) who have discarded the concept for this reason. Others have called for the use of technically better methods (for instance, Nijënstein, Haans, Kemperman & Borgers, 2015). Second, lifestyle has been operationalised in countless ways. Jansen (2014) identifies the main approaches as based on i) behaviour, ii) latent variables like values or attitudes, iii) a mix of the two, iv)

sociodemographic variables (against which one could argue whether this does in fact deal with lifestyles), and v) a mix of sociodemographic and other variables. Jansen (2014) perceives values to be more stable than e.g. attitudes and to be drivers of behaviour and thus argues for applying values as an operationalisation of lifestyles. Similar arguments are found in de Jong, van Hattum, Rouwendal & Brouwer (2018) calling for an adaptive take on the lifestyle concept, that is, an approach adapting lifestyle to the specific context of a given study.

Regardless of the challenges of incorporating the concept of lifestyle, scholars argue that an increasing diversification of households and housing preferences is taking place, and that new tools are necessary for analysing the housing choices of groups deviating from large-scale patterns. Examples include de Jong, van Hattum, Rouwendal & Brouwer (2018) who have studied the differentiation in housing choices of older adults arguing against too crude sociodemographic groups, and Nijënstein, Haans, Kemperman & Borgers (2015) who point out, how Western societies today are becoming increasingly mixed and complex, that is, more people are doing different things than the majority, more subgroups are emerging, more individualisation is occurring. In examining the housing choices of young Dutch families who have chosen to live in the city, Karsten (2010) argues that "*classical studies on housing preferences are not capable of explaining why some middle-class families opt for an urban residential location*". Thus, certain smaller groups might diverge from the norm because they are more affected by other factors than the majority of the population is. Kährik, Temelová, Kadarik & Kubeš (2016) have found influences of lifestyle factors on relocation choices in two post-socialist urban areas. Van Gent, Das & Musterd (2019) do not work with lifestyle as such, but examine both economic factors, sociodemographic factors and factors reflecting domestic gender-role. They argue that value-related factors matter significantly in housing choice because people, consciously or unconsciously, seek an environment in which they resemble the other inhabitants. These contributions to literature thus suggest the inclusion of lifestyle or values in examining housing choices, particularly if aiming for nuanced answers. They demonstrate how housing choice is not a simple causal mechanism; rather, it is a matter of complex negotiation between different priorities under the given set of circumstances, as argued by Özüekren & van Kempen (2002). As research into the motivations behind the unconventional housing choice of urban compact living is still lacking, this paper argues for an in-depth exploration of the contextually embedded, and mutually influential, dimensions at play.

Figure 32. Copenhagen has seen increasing popularity in recent years. A broad body of literature has discussed how to conceptualise the intangible, yet very distinct, character of the urban environment that seems to have an alluring effect.

URBAN COMPACT LIVING AS MAKING HOME IN THE CITY

A fruitful way of understanding the multiple, contextual and interrelated dimensions at play in housing choice processes is to apply the concept of home. At one end of the scale, it could be held that home is simply *"a machine for living in"*, as Le Corbusier's (1924) classical functionalist manifest holds. The heritage from this approach is highly evident in architecture and design targeted at compact living today. However, challenging this statement, anthropologist Marianne Gullestad argued in her classic work on home that "*home is more than merely a practical place ("a machine for living in"); it is a condensed symbol of quite a lot of what matters to us*" (Gullestad, 1993: 51 [own translation]). Literature on the concept of home solidifies this by pointing out the difference between the physical entity of a housing unit and 'a home' which can be said to consist of numerous layers of meaning, including social, cultural, psychological, practical, economic, political and historical (Blunt & Downling, 2006; Bech-Danielsen & Gram-Hanssen, 2004). Home is not a state of things, but a dynamic process, in which home is practiced or made (Pink, 2012). Home is a relational engagement of humans to a particular part of the physical environment to which they attach unique meanings (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020). However, this part of the physical environment does not necessarily consist of a dwelling unit. Home can relate to a dwelling, but also to particular objects, as in Pechurina's (2020) account of the feelings of homeliness of diaspora attached to objects from their country of origin; or home can relate to a neighbourhood or a city, as in a study by Kauko (2006) finding a stronger significance of location qualities (e.g. social environment and cultural infrastructure) than dwelling qualities (e.g. square metres) in urbanised areas and vice versa in rural and suburban areas. Whereas the former may be perceived as a highly context-centred culture, the latter may be perceived as a predominantly dwelling-centred culture – an adjustment of the term 'home-centred culture' to underline the focus on physical dwelling units (Attfield, 2016: 202, among others). Ewart & Luck (2013: 41) calls for viewing dwellings as "*a point of departure, as much as a destination*", arguing that the dwelling unit must be seen as inseparable from its surrounding environment and can sometimes become subordinate to it.

Research presents several valuable contributions to in-depth, contextual understanding of home and home-making processes, including studies of urban families with children. Nielsen & Winther (2019) identify how vibrancy, diversity and unruliness are perceived as key assets of urban space by middle-class inhabitants of a mixed neighbourhood in Copenhagen, and Meier & Karsten (2012) show how middle-class urbanites use the aesthetical values of the urban fabric for narrating belonging to their neighbourhood. Frank & Weck (2018) as well as Karsten (2020) also identify strong attachments of young middle-class

families to their urban neighbourhoods, based on highly intangible feelings of a certain ambience or atmosphere characterising that particular place, in combination with strong social networks in the local area and qualities such as proximity to work, cultural amenities, shops and so on. As pointed out by Lilius (2014) in a study of middle-class families in Helsinki, living in the city enables parents to continue elements from their lifestyles before parenthood and combine them with family life. Thus, these families have a strong sense of place (Massey, 1994) regarding the city and in particular, their neighbourhood. Literature has proposed various ways of demarcating and conceptualising this intangible character of urban space: Mommaas (2004) debated the understanding of "*culture*" in relation to urban areas; more recently, Kährik, Temelová, Kadarik & Kubeš (2016) have taken up the term "*genius loci*"; and Böhme (2017) applies the term "*atmosphere*" to describe the experienced and the sensed of an area, something that almost hangs in the air. According to Böhme, atmospheres are "*quasi-objective*" or "*subjective facts*" (2017: 2): They are not completely individual, but can to some degree be objectively accounted for, and are thus social to some extent. The question remains, however, why an atmosphere, or a synonym, may be experienced in the same way by some, but not by everyone. The purpose of this paper is not to disentangle such conceptualisations, but instead to explore the relationship between this distinct urban character and the housing choice processes of urban compact living in a Danish context. Through this, the paper may still shed some light on the relationality of such concepts.

Despite the presence of an alluring character of the city, research has identified a number of ambiguities and challenges of young families in relation to living in the city. In particular, young urban families express a constant awareness of the clash between city life and more traditional norms about a good childhood and suitable places to grow up. Frank & Weck (2018) shed light on the dilemmas of urban parents between viewing urban diversity as an asset or as a risk to the safety of childhood. Kerr et al. (2020) and Lilius (2014) point out how urban families' daily life practices are at odds with the physical character of urban space, arguing that this reflects how norms of family life as belonging to suburbia are still prevailing in urban planning today. Mechlenborg (2012) identifies such patterns in a Danish context, pinpointing how discourses portray detached suburban housing as the ideal home for the ideal family, namely, the nuclear family. Karsten (2020) identifies how differences in relationships to the city influence whether young families prefer to stay in the city or relocate to the suburbs, indicating that the extensiveness of their appreciation for the city is key. In an earlier study (Karsten, 2010: 96), she indicates that families remaining in the city perceive themselves as "*true urbanites*". However, as housing prices in cities are spiralling these years, the trade-off having to be made regarding dwelling qualities in order to live in the city is growing for middle-class families. Breaking with norms of living in

suburbia thus also entails breaking with norms of living in a large dwelling. According to Booi, Boterman & Musterd (2020), middle-class families leaving cities due to the difficulty of affording large family dwellings is an increasing tendency. This brings into play the question of spaciousness in relation to dwellings and to their surrounding environments. Spaciousness in this regard is not a solidly defined theoretical concept, and existing research primarily deals with positivistic measurements of human experience of different room sizes and topologies (Fisher-Gewirtzmann, 2017; Stamps, 2010). This research draws attention to one key point for understanding spaciousness in relation to living environments, namely, that spaciousness is not merely observed, but experienced dynamically, bodily and sensory (Bek, 2010). However, another key point for understanding spaciousness is missed by this literature, namely, that spaciousness is not only physical, but also social. Spaciousness is experienced by humans embedded in cultural, personal and socio-structural contexts (Pink, 2012). Altogether, this underlines how housing choice is a complex process in which a number of entangled parameters are weighed against each other. The role of area-related qualities (here, urban areas) in such processes must thus carefully be examined and related to concepts such as lifestyle and spaciousness in order to take a first step into the field of housing choice in urban Danish compact living.

6.3. METHODS AND DATA

The paper is based on a study employing qualitative social-science methods in the form of an in-depth case study. The knowledge produced gains its quality through its depth rather than through its breadth as well as through its explorative nature (Flyvbjerg, 2015; Thomas, 2011). The purpose is not to discuss the quantitative expansion of urban compact living and compare with current residential settlement patterns, but to offer an in-depth understanding of themes and narratives at play in this emergent field and hereby inform and qualify further research on housing choice in urban compact living. Going against a widespread perception that the purpose of social sciences is to produce representative, evidential knowledge that can be applied universally to predict actions of the social world, the case study acknowledges that all situations of the social world are unique and particular (Flyvbjerg, 2015). Interpreting them as examples in their own right, to be understood and interpreted as a whole within a specific context and experience, is both the purpose and the strength of the case study (Thomas 2010). It accepts and builds upon the context-dependency, the ambiguity and paradoxicality, and the complexity and thickness of detail inherent to the social world. This does not render interpretation beyond the particular cases invalid, as they are never isolated or detached from the rest of the world. Thus, the example or the case holds valuable potential for identifying patterns and connections that

may recur in other situations (ibid.). Furthermore, given the novelty of the field of urban compact living (particularly within a Danish context), key to the methodological approach is to allow this field to unfold itself. These reflections are the background for taking an explorative, qualitative approach to the study.

The research design consists of two blocks supplementing, and challenging, each other. The first focusses on narratives and meanings: Detailed data about experiences, perceptions, descriptions, and memories is collected, as well as features like values, attitudes and practices. This is done through semi-structured interviews, home tours, and a photo elicitation task in which household members photograph their living environments. In the other block, practices are studied more directly through logging of activities taking place within the dwellings, mapping of activities of household members in the surrounding neighbourhood, and a registration of the physical arrangement and use of the dwelling. Furthermore, the data collected is discussed at the interviews to challenge and elaborate narratives and meanings. Thus, the empirical cases are not restricted to neither the dwellings nor the urban environment. Nor are they restricted to neither the physical environment nor the social world, but designed to focus on the interaction between them. Data was collected between August 2018 and December 2019. The case study consists in three cases of families with children[32] that can be defined as compact living families in an urban context: Middle-class households living in the city in much less space than conventionally for this household type and household size. This definition is relational, in that the sizes of dwellings as well as the relationship between dwelling size and household size are compared with applying contextual factors. Thus, in Denmark, the average dwelling size is 112 square metres; for flats, it is 79 square metres (Gadeberg, 2020). The average floor area is 53 square metres per person, yet in Copenhagen, it is 40 square metres[33] (KL, 2018). Given that these averages are high compared with other countries (Eurostat, 2018), the selected cases of compact living will be more spacious than an understanding of compact living within a different context would define. In the following, descriptions of the three cases are given, including their housing situations as well as the household composition.

[32] Given the nature of the study, children only participated to a minor degree (particularly the younger ones).

[33] This figure applies to City of Copenhagen, making up the largest part of the city. Frederiksberg Municipality makes up the remaining, smaller, part of the city, and here, the average floor area is 46 square metres per person (KL, 2018).

CASES

Case #1. *(16.3 sq. m./person)* A 65 square-metre third-floor flat consisting of a hall, a bathroom, a kitchen, a living/dining room, and two former rooms remodelled to now contain two children's rooms, an office, and a parents' room with bedloft above a wardrobe. The flat is located in the central Copenhagen neighbourhood of Vesterbro, a high-density, mixed-used area built in the early-20th century. The flat is occupied by a couple in their fourties, the woman (Mette) a communications consultant and the man (Anders) working with educational material, and their two daughters aged 14 and 18, both attending school. The family relocated to Copenhagen ten years ago after living 18 months in a 105 square-metre terraced house in a provincial town.

Case #2. *(14.0 sq.m./person)* A 56 square-metre third-floor flat with a balcony. It contains a hall, a kitchen, a bathroom, a parents' bedroom, and a living/dining room connected by a sliding wall to a children's room with bed loft. The flat is located in the highly mixed neighbourhood of Nordvest, on the border between Copenhagen's dense inner city and its more open suburban areas. The flat is occupied by a young couple, the woman (Johanne) who is a job-seeking biologist and the man (Emil) who is an urban planner working in central Copenhagen, and their two small children, aged one and five, attending nursery and kindergarten. The flat was purchased 12 years ago by Johanne during her studies, and the family has then grown.

Case #3. *(17.7 sq. m./person)* A 53 square-metre ground floor flat with a balcony, remodelled to contain a combined living room/dining room/hall/parent's bedroom/kitchen, a tiny bathroom, and two small children's rooms. The flat is centrally located in the neighbourhood Vesterbro. It is occupied by a female self-employed fashion designer (Stine) in her fourties (working within walking distance) and her two daughters aged 12 and 14, who live in the flat every second week. After divorcing her ex-husband, Stine moved from their shared home only 400 metres away to this small one-bedroom flat, which she then remodelled.

6.4. ANALYSING HOUSING CHOICE IN THE CONTEXT OF URBAN COMPACT LIVING

A profound appreciation for the city is evident throughout the case study. The families express a strong attachment to the city and especially the neighbourhoods they live in. Examining where this attachment and profound appreciation comes from shows that it relates to two dimensions. First, the practicality and convenience of being close to work, independently of cars or public transport, being close to social networks, being close to school, and being close to an

extensive network of amenities. The families could not sustain such practices if they relocated, especially since the high housing prices in the city would force them to move far outside Copenhagen. These findings of the case study support existing research on families' motivations for living in the city, such as Kerr et al. (2020), Lilius (2014) and Karsten (2010), among others. The families thus have a strong sense of place (Massey, 1994) regarding the urban environment. Yet as this concept indicates, such attachment to the city is not only social and practical, but emotional too. This leads to the second dimension.

Second, the families' appreciation for the city and especially the neighbourhoods they live in is related to a profound appreciation for an intangible character, ambience or atmosphere of the area. For instance, while discussing his neighbourhood, Anders (Case #1) says *"I basically like the atmosphere here".* Theoretically grasping and conceptualising such character, spirit, quality, atmosphere or even personality of an area is puzzling, as it is describable and social, on the one hand, and intangible and subjective on the other (Böhme, 2017). In the current study, expressions of appreciation for the neighbourhood, or the city in general, are voiced by the case study families in numerous ways: They like the myriad of amenities matching their taste, the people hanging out and socialising in ways they can see themselves in, and the diverse, casual and unruly character of urban space. For instance, the family of Case #2 lives in one of Copenhagen's most mixed neighbourhoods in terms of income, social resources and ethnicity (Nielsen & Winther, 2019). They express an appreciation for this, arguing that the more upscale neighbourhoods of Copenhagen are 'posh', snobbish and boring in contrast to their own, whereas they feel they share the values of people in their own neighbourhood. Thus, home-making to these households is about a feeling of belonging (Pechurina, 2020) and of fitting in with the surrounding environment (van Gent, Das & Musterd, 2019). Expressions of such feelings of belonging and attachment come across clearly, when the families describe places they would *not* want to live in, in particular, suburbia. The families depict life in these kinds of areas as traditionalistic, uniform and self-sufficient, contrasting with the views they have on their own lives, namely as socially oriented, progressive and personalised. In this way, the physically spacious suburban environment is interpreted as socially un-spacious, so to speak. Furthermore, life in suburbia is interpreted as a stereotype of a predominantly dwelling-centred culture (Attfield, 2016), attending more to one's own cadastre than to sociability, as opposed to a completely context-centred culture in the city. This demonstrates how individuals and groups perceive themselves and their lifestyles *in relation to* others and to the context, they are in. Stine (Case #3) illustrates this in the following way:

You do resemble your friends to some extent, and definitely in terms of the way you live. And if all your friends suddenly were to buy houses with gardens – that definitely has an impact, like "oh, maybe I should do that too". I mean, you feel quite similar to the people you socialise with, and this might even generate a certain peace of mind.

Savage (2011) attempts to construct a fruitful understanding of this relationality by updating the classical Bourdieuian approach to spatiality (1996) with the approach of Deleuze (2014), that identity does not exist in itself, but only by means of the differences between identities. According to Savage (2011), the relational transcends borders between the physical and the non-physical, because non-physical relations (or differences) will become *"sedimented and etched into physical features"* (Savage, 2011: 517). By distinguishing or differentiating themselves from something or someone, for instance a dwelling-centred suburban culture, individuals or groups connect themselves to something else, for instance a context-centred urban culture[34]. Hereby, they express who they perceive themselves to be. Accordingly, perceptions of a place, for instance an urban neighbourhood, are relational, that is, depending on the position of the perceiver. The social, personal, cultural and structural context in which individuals are embedded become a set of glasses, so to speak, through which they perceive their surroundings.

Building on this argument, the analyses of the case study households' narratives of and attachment to the city show that these are bound up on values, attitudes and tastes. They revolve around concepts such as social awareness, considerateness, diversity, casualness, unruliness, and progressivity, and the household members enjoy being surrounded by environments and amenities matching their tastes – not necessarily because they frequent them often, but because they feel like they fit in and feel at home when surrounded by them. As pointed out in Case #1:

Mette: I might not make use of the cultural facilities here every single day, but I pass by my favourite shop everyday on my route home from work.

The daily activities and patterns of movement within urban space, however, are not dependent on the distinctness of the urban fabric, as would be the case, for instance, if the households relocated domestic practices to urban space due to the spatial restrictions of their dwellings. The households go to school, work and sports, and run practical errands, while leisure time is spent at home, visiting

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[34] Another paper building on this case study (Winther & Bech-Danielsen, 2020) examines this reverse narrative of city and suburbia and its influence on housing choice and home-making.

friends or family, or making trips to the city centre or the countryside. To some extent, it could be argued that their daily life activities are transferrable to other physical environments, for instance, suburbia. Arguing against this is the finding that the professional and social networks of the household members are strongly rooted in the city, however, two comments must be made in this regard: First, networks are built up through daily life practices over the course of time. This is not to disregard of neither longer-distance networks (virtual or physical) nor the condensation of functions and people in the city. But networks are, by implication, connected in some sense to the places in which daily life is situated (Massey, 1994). Second, when substantiating their preferences for living in close proximity to work, social networks and facilities, the households draw on aversions against an image of suburbia as sleepy towns. Consequently, values are attributed to daily life practices. According to recent housing choice research (for instance, de Jong, van Hattum, Rouwendal & Brouwer, 2018; or Kährik, Temelová, Kadarik & Kubeš 2016), such findings are examples of lifestyle influencing housing choice processes. De Jong, van Hattum, Rouwendal & Brouwer (2018) argue that values and attitudes are more stable over time than patterns of activity and movement. Such argument resonates strongly with the current context of families with children, as the daily life practices of these families are strongly dependent on the ages of the children. Thus, Case #2's parents of a 5- and a 1-year old may rarely have opportunities to frequent the coffee shop a few streets away. Nevertheless, they regard this as one of their favourite features of the neighbourhood (see Figure 33). Keeping an eye for such expressions of taste and values thus allows for capturing these aspects of attachment to the city; aspects, which are, currently, not reflected in the daily lives.

This case study thus shows how the city is key to the lifestyle of the households, and accordingly, that living in the city becomes an essential priority. Yet due to the high-pressure housing market in Copenhagen in recent years, living in the city increasingly entails quite substantial compromises on other priorities for middle-class households. In the specific context of urban Danish compact living, it is thus worth examining whether this essentiality of living in the city is profound enough for the households to make such substantial compromises, or whether things are more complex. Examining their processes of making home and their imaginaries of what an appropriate home is, it is clear that the households are aware of diverging from macro-scale ideals of the home. Case #1 even tried the mainstream choice, as they previously lived in a suburban neighbourhood in a provincial town. Here, they could afford a spacious terraced house with all the amenities they attributed to a proper family home:

> *Mette: We had this idea that the right thing to do was to move out of the city and get more space and fresh air. There was something about that the kids*

Figure 33. The coffee shop Madsens Mekka in the Copenhagen neighbourhood Nordvest is one of the best features of the area according to the household of Case #2. *"Nearby and child friendly. Good when the weather is nice"*, they say. Photo by Emil and Johanne.

> *should be allowed to toddle about on the lawn instead of on tarmac and gravel in the city. And we got a house that was really neat and very practical, a nice big kitchen and family room combined. It was very functional and had a nice appearance.*

This dwelling offered practicality, functionality, privacy and was located in a quiet low-density area. However, the case study households clearly express how the city's vibrancy, diversity, condensity, creativity and atmosphere make them feel at home and feel like they belong. Suburban areas represent nearly the perfect opposite of the city. The case study shows that these narratives do not only regard the surrounding environment, but also apply to narratives of the dwellings. For instance, in the following characteristic of interior style and the approach to home-making, the family of Case #2 nearly personify their home and attach attributes to it that express their self-perception:

Johanne: The most important thing for me when it comes to our home, is that it's cosy and feels nice to be in, and then never mind if the décor doesn't match or things aren't spot-on fashionable. In a way, such an old flat is cosy in itself. As opposed to new standard houses where you have to work more to give them some atmosphere.

Emil: This flat has some charm; everything's a bit unorthodox. And we've done things like painting the floors green, putting up a 'bounty' beach wallpaper. Adding a bit of humour, the flat has a little craziness to it.

Strongly echoing narratives of the city, this quote reveals how the family perceive themselves as social, casual, humorous and non-materialistic. Thus, imaginaries of home concerning location mirror their imaginaries concerning the dwellings. In this perspective, compact living makes sense in two ways: First, in terms of attaching themselves to certain values and attitudes regarding home-making in the dwelling, and second, in terms of enabling living in a location that matches those values and attitudes. As stated clearly, housing choice is about much more than practical functions, it is about making a home, and entails weighing priorities against each other. Thus, compact living is not without challenges and compromises for the households. For instance in terms of privacy, as Stine of Case #3 sleeps on a sofa bed in the living room to let her daughters have their own rooms. The concrete practices and experiences of home-making of these households are examined in Winther (2020). Thus, compromises on physical spaciousness make sense to the case study households, because they enable them to live in the city, and because urban compact living represents values and attitudes in which they feel at home – inside the dwellings and in the surrounding environment. In Case #1, they made this experience by direct comparison:

Anders: Basically, we didn't become a part of the community [in suburbia].

Mette: The house couldn't make up for this feeling that it was like every square metre of space became a chasm between us and the good life. And for my part, this was in Copenhagen. […] We had been dreaming <u>so much</u> about getting more space… And that's exactly what we got. But that couldn't make me happy or comfortable, I realised. I was so ready to give up those square metres again.

6.5. CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated the complexities, ambiguities and the context dependency of housing choice processes in a new and emergent empirical field: urban compact living. In a Danish context where compact living is (still) only a small fragment of urban housing, this deliberate downsizing of living space is

both controversial and unconventional. Denmark has very high housing conditions compared with the rest of the world, and Danes have the second highest average for floorspace per person in the EU. Thus, middle-class households choosing to live on much less space is highly unconventional. Furthermore, living in the city starkly contrasts macro-scale, historically rooted ideals of what constitutes an appropriate home. Especially for families with children, suburban neighbourhoods are perceived as the appropriate living environment. This paper is based on an in-depth ethnographic case study of middle-class families with children living in Copenhagen flats offering much less space than conventional ideals of home would have. By taking an explorative approach aimed at grasping and understanding this new empirical field, this paper examines the themes and narratives at play in the processes of housing choice.

The paper finds that to the households under study, the neighbourhood – not the dwelling – is the destination (Ewart & Luck, 2013). This does not mean that the dwelling is unimportant to them, but simply that they prioritise area-related qualities over dwelling-related qualities to an extent that it outweighs the physical domestic compactness. However, the explanation behind is complex: To start with, the households are aware of diverging from macro-scale norms of an appropriate home, but parallelly on a smaller scale, they feel belonging and attachment to a lifestyle centred on values of anti-materiality, progressiveness, creativity, and liberatedness. This can be interpreted as social spaciousness, in a way, and is a core characteristic of the city in the eyes of the case study households. Living in the city is a paramount part of their imaginaries of home, and accordingly, of who they perceive themselves to be. Following this thought through, compact living *also* represents such social spaciousness, yet social spaciousness regarding the dwelling units; and in that sense, downsizing on dwelling space is not only a losing game.

The paper argues for a multifaceted approach to housing choice research that includes social and cultural dimensions, such as lifestyle. In particular, when researching processes diverging from macro-scale norms. Additionally, research must take an approach aimed at grasping and understanding when examining new empirical fields. Finally, the paper argues for introducing a broad conceptualisation of spaciousness in relation to living environments, perceiving it as more than physical, but as lived and experienced by humans within specific cultural, personal and socio-structural contexts. Urban compact living cannot be reduced to square metres and assessed on these grounds. Rather, urban compact living is about lived life and about making home in the city.

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CHAPTER 7. PAPER: ENTANGLED ADVERSARIES? UNDERSTANDING THE CITY THROUGH PERCEPTIONS OF SUBURBIA

by

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Abstract: Through an ethnographic case study of compact living in Danish cities, this paper examines current perceptions of city and suburbia amongst city dwellers. From a historical point of view, suburban neighbourhoods were developed as a reaction to the unhealthy and even dangerous living conditions in the cities. Yet since then, criticism of suburbia as trading character and atmosphere for rationalism and systematisation has resounded from urban opinion formers. This paper finds that despite their immediate contrasts, city and suburbia seem to be reverse sides of the same coin and thus intricately entangled adversaries: To the urban compact living households, the city is a lively, atmospheric scene consisting of a particular mix of people, materialities, facilities and activities, amongst which they feel at home. The city is perceived as diverse and liberating. Suburbia, by contrast, is perceived as a uniform and characterless place, where life is confined by social control, conventionality and self-absorption. Living in suburbia is perceived as living within one's own cadastre, whereas living in the city is perceived as feeling at home in the whole neighbourhood. Thus, despite its physical spaciousness, suburbia is perceived as a place of claustrophobia – social claustrophobia.

7.1. INTRODUCTION

There was a time, when the Danish city was dangerous and unhealthy. It was dirty, filthy, filled with diseases, overcrowded and offered poor living conditions for its population. Only the wealthiest could afford proper-quality flats – or even houses. But in the early 20th century, the first steps towards the welfare state as we know it in Denmark today, was taken. Over subsequent decades, gradual steps were taken towards better living conditions for the general public, for instance

better health conditions, better employment conditions or better housing conditions. A key element in this was the development of suburban environments. Quiet, clean and safe neighbourhoods with new flats or houses offering modern facilities, plenty of space, and access to greenery, even for lower middle-class households. With the development of industrialised production methods in the 1960s, these population groups could even afford their very own house on its own plot, and soon followed other modern-day consumption goods for the home like washing machines, cars, televisions, etc. Thus, the mass-produced standard house of the 1960s and 1970s is an iconic part of the development of the Danish welfare state, and the construction boom of this period was so significant, that these houses remain the most common housing type in Denmark today.

Yet since its birth, suburbia has been put under stark criticism from certain voices, especially culturally and socially advantaged population groups perceiving the new neighbourhoods to be ugly, alienating and devoid of character. Despite the widespread popularity of such suburban neighbourhoods in the general public (suburbia is highly attractive on the housing market), such criticism still remains today. Additionally, cities have recently experienced a newfound popularity materialising in very high housing prices, a growing pressure on the housing market and an increasing interest from both national and international tourists. The cities are perceived to be fascinating, diverse and lively – starkly contrasting the image of quiet and uniform suburbia. So: Are the two types of environment simply each other's perfect opposites? Or are things more complex than that? Suburbia was developed as a reaction to an urban problem, but since then, cities have changed away from the dystopian: housing conditions, physical environment and economy have been extensively refurbished to create a modern Danish city, which is both quiet, clean and safe. Yet such features ring a bell – a suburban bell. Simultaneously, and on the face of it conversely, 'urban life' has become a keyword in the renewal of existing suburban neighbourhoods and the planning of new ones: Attempts are made to multiply activities and facilities in public space, the built environment is being densified, terraced houses are called "*townhouses*", and local suburban squares are attributed with "*pulsating urban life*" (e.g. Bellakvarter, n.d.; Stender, 2014). City and suburbia may be more than two contrastingly different environments – they may be reverse sides of the same story and intricately entangled adversaries.

This paper is based on an ethnographic case study aiming to explore and understand the concept of urban compact living in a contemporary Danish context. Urban environments are denser than suburban ones, and when living compactly in urban areas, density is enhanced even further, and the contrast to the spaciousness of a typical suburban single-family house becomes stronger. Another paper working with the same case study has shown how the urban

location is the key driver behind choosing compact living for the case households (Winther, 2021[35]). The perceptions of residents and users of urban environments are central for the workings of neighbourhood life and for residential settlement patterns, as demonstrated by e.g. Nielsen & Winther (2019). Though city dwellers may or may not have personal experiences with living in suburbia, "*at the end of the day, it's your perceptions that decide whether you actually end up moving there or not*", as put by the study participant[36] Stine (Case #3) in the case study of the current paper. Thus, understanding perceptions of the urban environment is key for understanding urban compact living. However, examining the perceptions of the city identified in this case study has revealed how perceptions of suburbia are highly entangled in this and nearly innate to perceptions of the city. Thus, by relating the informants' perceptions to the perceptions voiced more publicly since the offset of the city-suburbia dichotomy some 100 years ago, this paper sets out to examine whether city and suburbia are in fact entangled adversaries and accordingly, what can be learned about perceptions of the city through perceptions of suburbia.

7.2. CITY AND SUBURBIA – CONTRASTS CLOSELY CONNECTED

The perceptions of city and suburbia has its roots in the historical urban development. Ever since the first suburban development, city and suburb have thus been contradictory and yet at the same time closely interconnected. When the development of the suburbs began, it happened as a result of the 19th century urbanisation and the critical housing conditions in the new industrialised cities; the cities grew rapidly, and the working class huddled together in small and unhealthy flats, the courtyards were densely populated, the dwellings were located side by side noisy and polluting industries, and there was a lack of clean drinking water and closed sewer systems (Lützen, 1998). Cities were hopelessly unhygienic, and in virtually the entire world, it led to outbreaks of cholera in the mid-1800s (Kohn, 2008; Snow, 2010). In Copenhagen, 10 % of the population died of cholera in 1853 alone (Lützen, 1998). This led to the development of a new view on the city; previously, the city had been considered the safe place where citizens sought refuge and protection from external dangers. Now this picture changed completely, and the protective city walls were exceeded. As part of the preventive work against cholera in Copenhagen, populations of the worst affected districts were moved to tent camps outside the city walls (Zerlang, 2001), and the hope of survival and a healthy life became linked to the fresh air in the countryside. The

[35] This refers to the paper in Chapter 6.

[36] In the submitted version of the paper, the term 'informant' was used. This has been altered in this dissertation for purpose of consistency with the other chapters.

better bourgeoisie also sought out of the cities, initially in summer residences, where they could enjoy the peace and live out the ideal of 'a healthy soul in a healthy body' (Bech-Danielsen, 2013). The city was left as an unhealthy and obscure dystopia. Suburbia was developed as a utopian counter-image to the city; here, a healthy life could be developed with lots of open space and in green surroundings. Suburbia was thus developed in the aftermath of the city-downturn.

When the Danish suburbs developed further in the beginning of the 20th century, many Danish urban planners found inspiration in Ebenezer Howard's "*garden cities*" (1898). The ideal of the garden city was developed as a result of the intolerable conditions in the dense industrial cities and in direct contrast to them (Lind & Møller, 1996): The garden city should be a self-sufficient unit, located in the open landscape, the houses should be low-rise, and all homes should have access to a private garden (Howard, 1898). In Denmark, these ideals initially found their way into terraced houses (such as Gerthasminde from 1912 in the city of Odense), but in the 1920s and 1930s it was increasingly detached single-family houses that were built (Lind & Møller, 1996). This development was further nurtured when, in the years around WW2, economical support from the Danish state was granted for the construction of small single-family houses. The economic support was given, among other things, because the Danish Social Democratic Party perceived home-ownership as an opportunity for the working class to rise in the social hierarchy. The single-family house in the suburbs was thus connected to the good life of the common nuclear family.

In the post-war period, suburbia became associated with the progress of the welfare state, while the city centres collapsed and were associated with a mixture of poor and outdated housing, dilapidated infrastructure and worn-down industrial areas (Andersen & Andersen, 2017). The industrialisation of construction was effected, single-family houses were developed through mass-production, and thus the extensive construction of single-family houses in the Danish suburbs took off in the 1960s and 1970s.[37] During this period, the internal dependency between city and suburbia clearly and concretely came to an expression, as the redevelopment of inner city settlements had paved the way for the expansion of suburbia - and vice versa (Lind & Møller, 1994). It can e.g. be seen in the population of the city of Copenhagen, which peaked in the 1950s and subsequently fell by over 300,000 inhabitants (corresponding to approximately 30 %) during the following three decades (Andersen & Andersen, 2017). As a result,

[37] Between 1960 and 1979, more than 600,000 single-family houses were built in Denmark, and this still constitutes half of the total number of single-family houses today (Bisgaard, 2019).

the city became less dense and compact, and the growth of suburbia has thus contributed to the current "*liveability*" of Copenhagen (Brûlé, 2014) and to the fact that families with children are increasingly settling in neighbourhoods in the inner city (Andersen & Andersen, 2017) – it is no longer a matter of course for all inhabitants to move to a detached house in suburbia when starting a family.

Since the 1980s, the view on the city has gradually improved. This has happened as a result of heavy industry having moved out of the city (among other places to suburbia), and as a result of urban renewal creating new qualities in the city's residential areas (Bech-Danielsen, 2013). In recent decades, there has also been an interest in re-densifying the city, partly because the dense city is considered to be environmentally sustainable (Dempsey et. al, 2012), and partly because increased urban density creates the basis for a city life with shops, cultural services, cafes, etc. It is also crucial that the completed urban renewal has brought a number of suburban recreational qualities into our cities, like greenery and recreational areas, better air quality, etc. Put radically, today's city is at times described as vertical suburbia, and it can therefore be discussed whether it makes sense to continue to see the city and suburbia as opposites?

In a theoretical context, new understandings have developed in recent years of the city, of suburbia and of their interrelationship. New concepts such as "*zwischenstadt*" (Sieverts, 2000) and "*splintering urbanism*" (Graham & Marvin, 2001) describe cities and suburbs in the form of complex networks where contrasting views are no longer in focus. However, a similar view does not seem to have seeped into the Danish population, and in line with the urban revival of the last four decades, the single-family-house neighbourhoods in Danish suburbia have been severely criticised. This criticism initially arose in continuation of the international critique of the suburbs as urban sprawl (Batty et al., 2003; Fouberg et al., 2012), and it has led to descriptions of the Danish single-family-house neighbourhoods as boring sleepy towns (Bech-Danielsen & Gram-Hanssen, 2004). This criticism has been voiced mainly by culturally and socially advantaged parts of society, in particular cultural-radical opinion formers. They would never live in the suburbs themselves, and in their view, life in suburbia abounds in overconsumption and materialism, in boredom and the jogtrot of everyday life, in conformist family and gender roles, and in officiousness and self-adequacy (Nielsen & Winther, 2019; Mechlenborg, 2012; Frandsen, 2009; 2006). Conversely, the same culturally advantaged population groups describe the city as a vivid, atmospheric, diverse, stimulating, challenging and fascinating scene (ibid.). The unflattering Danish expression "*privet hedge fascism*" (Mechlenborg, 2012 [own translation]) illustrates a view of suburban life as a prioritisation of privacy and a devaluation of social life in the neighbourhood. In such perspectives, urban settlement can be identified as the contrast to suburbia. As will be seen in this

Figure 34. The neighbourhood Nordvest is one of the most diverse in Copenhagen, in terms of both resident composition and composition of the physical environment. The photo shows the busy street Frederiksborgvej close to the flat of Case #2. They appreciate the unruliness, diversity and liveliness of their neighbourhood and would not want to relocate to the suburbs. Photo by author, originally published in Beckman et al., 2015.

paper, this also applies to the case study households of the present research project.

Yet suburban residents seem to do exactly the same: they identify and describe the qualities of their own neighbourhood by contrasting it to urban neighbourhoods. They perceive life in the city as anonymous, and they highlight the social community as a special quality of the suburban detached-house neighbourhoods (Bech-Danielsen et al., 2014; Bech-Danielsen & Gram-Hanssen, 2004). Thus, city and suburbia are not only in contrast to one another in a historic sense, they also contrast strongly in the way residents identify with and understand their housing area. This is also reflected in the way Danish popular culture perceptions of suburbia contrast with the perceptions of culturally advantaged population groups described above: In popular culture or mass culture, suburbia is generally idealised and represented as *"a metaphor for the good life, the nuclear family, comfort, and close proximity to nature. A longing for withdrawal to a miniature paradise, focusing on family life, and being master in one's own house"* (Mechlenborg, 2012: 19 [own translation]).

In general, the single-family house is popular in a Danish context. Today, there are 1.2 million single-family houses in Denmark, they make up 43 % of all Danish homes (Bisgaard, 2019), and more than half of the Danish population (52 %) live in a single-family house (Statistics Denmark, 2020g). Studies of Danish housing preferences show that the single-family house is the most preferred housing type of all: nearly 80% express such a preference (Kristensen & Andersen, 2009). It is especially the nature and the landscape, the safety in the neighbourhoods, the absence of social problems and the access to a private garden that Danes appreciate. It is probably also of great importance that the detached single-family house offers a relatively large living space: An average Danish detached house covers approximately 153 square metres, which is significantly more than the Danish average living space of 112 square metres (Bisgaard, 2019). Moreover, new Danish single-family houses constructed in 2019 contained over 200 square metres of living space on average (Statistics Denmark, 2020a).

7.3. THE CASE STUDY – METHODOLOGY AND DATA

The empirical analysis of this paper is based on data from an ethnographic case study. The overall field of study is urban compact living. Compact living refers in this context to the life led in dwellings which[38] 1) are small – in relation to local norms, as Danes generally have large homes, 2) have been actively chosen by their occupants (thus leaving out dwellings occupied by marginalised population groups with little freedom of choice), and 3) are adapted by the households to a compact way of living. Thus, in a society where the majority of the population has a preference for detached-housing areas, households opting for compact-living flats located in highly urbanised dense areas represent an unconventional housing choice. They have rejected suburbia in favour of the city. Consequently, examining their perceptions of suburbia and through this their perceptions of the city is highly relevant, and this may furthermore hold valuable information about wider perceptions of city and suburbia. As the purpose of the study has been, first, to explore and understand perceptions regarding housing choice in the particular context of urban compact living and, second, to gain in-depth and detailed information about this particular way of living in order to relate it to a wider context, the methodology selected is that of a qualitative, ethnographic case study (Pink et al., 2017; Flyvbjerg, 2015; Thomas, 2011; 2010).

For the case study, six households were selected. However, one case is located in the countryside. It is part of the original study due to its relevance regarding

[38] The precise definition of urban compact living in this dissertation was adjusted after the submission of this paper. Thus, the definition formulated here is an older version.

compact living, yet for the analyses of this paper on choosing urban life, it is not relevant and accordingly not included. Data was collected between August, 2018 and December, 2019. For each case, comprehensive data was collected through the following methods:

- Routes and activities of the household members in the surrounding neighbourhoods were drawn and noted on printed maps over the course of four days. The neighbourhood maps were subsequently discussed and elaborated with the household members. The purpose hereof was to capture their everyday life practices in and interaction with their neighbourhood as well as their perceptions of the neighbourhood and the city – both cognitive and sensory, and additionally, to spatialise and situate discussions of the neighbourhood and the city.
- Qualitative, semi-structured interviews with the household members, recorded and subsequently transcribed. The interviews covered topics such as residential history, housing choice and neighbourhood choice, perceptions of the neighbourhood and the city, perceptions of home, everyday practices, etc. The purpose was to capture the perceived and the experienced.
- Household members photographing their least and most favourite parts of the surrounding neighbourhood. The photographs were subsequently discussed with the household members. The purpose of this photo elicitation was to open up discussion and contemplation about the neighbourhood through visual and more sensory channels in order to supplement the solely verbal channels of the interviews.
- Additionally, data regarding the perceptions and usage of the actual dwellings was collected in the case study by photographing, touring and discussing the home with its household members, by analysing and producing drawing material and by collecting household members' photographs of their dwellings and a seven-day registration of activities taking place within the dwellings.

Altogether, the collected data provides in-depth and detailed information of each of the selected cases. To ensure that the study examines households with a certain level of freedom of choice in relation to housing (see the definition of the concept of compact living), all adults are in employment[39], and all households are financially comfortable. Yet on other parameters, they are different. The cases include both families with children (some younger, some older), a couple without

[39] One woman has a recently ended contract. However, she lives with her partner, who is under employment.

children and a woman living by herself. The adults are in their thirties or fourties. Some are local to the city, they live in; others have made interregional moves. Some of the households live in very dense urban neighbourhoods characterised by narrow streets with early 20th-century building blocks, while others live in less dense neighbourhoods with mid-20th century housing estates adjoining detached-housing areas. Some of the households have favoured privacy and enclosed rooms, while others have prioritised open-plans to allow for airiness and light. Some enjoy filling their homes with a large amount of items in a coincidental mix, while other have carefully selected the objects, and amount of objects, in their home. Finally, some are city-dwellers to the bone, while others value using the countryside as an occasional bolt-hole. However, they all have a substantial aversion towards suburbia – in particular 1960s and 1970s neighbourhoods of detached housing. The following section will explore why.

7.4. PERCEPTIONS OF CITY AND SUBURBIA – KNOWLEDGE FROM THE CASE STUDY

Though the five cases of this study all live compactly in the city, they vary in household composition and demographics, as demonstrated in the Cases and methods section. Yet they all share an aversion towards suburbia – in particular, the detached-house neighbourhoods of the 1960s and 1970s scattered abundantly across the country. Furthermore, their perceptions of suburbia are articulated and precise – and remarkably alike. In another paper based on the same case study (Winther, 2021[40]), it is shown how reverse narratives of suburbia and the city aid the identification of the study participants with city life and their understandings of themselves as city-dwellers. Following arguments of Savage (2011) building on Deleuze's concepts of identity through difference (2014) and Bourdieu's relational theory (1996), the paper demonstrates how differentiating themselves from a certain lifestyle in suburbia becomes a means for the study participants to connect themselves to a certain lifestyle in the city, i.e. a lifestyle they identify themselves with. Thus, the study participants make use of the established dichotomy between city and suburbia, depicting suburbia as the photo negative of the life to which they wish to belong. Consequently, the study participants' perceptions of suburbia are a valuable and important part of understanding their perceptions of the city as well as the enduring complex relationship between city and suburbia. Accordingly, this section will examine not only the study participants' perceptions of suburbia, but also their perceptions of the city, as the relation between these is the core of the analysis.

[40] This refers to the paper in Chapter 6.

Figure 35. Two streets in Copenhagen close to the dwellings of Case #1 and Case #3. Living in the city is of essential importance to the urban case study households.

LIVING THE CITY

The study participants all share a profound affection for the city they live in. In four of the cases, this is the city of Copenhagen, in the last; it is the city of Aarhus. Though the two cities are different in some ways – the most obvious one being size, as Copenhagen has a population of approximately 1 million people and Aarhus only of approximately 300,000 people – they are also similar in many ways, especially in comparison to the rest of Denmark (partially disregarding a couple of semi-large cities): Both are dense concentrations of people, built environment, cultural facilities and activities, business life and commercial life incomparable to anywhere else in Denmark, and both are growth areas – economically, physically and in terms of population.

The strong appreciation for the city expressed by the study participants of the case study is founded in their lifestyles (see Winther, 2021[41]) for an elaborated analysis hereof). Lifestyle is here to be understood as referring to their values, attitudes and tastes, and to a much lesser extent to their daily-life activity patterns, as these are very independent of the city: the study participants attend to school, work, sports, practical errands, and spend leisure time at home, visiting friends or family, or making trips to e.g. the city centre or the countryside. Their values, attitudes and tastes, on the other hand, revolve around the city (and especially around particular neighbourhoods): The study participants' appreciation for the city is to a large extent about its street scene – about what happens in public space, which people there are, which facilities there are, and how the physical environment appears: It is about the available shops and facilities, for instance specialties shops like vintage shops, clothes shops, crafts shops, galleries, specialty food markets, etc., as well as cafés, coffee shops, bars, restaurants, takeaway eateries, and cultural facilities like cinemas, music venues, theatres, etc. Furthermore, it is about the events taking place, like flea markets, festivals or the like. And finally, but no less important, it is about the people using the area: those minding the shops, visiting the markets, eating at the restaurants, strolling the streets, hanging out in the parks. Blending together, these features interact with the characteristic physical environment of the urban neighbourhood: the dense network of streets lined with neo-classical building blocks regularly interrupted by squares or small parks; and create a particular setting[42]. This setting matches the tastes, the attitudes and the values of the study participants, it is a setting to which the study participants wish to belong, a setting in which they feel at home.

[41] This refers to the paper in Chapter 6.

[42] Another paper working with this case study (Winther, 2021) discusses the applicability of theoretical concepts like atmosphere, ambience, etc. in explicating this particular setting.

Accordingly, the two case study families that live in less dense, more monofunctional neighbourhoods on the borders between the inner city and its most central suburbs (cases #5 and #6) orient themselves towards other neighbourhoods offering settings like described above. Their home neighbourhoods function instead as points of departure (Ewart & Luck, 2013). Thus, to the study participants of the case study, the value of living in the city is as much (if not more) about sensing this particular setting and *living it*, as it is about actually eating in a restaurant or buying a piece of art in a gallery:

> *I really enjoy having [a local street] down there, that's where our newsagent is [not a regular newsagent, it plays with the traditional concept], there's quite a nice ambience there. Ok, so it's a really Vesterbro-ish spot [Vesterbro is her neighbourhood], but it's a neat spot which organises some nice events. We use it for shopping too, 'cause there are no nice supermarkets nearby. They have some curious specialties and good wine and chocolates and beer. And bread for breakfast. And then they create some atmosphere here, they host events, wine tastings, flea markets and so on. So there is a positive energy there. And of course, there are a lot of youngsters hanging out and chilling out, and that just creates a positive ambience, which makes you think "great!". I really like that about the city, that it has those kinds of things (Stine, Case #3).*

SUBURBIA: THE LITTLE MAN'S DULL PARADISE

Turning from the study participants' accounts of the city, this next paragraph examines their accounts of suburbia. Given the significant density of both the home neighbourhoods of the study participants and of their dwellings, the living environments of these families differ substantially from suburban environments, particularly low-density areas like detached-housing neighbourhoods. Though contemporary suburbia also contains terraced houses, blocks of flats and non-residential functions like supermarkets, sports facilities or recreational areas, the focus of the study participants is on detached-housing neighbourhoods of primarily 1960s and 1970s single-family houses. Physically manifesting the construction and land development surge of that time, such neighbourhoods are very obvious and characteristic structures in the Danish landscape – one cannot move far without coming across one, and the single-family houses of this period remains the most common housing type in the country today.

A key point voiced by the study participants is that in suburbia, everything looks the same: They see the residential areas as consisting of numerous identical roads lined with numerous identical houses surrounded by identical gardens. To the study participants, the lack of variation characterising houses and gardens of 1960s and 1970s suburban neighbourhoods does not characterise neighbourhoods

of older age. This may very well be because most 1960s and 1970s houses are system-built and constructed with mass-produced materials, whereas older houses are typically built independently by local craftsmen. Frank and Tanja from Case #6 describe it in this way:

> *Frank: All the houses look like each other and are lined up in rows.*
>
> *Tanja: But let's say they weren't all the same, like [gives an example] on a summer day where you can hear kids play and lawns being mowed, that's idyll to me.*
>
> *Frank: It's the sixties and seventies houses in particular, the older villas are much more welcoming, I could more easily see myself there, cause things aren't all the same, the trees have been allowed to grow tall, you know. Neighbourhoods with absolutely no trees, but only houses as far as the eye can see, that's a drag.*
>
> *Tanja: Yeah, I think so too. It has to do with variation, I guess, in house style and garden style.*
>
> *Frank: Yes and places where things have grown – each in their own way. Where one house has been built at a time and one looks different than the other. If everything is erected at once, it becomes much less charming. And also, usually they are constructed really fast, with poor-quality materials, so they are already decaying.*

Such opinions clearly mirror those of culturally and socially advantaged parts of society, as described in the first section of the paper. The logic of rationality characterising the development of residential neighbourhoods in the 1960s and 1970s thus becomes the source of the problem to the study participants. The repetition of a perpendicular pattern of roads and plots, the separation of service functions from residential functions and from traffic, and the application of mass-production, prefabrication and systematisation in the construction process are all measures to develop functional houses and neighbourhoods for large populations in a relatively short amount of time and at a relatively low cost. Yet according to the study participants, the charm and character found in older detached-housing neighbourhoods and in urban neighbourhoods is lost in this process. However, brief consideration must in this context be given to the highly distinct and recognisable architectural style characterising older residential neighbourhoods. Detached houses of the early 1900s' Bedre Byggeskik approach (Floris, 2005) form one example, and the neo-classical building blocks characterising numerous urban Danish neighbourhoods form another. Bech-Danielsen & Stender (2015) debate precisely such distinction between a positive and a negative representation

of visual uniformity and repetitiveness in Danish residential neighbourhoods (see also Bech-Danielsen & Gram-Hanssen, 2004).

A second key point voiced by the study participants regards the life led in suburbia. Firstly, suburbia is perceived to be a family sphere. A place for families with children attending to school, day-care, sports and leisure activities, playmates, and none the least, home life. For instance, Agnes (Case #5) is a young woman without children and to her, suburbia does not make sense *because of* this:

> *To me, suburban life is all about family life revolving around school and kindergarten. If you don't have strong neighbourhood relations, for instance through your kids, then there's nothing to do in such a place – like for young people, let's say up to 40 (Agnes, Case #5).*

A large body of research have consistently confirmed the strong link between suburbia and families with children, both in terms of the population groups living in detached suburban houses[43] (Statistics Denmark, 2020f; Kristensen & Andersen, 2009) and in terms of cultural representations and social perceptions of suburban life (Mechlenborg, 2012; Frandsen, 2009; 2006; Kristensen & Andersen, 2009). However, the families of this study, i.e. families with children, also find it hard to see themselves in suburbia. Housing choice is a complex, multifaceted process, as demonstrated by a large body of housing research (e.g. van Gent, Das & Musterd, 2019; Jansen, 2014), encompassing much more than e.g. the functionality, practicality or safety typically associated with suburban family life. As clarified above, lifestyle is a key driver in the housing choices of the families in this case study.

Secondly, the cases of the study find suburban life too introspective and socially isolated, for instance Tanja (Case #6) who characterises life in suburbia as devoid of community, because "*you just put up four walls around you, and then you never ever see anyone*", and Mette (Case #1) perceives suburbans as self-sufficient and officious. Bech-Danielsen et al. (2004) have identified similar perceptions amongst city dwellers, yet also reverse perceptions amongst suburbans: They perceive city life as anonymous, alienating and devoid of community[44]. Yet in the view voiced by the study participants, suburbia becomes the stereotype of a dwelling-centred

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[43] Another common resident group in suburbia is adults of older age groups (see e.g. Kristensen & Andersen, 2009). Since they have generally lived in their homes since their children were living there with them, their housing choices are based on family life and bear traces of it, and consequently this group also adds to the impression of suburbia as a family sphere.

[44] The referenced anthology accounts for a study undertaken by C. Bech-Danielsen and K. Gram-Hanssen, which deals with this topic.

culture as opposed to a context-centred culture (Attfield, 2016; Winther, 2021[45]). For instance, the idea of doing work on one's house and garden seems highly unpleasant to some of the study participants (an activity that is actually shown by research on homeownership to strengthen people's feeling of attachment to their homes (Wentzel Winther, 2013; Kristensen & Andersen, 2009; Bech-Danielsen & Gram-Hanssen, 2004)). Another paper working with the same case study (Winther, 2021) demonstrates how the housing choices of the study participants are the results of a prioritisation of area-related qualities over dwelling-related qualities, because they value the former higher than the latter: They have compromised on dwelling-related qualities like square metres in order to gain on area-related qualities, in this case qualities connected to urban areas. According to the study participants, suburbia's stark contrast to the multifunctional character of central urban neighbourhoods makes suburbia a boring and way too quiet place to live. In this perspective, the monofunctionality of suburban residential neighbourhoods adds to the study participants' impressions of suburbia as a place of residency, not of activity, and as a sphere of introspectivity, not of community. This image of an introspective, dwelling-oriented way of life appears highly confining to the study participants; Stine (Case #3) terms it claustrophobic and phrases it like this:

> *I think it would become a little claustrophobic to live in a place where you would just, you know, stay behind your hedges. Of course, one could try and engage in socialising in the area, but how would that turn out..? (Stine, Case #3).*

Given the high-density character of the home neighbourhoods of the study participants and the substantial compactness of their dwellings, perceiving life in suburbia as claustrophobic may come across as peculiar at first hand. Yet viewing this claustrophobia as social, as opposed to a merely physical claustrophobia related to spatial restrictions, opens up understanding. Life in the city is perceived as liberating – as a certain freedom linked to diversity, anonymity and constant change and evolvement lent to the city dweller. Life in suburbia, on the other hand, is perceived to be confined by social control, norms and self-absorption. Furthermore, in the perception of the study participants, life in suburbia is dwelling-centred, entailing that 'home' ends at the cadastral boundary. By contrast, they perceive their own life in the city as context-centred, thus expanding the boundaries of 'home' to include the entire neighbourhood – perhaps even the

[45] This refers to the paper in Chapter 6.

whole city. Thus, suburban living in a spacious home comes across as claustrophobic – urban compact living comes across as spacious.

7.5. CITY AND SUBURBIA: WORLDS APART OR TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN?

The city as we know it in today's Danish context is a highly different place than the city, as it was only fifty or a hundred years ago (let alone two, five or eight hundred years ago). Back then, the city was both unhealthy and dangerous with poor living conditions in crowded flats. By contrast, the new neighbourhoods developing outside the dense city offered light, space, fresh air, greenery, and much better housing conditions. Based on ideas of rationality and systematism, suburbia developed as the miniature paradise of the common man – the teacher, the mechanic or the clerk, for whom a modern home in healthy surroundings had previously been out of reach. Yet despite the widespread gloomy perceptions of the city, cultural-radical opinion formers and other socially and culturally advantaged parts of society took an urban stance and criticised suburbia for uniformity, dreariness, materialism and the like. Additionally, the welfare state has developed even more since then, and in recent decades, cities have undergone extensive changes: Comprehensive renovation of old buildings into modern-quality housing, deporting of pollutional elements like factories, large industrial sites and heavy traffic, sharp decreases in the population density, and marked changes in the population composition in terms of demographics and socioeconomy. Today, both Copenhagen and Aarhus are internationally praised for the beauty, safety, cleanliness and bon vivant environments, they are perceived to offer for both tourists and inhabitants. Suburbia may not have changed as much. Of course, houses have been renovated and some replaced with new ones, but the general layout of the suburban neighbourhoods, the structure of available facilities, and the population composition on both dwelling and neighbourhood levels have only changed marginally since the large expansion of suburbia in the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, not much is on the table to challenge the perceptions of suburbia (negative and positive) voiced already upon its development. However, the widespread popularity of suburbia in the general public persists as well.

The criticism put forward by generations of culturally and socially advantaged population groups holds that suburbia is uniform, monofunctional, boring, historyless, devoid of community, and inciting introspectivity and egotism. The linkages from such critical perceptions of suburbia to the accounts of the study participants are evident throughout the case study. Suburbia is depicted as the little man's dull, self-centred paradise; the city is depicted as a living, sociable, atmospheric epicentre. The following account of suburbia illustrates this clearly:

> *It's just these long rows. In a way, it's an assembly-line kind of life, I think. It just gives me ticks, you know, I just can't stand suburban life. […] People in suburbia are prone to want their neighbours to cut their hedges in the same way as themselves, and that's where it reaches too far into my private sphere. In the city, we are forced to be considerate of each other (Mette, Case #1).*

The perspective on suburban hedge trimming voiced in this quote clearly references the expression "*privet hedge fascism*" (Mechlenborg, 2012) mentioned in the first section of the paper. By ascribing to such views of suburbia, the study participants in the study connect themselves to culturally and socially advantaged parts of society rather than to popular-cultural opinions of suburbia. Furthermore, the quote illustrates how the accounts of the study participants shift flowingly between physical and social or cultural elements in their characteristics of suburbia and the city. The physical environment acts upon the social and cultural – and vice versa (Yaneva, 2009; Castells, 2002 or Sassen, 2000 on cities). Given the clear socio-structural background of the development of suburbia, it is evident why the terms suburbia and city both give associations to certain ways of life and not only to certain physical environments.

Analysing the accounts of the study participants further makes it evident how their perceptions of suburbia continuously reference back to the city, like in the quote above opposing suburban and urban ways of conduct. Their accounts of city and suburbia are entangled and mutually affirming. In perceiving suburbia as quiet, monofunctional and introspective, it practically becomes the antithesis to the city perceived as lively, diverse and engaging. In fact, in the perceptions of the study participants as well as in cultural representations of city and suburbia, the two environments come across as each other's perfect opposites: lively/quiet; social/introspective; diverse/uniform; monofunctional/multifunctional; engaging/self-absorbed; atmospheric/dreary; and so on. Rather than merely highly different environments, city and suburbia may be highly interrelated, as two sides of the same coin. From the offset, the two environments have been entangled: suburbia was initiated as a reaction to an urban problem, and since then, the city has continuously adopted and translated suburban elements, as has suburbia adopted and translated urban elements. To this day, the discussion continues whether one is becoming the other, and which is the better side of the coin. Though city and suburbia may appear to be two different worlds, they are in no way worlds apart.

7.6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper has taken selected compact living households as a case study to examine their perceptions of city and suburbia and, none the least, the relations

between them. These households have chosen to live compactly, because they value living in the city very highly. To them, the city is a lively, atmospheric scene attributed with a particular mix of people, materialities, facilities and activities with which the households feel they fit and in which they feel at home. Examining their accounts of the city in detail reveals how these continuously reference back to suburbia, and vice versa, and how such narratives aid the identification of the households with living-in-the-city. Furthermore, the linkages from these perceptions to perceptions voiced by socially and culturally advantaged population groups, or particularly cultural-radical opinion formers, are highly evident. In such perceptions, the city is virtually the perfect opposite of suburbia: Pairs of opposite features are attributed to the two environments: lively opposes quiet, social opposes introspective, diverse opposes uniform, etc. From the very offset, i.e. the creation of modern-day suburbia, city and suburbia have been closely entangled. This paper demonstrates how such entanglement remains today – in the more general cultural perceptions and representations of the two environments, and in the personal perceptions and narratives of the studied households.

A key finding of the paper is that living in the city is perceived as *living the neighbourhood*, so to speak, as if home includes the whole surrounding area. This does not necessarily refer to actual daily activities, but to the lifestyle-based motives behind the choice of urban settlement. Living in suburbia, by contrast, is perceived by the case study families as living primarily within one's own cadastre, that is, a much more dwelling-centred way of life. In this perspective, living in suburbia is perceived as claustrophobic – despite the much lower density of the environment and the larger available space within the home. The parallels of these accounts to longwithstanding criticism of suburbia amongst certain population groups further suggest that such perceptions are more generally at play in urban perceptions of city and suburbia – and consequently that they affect residential settlement patterns: The paper has demonstrated the importance of location in the process of housing choice – perceived location, that is. Accordingly, though perceptions of housing types or neighbourhood types may be complex to grasp, they are crucial for the process of housing choice and consequently for the formation of residential settlement patterns in society.

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CHAPTER 8. PAPER: MAKING DECENT HOMES IN COMPACT LIVING. EXPLORING IDEALS OF THE HOME IN URBAN DANISH COMPACT LIVING

by

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Abstract: [No abstract, as this paper was submitted as an anthology chapter.]

8.1. INTRODUCTION

Average Danish households spend nearly 38 % of their income on housing-related expenses[47] (Statistics Denmark, 2019). At the same time, Danish homes are generally becoming larger and larger, and today, the average available living space is 53 square metres per person (Gadeberg, 2020), the second highest level in the EU (Eurostat, 2018). Thus, tackling a strenuous housing situation does not seem to be the reason for this extensive prioritisation of our dwellings. Average sizes of newly built houses exceed 200 square meters (Statistics Denmark, 2020a (single-family houses)), yet 200 square metres is not necessary to get a roof over our heads and have room for basic functions like a kitchen, a bathroom and a place to sleep. Thus, the purpose of contemporary homes in a society like Denmark today must reach far beyond the fulfilment of basic practical functions. The substantial share of our incomes spent on housing-related expenses alongside the voluminous home decor market and substantial popularity of home decor television, magazines, social media communication etc. all provide very strong indications of the immense importance of our homes and the clear presence of ideals about what a proper and a decent home is. Though such overarching, generalised ideals of the home are not to be understood as dictating of social

[47] Calculated as the share of variables housing use [boligbenyttelse] and furniture, household equipment and services [møbler, husholdningsudstyr og husholdningsservices] of total private consumption [forbrug i alt] at Statistics Denmark (2019).

acceptance, they do seem closely linked to social status and the assessment of ourselves in relation to others.

The continuously expanding consumption of dwelling space strongly suggests that spaciousness is a core element of conventional ideals of the home today. Despite this, however, some households choose to go in the opposite direction: Instead of giving a high priority to spaciousness, they deliberately choose to cut back on the size of their home. Households living on little space due to financial restrictions is of course nothing new, yet these are socially and economically resourceful households that do have other options. Especially in the largest cities of Denmark (and of other countries too), stable and well-functioning households deprioritise spacious dwellings like large single-family houses outside the city in favour of small-sized, but centrally located urban dwellings. In the context of this paper, the term compact living is applied to households who[48] 1) live in dwellings that are smaller than conventionally for their household type, and 2) actively choose compact living – as opposed to marginalised population groups with little freedom of choice in housing. In this context then, the concept of compact living differs from simply living on little space. The paper is part of a project exploring compact living in Denmark through a case study. Another paper (Winther, 2021[49]) has shown how the lifestyles of the households under study are clearly centred on the city and accordingly, that their housing choices are a prioritisation of location over dwelling qualities. Such findings paired with the above observation that these households have made unconventional housing choices may indicate that they have unconventional ideals of home and accordingly, that the conventional social status of spacious homes may be unimportant to them. However, studying these households further reveals that matters may not be that simple, and this paper thus asks: *Do conventional ideals of the home play a role for the households under study?* Secondly, given the general preference for spacious dwellings in conventional ideals of the home, there is an immediate misfit between these and compact living. The paper thus further asks: *How does compact living affect the realisation of conventional ideals in the homes under study?*

8.2. PRACTICING HOMES. ESTABLISHING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literature on the concept of home has clearly demonstrated how dwellings must provide much more for their occupants than a roof over their heads in order to be

[48] The precise definition of urban compact living in this dissertation was adjusted after the submission of this paper. Thus, the definition formulated here is an older version.

[49] This refers to the paper in Chapter 6.

a home. As put clearly by Carole Després thirty years ago (Després, 1991) and continuously underlined by proceeding scholars (see Kusenbach & Paulsen (2013) for an overview of the multiple dimensions in the concept of home), homes contain numerous layers reaching beyond the material: Homes must accommodate both the social, the affective, the sensory, the personal, the practical and the physical (Blunt & Dowling, 2006), and they affect feelings of belonging (Sobh & Belk, 2011). As argued by e.g. Reimer & Leslie (2004) or Sparke (2010), homes express the lifestyle and the tastes of their occupants through style, decoration and organisation or, as argued by Bech-Danielsen & Gram-Hanssen (2004) or Karsten (2010), through the choice of location and housing type. Yet, as underlined in studies like the above, lifestyle and tastes are relative concepts, that is, occupants position themselves in relation to others. As argued by Deleuze (2014) applying the concept of identity (see Winther, 2021, for a discussion of identity in relation to e.g. lifestyle[50]), identities exist by way of difference. Thus, homes become a material translation of the identities of their occupants (Deleuze, 2014; see also Savage, 2011, linking the deleuzian understanding to bourdiuian relativity and spatialisation).

However, though home is *"space under control"*, as phrased by Douglas (1991: 289), this control is contested. Humans are not fully in control over their homes: Firstly, for most people, finances put up limitations to our freedom of choice in terms of both acquisition, renovation and decoration of dwellings. Additionally, other factors can set up obstacles too, e.g. structural or societal factors like housing market conditions, legislation, personal resources and competences or the physical conditions of the home (e.g. topological or constructional features) (Özüekren & van Kempen, 2002). Consequently, a mismatch between dwellings and occupants is the rule more than an exception, though to highly varying extents, and in some situations, homes can thus be associated with dissatisfaction or even discomfort or constraint. Access to a physical dwelling does not necessarily instigate a feeling of homeliness – or vice versa for that matter: Home can in some situations relate to a neighbourhood, a city, a region or even a nation more than a dwelling, as demonstrated for instance by Lancione (2019) and Bech-Danielsen & Højring (in press) studying cases of homelessness, where individuals can feel at home in a certain public space, or by Warren & Williams (2013) studying community ties amongst elderly in assisted living. For the households studied in this paper, homeliness is strongly tied to the neighbourhoods they live in (see Winther, 2021[51]). Home can also relate more to emotions or practices than to a geographical location, as demonstrated by e.g. W. Winther (2013) pointing to

[50] This refers to the paper in Chapter 6.

[51] This refers to the paper in Chapter 6.

the phrases 'feeling at home' or 'making oneself at home', which are not restricted to refer to an individual's dwelling, or by Wästerfors (2013) studying homeliness practices of institutionalised youths. Thus, homes are not static material housing units, homes are practiced and perceived: They are constantly in the making, continuously activating and connecting past, present and future (Pink et al., 2017) and renegotiating usage and perceptions of different spaces (Meagher, 2017).

In this making of homes, people interact with the physical environment around them, yet the social sciences and humanities, i.e. the sciences working precisely with the social and the human, have traditionally perceived the physical world as merely a backdrop for human life (as described by Warf & Arias, 2009). However, within recent decades, scholars have increasingly begun dealing more thoroughly with the physical surroundings of people as opposed to the people only and as something which actively impacts human life – a development often phrased as the spatial turn, e.g. by Warf & Arias (2009). One of the most radical approaches to ascribing an actual character of its own to physical objects, environments or even non-physical elements like technological elements, is that of actor-network-theory as instigated by Latour (e.g. 1988). Actor-network-theory has abolished the borders between humans and non-humans arguing for their irrelevance, as both humans and non-humans have abilities to act upon each other. Yaneva (2009) has translated this thinking to the world of architecture and set out to demonstrate how physical objects "*perform the social as we use them*" (Yaneva, 2009: 280).

Sharing the idea of the non-human as acting, Norman (2013) has examined the design of everyday objects through their interaction with humans by reinstating and reformulating the concept of "*affordances*": Originally introduced in 1979 by Gibson (Gibson, 2015), affordances refer to the way in which physical elements prompt or invite certain actions from humans (Chong & Proctor, 2020). For instance, solid ground prompts standing or walking; and when added an adjacent raised level, it prompts sitting. In other words, affordances are objective. However, proceeding scholars have criticised this objectivity, most notably Norman (2013) arguing that the way humans perceive and interact with the physical environment does not depend on the affordances of this alone; it also depends on human cognition and thus involves interpretation. Interaction with a given physical element, for instance a dwelling, a room or a piece of furniture, will not be identical for all humans. According to Norman, "*affordances provide strong clues to the operations of things*" (Norman 2013: 13), but are not determinant of perception. Norman thus distinguishes Gibson's physical affordances from

"*perceived affordances*" (Norman 2013)[52]. Consequently, as Højring (2019: 65) puts it, studying affordances entails studying not only the physical elements which prompt or impede human action, but also studying those who act and their actions. Studying homes thus reaches far beyond studying material dwellings. As Pink (e.g. Pink et al., 2017 or Pink, 2012) argues from a practice-theoretical approach: What we generally think of as a kitchen, i.e. an indoor room equipped with a refrigerator, a cooker, cupboards, tableware and utilities, would not be a kitchen without being practiced as such, i.e. being cooked in, being used to store food and tableware, etc. Yet practices in themselves do not determine whether they are performed in one way or another; this depends on their relation to the world in which they are performed and to the humans performing them. In other words, humans perform practices in multiple ways, depending on who they are, and how they relate to the world around them – including the physical environment[53]. Places, on their part, situate practices and humans in the world (Pink, 2012). Correspondingly, a dwelling without people or practices would not be a home, but simply be a volume filled with air and certain material elements (walls, furniture, etc.). As art historian Bek's account (Bek, 2010) of the historical development in visual arts and architecture demonstrates, human understanding and perception of the spatial has become more refined over time, elaborating from a simple and static understanding to an organic in-motion understanding tied to senses and experiences. The spatial is lived and experienced, not merely observed. This applies to the spaces in a dwelling too.

Altogether then, homes are practiced by people, meaning they are produced through our bodily, cognitive and social practices, all rooted within the given context. At the same time, homes actively practice back, so to speak, they are much more than passive, material backdrops of human life. Accordingly, the object of analysis of this study must be the interaction between people, practices and the non-human environment.

8.3. METHODS AND CASES

The paper is based on a qualitative ethnographic study methodologically designed to produce in-depth, detailed and situated knowledge rather than

[52] Gibson did in fact touch upon this (Chong & Proctor, 2020), but without specifying it or following the matter through: For instance, he described how children often interact differently with objects than adults due to children's smaller physical size (see Højring, 2019). But then, one might ask, why not because of children's different way of perceiving the world? A chair may be interpreted not as something to sit on, but to climb on, by a child's playful mind.

[53] The term also includes non-physical elements like digital media or other technological features – encompassing what might be termed non-human by e.g. ANT scholars (e.g. Yaneva, 2009).

broad-spectrum knowledge. Consequently, it takes qualitative case study as its method, as the strength of this lies in the detail, the depth and the power of the good example (Flyvbjerg, 2015; Thomas, 2011). The approach is explorative in order to allow for situating and contextualising the collected data (Thomas, 2010), and the purpose is to capture the concrete, the experienced, the reflected and the perceived set within space and time. Accordingly, the methodology lends from everyday life ethnographies on the home (like those collected by Pink et al. (2017) or the work of Madsen (2017)). The dataset covers six carefully selected cases, each consisting of a dwelling, its occupants, its surroundings and the life led in and around the dwelling.[54] Given the sizes of the dwellings, it is evident that in other countries, these cases might hardly be perceived as living in particularly small dwellings. However, the relation to general housing patterns in the surrounding society is key, and as pointed out, Denmark has very high averages of available living space. It should be mentioned that Danish cities are experiencing increasing housing shortages causing rising prices (KL, 2018); yet this does not alter the fact that the households of this case study are affluent enough to have alternatives on housing markets outside the cities. Each case is studied through a palette of methods, namely qualitative, semi-structured, in-depth interviews taking place in the homes and including a tour of the home; registration of dwelling layouts and arrangement of dwellings (functions, furniture, etc.); households photographing least and most favourite parts of their home; and seven-day journal-keeping of all activities in the homes[55]. Data was collected between August 2018 and December 2019.

8.4. FINDINGS FROM LIFE IN SIX COMPACT HOMES: MAKING DECENT HOMES UNDER SPATIAL RESTRICTIONS

The following section analyses the six cases of the study to examine, first, which role conventional ideals of the home play for the compact living households. Such conventional ideals are to be understood as the ideals prevailing in the surrounding society with regards to the home. This is not to say that all housing practices are identical and dictated by such ideals, but rather that overarching tendencies exist, and that these play key roles for the definition of socio-cultural contexts of normality, acceptability and status. Second, the section examines how

[54] In the version submitted to the journal, six diagrams presenting the cases and a reference to the dissertation for elaboration of the cases were included here.

[55] Additionally, photographs, routes and activities of each household member in the surrounding neighbourhood were collected too. This data type is however less relevant for the current paper, as this focuses on the dwelling units and not their surroundings.

the case study households set out to realise such conventional ideals of the home within the particular context of compact living.

DO CONVENTIONAL IDEALS OF 'A DECENT HOME' MATTER AT ALL?

Compared to conventional ideals of the home and prevailing residential settlement patterns of the surrounding society, the households under study have made very unconventional housing choices. Does it then follow that their ideals and perceptions of home are unconventional too? A clear finding that cuts across the cases are the aspirations of the households to create "*decent*" homes or "*proper*" homes – in their own words (e.g. Case #2, Case #4 and Case #5). Examining the meanings of such terms thoroughly reveals that these are highly social phenomena, closely linked to more common or conventional ideals of the home: This is evident for instance in Case #1, where the household has simply shrunken and condensed the topology of a conventional dwelling instead of seeking to recast and revolutionise it (see Figure 6 (Chapter 4)), or in Agnes' indication of an opposition between a shabby home and a normal home – and of an extended risk for small homes of becoming shabby:

> *Things are normally sized in my flat; it feels normal to be here… You owe yourself, when you live in a small space, to avoid your home becoming shabby. (Agnes, Case #5)*

Similarly, Majbrit's assessment of her caravan home is based on distinguishing it from the trailers of alternative communities of squatters, marginalised groups etc.:

> *It feels like a home-home, like a home for real, you know. […] My house doesn't look like an appalling trailer, which is all filthy and cold and clammy, I mean, it's bright and nice – it's an actual home. (Majbrit, Case #4)*

As demonstrated in the literature section, homes play key parts in the self-perception of individuals in relation to others, and accordingly, the feeling of having a shabby home, as Agnes phrases it, translates into a feeling of being shabby herself. In a society like Denmark today, where the overarching tendency is that those who can afford larger dwellings opt for such, small dwellings are associated with low social status. They are left as the less desirable choice, occupied by those with few social and economic resources (apart from student housing). Illustratively, a noted Danish-English encyclopaedia translates the Danish version of 'living in a small space' into either "*to be cramped for space*" or "*to live in a poky flat/house*" (Gyldendals Røde Ordboger, 2020). Thus, space grants

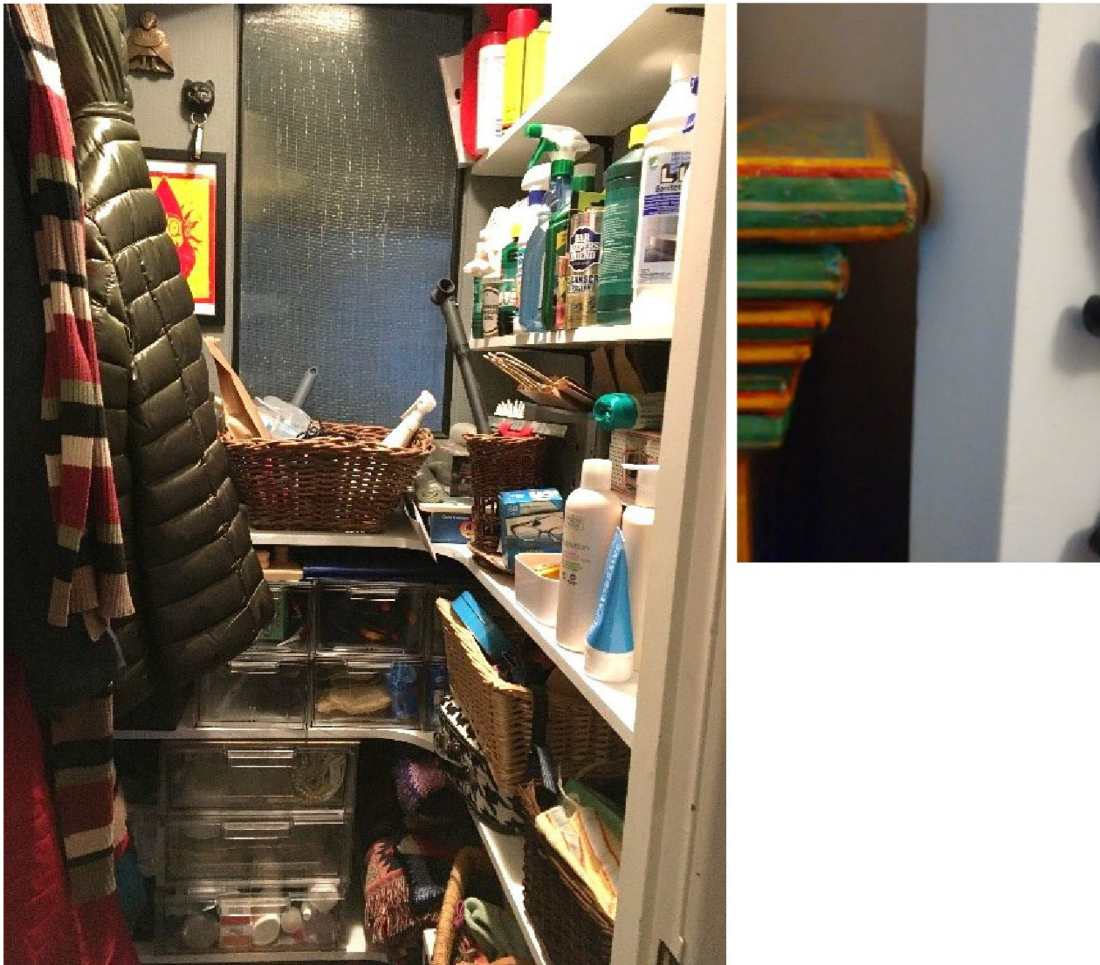

Figure 36. To the household of Case #6, their possessions are important and key in making them feel at home. Left: Their packed storage room in the hallway. Right: The material consequences of a packed home. The door hits the drawer squeezed in next to it. This is one of Frank's least favourite things in the flat, *"notice the wear marks!"* he says. Photo by Frank.

social status, entailing that the case study households are off to a poor start in producing what they perceive as decent homes, and as the above quotes demonstrate, they are highly aware of it.

However, conventional ideals of the home are multiscaled. One only needs to consider the vast differences between different parts of the world and different countries to grasp how one universal ideal of home does not exist (see Meagher,

2017, or Sobh & Belk, 2011, for intercultural studies of home). Accordingly, even within a small country like Denmark, variations in the ideals of home exist depending on culture, demography, lifestyles, economy, etc. as well as on the local housing stock: While the average available living space in Denmark is 53 square metres per person, the averages in the municipalities of Copenhagen and Aarhus are 40 and 46 square metres respectively (Dansk Byggeri, 2020)[56]. In other words, the five urban households of the case study all live in areas, where small homes are much more common than if the families had lived in the suburbs or the countryside. The impact of such contextual conditions on local norms about the home is clearly noticeable to the households. For instance, the family of Case #1 states that:

> *Mette: Other families live relatively small too; it's not like if we lived in the middle of a detached-house neighbourhood*
>
> *Anders: It's really not that unusual here; we've just taken things a little step further*

Similar reflections are expressed by the study participants when accounting for their decisions to remain in a flat in the city instead of taking the conventional road and settling in a house in the suburbs: Being surrounded by other households that have made the same choice (living in the city) have made the choice feel much less controversial (see Winther, 2021[57], which examines these processes). In fact, the rural tiny house case (Case #4) underscores such locality effects, in that the resident, Majbrit, has received significant attention and reactions in the local environment, where houses are generally very spacious, regarding her choice to live on only 22 square metres.

Yet despite local ideals of the home in urban areas making the choice of compact living feel less controversial, conventional ideals about home and what constitutes a decent or a proper home are very evident to the households of the study. Being short on square metres granting their homes social status, the households consciously apply other means to create what they perceive as decent homes. In particular, they look to comfort, to functionality and to aesthetics, and the following section will examine how.

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[56] The municipalities include detached housing neighbourhoods too, entailing that the averages would be even lower, if calculations were restricted to dense, urbanised building-block neighbourhoods.

[57] This refers to the paper in Chapter 6.

Figure 37. Case #3. Stine's style references both the Scandinavian design tradition such as the Børge Mogensen dining chairs or the Luxo wall lamp, as well as up-to-date interior trends such as the one-of-a-kind ceramic pieces or large green plants. Photo by Stine.

PRACTICING DECENT HOMES WITHOUT SPACIOUSNESS AT HAND

Understood as a domestic feature, comfort is considered by literature to be a core element in contemporary standards of home and to have almost come to represent the basics of housing qualities in the westernised world (see Madsen, 2017, for a literature overview). Comfort being a key element in the case study households' perceptions of a decent home thus supports such arguments. In the home, comfort contains multiple layers like thermal comfort, sensory comfort, cosiness, physical convenience and ease (Madsen, 2017). Similarly, comfort takes many shapes to the households under study. In Case #2, an insistence on making room for a voluminous sectional couch in the living room is a way of creating comfort in terms of relaxation (bodily and cognitively) and cosiness. Such large couches have become common in Danish homes in recent years as opposed to smaller, more upright sofas in a mid-20th century design. Accordingly, this choice of furniture is a way of keeping up with modern-day standards of domestic family life, despite living in a small dwelling that would seemingly *afford* opting for more compact furniture (Norman, 2013). Additionally, the household insists on making room for kitchen appliances that functionally speaking are dispensable, but that grant the family an added convenience in their practices of making coffee, baking and washing up:

> *Let's just call it a luxury problem, I mean, we don't actually need a stand mixer or a milk steamer, and they take up a lot of counter space, but they are luxury elements that we enjoy, so I wouldn't trade them for anything. And a dishwasher – one could of course live without it, but I would just never give that up either. (Emil, Case #2)*

At first hand, compact dwellings appear to be affording an elimination of inventory that is not utterly indispensable, and adding extra comfort to the home often takes up extra space. However, the households of the study interpret their dwellings differently and insist on prioritising comfort, on the face of it *in spite of* the restricted spatiality, but perhaps more precisely *because of* the restricted spatiality. The physical affordances of the homes thus differ from the perceived or interpreted affordances, in the terms of Gibson (1979) and Norman (2013). As Norman argues, affordances provide strong clues to the interaction between the physical environment and the people living in it, but they are not determinant of it (ibid.). Here, prevailing social ideals of home act in as well, affecting the human interpretation of the compact dwellings. To the case study households, consciously prioritising an upholding of certain levels of comfort becomes a means for increasing the decency of the home.

Besides comfort, the households of the study look to functionality as a means for approaching the ideals of home. In fact, domestic functionality can be said in a way to be a form of comfort – relating to the layers of physical convenience and sensory or bodily comfort (Madsen, 2017) and is likewise perceived by literature to be a central element in modern westernised standards of housing qualities. A key source of the challenges to domestic functionality in the dwellings under study is what could be termed as compact functionality, that is, the way multiple functions are physically compressed in the home. Especially practical rooms like kitchens, bathrooms and hallways present compact functionality, for instance, the kitchens contain multiple items each affording different practices (washing up, preparing meals, filling and emptying the dishwasher, sometimes eating too), and given their small sizes, this compact functionality is intensified further. Moreover, in some of the cases, practices conventionally performed in other rooms are relocated to the kitchen, for instance tooth brushing, which in Case #1 is relocated from the bathroom due to the similarly intense compact functionality of this. As a consequence, the household has embodied adapted ways of conduct and regulations of behaviour in the kitchen and the bathroom – "*like on a submarine*", one of the residents say. A symbolic materialisation of such lack of domestic functionality is when the case study households experience physically bumping into things in their homes or physical items repeatedly bumping into each other, because of the restricted spatiality and compact functionality. Frank and Tanja (Case #6) have consciously prioritised making room for their abundance of physical possessions as opposed to sorting out and arranging their home more airily. Nevertheless, when they experience the lack of functionality through physical collisions like edging through the narrow space between the bed and the closet or repeatedly bumping the opening cabinet door into the drawer, leaving wear marks on both, it is a clear source of irritation and linked to perceptions about decency in the home. In fact, Frank identifies the physical traces on the drawer and the cabinet door as one of his least favourite things about his home at all (see Figure 36). Thus, Frank and Tanja's ideals about the functionality of a decent home collide with a feeling of homeliness rooted in surrounding themselves with meaningful material objects. As a consequence, the compact physical environment of their dwelling puts up obstacles for their practicing of home – figuratively *and* literally. Altogether, the challenges to creating functionality in the compact dwellings under study demonstrate how the physical environment acts, affording changed practices and interpretations and challenging the realisation of human ideals of the home.

Finally, the households of the study look to aesthetics as a means for making decent homes. At first hand, this seems self-evident, as the beautiful home is the contrast of the ugly and unappealing home. However, aesthetics is largely a matter of taste, making the venture into creating domestic beauty a more

uncertain one, on the face of it. However, questions of taste or style have to do with socially relative questions of identity and lifestyle (Deleuze, 2014; Savage, 2011). In this perspective, homes can thus be perceived as displays of the identity, the lifestyle and the social positions of their occupants (Reimer & Leslie, 2004; Sparke, 2010). To Stine in Case #3, creating bright, airy and uncluttered environments is key to her aesthetics and consequently, she has compromised on a key element of domestic space, according to e.g. Lawson (2001), namely privacy: Instead of creating a separate bedroom for herself, she has combined all functions of her sleeping area, living room, dining room, kitchen and hallway in one main room, in which she sleeps on a sofa bed (see Figure 37, and Figure 17 (Chapter 4)). Her privacy is thus temporal – restricted to the weeks in which her daughters stay at their father's – rather than sensory or spatial (Pink, 2012). In return, Stine has maximised the brightness and airiness in the main room of the flat. To other households conversely, like Case #1, creating small, dense nooks in the flat and filling it with trinkets and curiosities is key for their aesthetics and perceived as a means for creating cosiness and atmosphere. Of course, prioritising individual privacy for the four household members is the first-hand purpose of subdividing their flat into small separate rooms instead of creating an open plan. However, their aesthetic preferences for physical condensity in the home make this topological solution appealing aesthetically too and are an important additional reason for organising their flat in this manner. To this family, Mette in particular, the aesthetic ideals are the eclectic, the bohemian, the patinated and the disorganised. To Stine of Case #3, on the other hand, the aesthetic ideals are the simplistic, the light, the Scandinavian and the designed. In both cases, these ideals are clearly expressed in the interior and organisation of their homes. As pinpointed by Gullestad (1989), our dwellings are simultaneously a symbol of our lives and the place of their continuous formation and consolidation. Accordingly, the household of Case #2 attribute nearly human characteristics to their home, making strong links between it and their own tastes, personality and lifestyle (see Winther, 2021[58]) for elaboration):

> *This flat has some charm; everything's a bit unorthodox. And we've done things like painting the floors green, putting up a 'bounty' beach wallpaper. Adding a bit of humour, the flat has a little craziness to it. Emil (Case #2)*

Altogether, the study demonstrates how the case study households consciously set out to realise widespread, conventional ideals of the home by different means than domestic spaciousness, which they strongly lack in their compact living

[58] This refers to the paper in Chapter 6.

context. Furthermore, the study supports claims that comfort, functionality and aesthetics are core elements in prevailing ideals of the home.

8.5. CONCLUSION

Overarching housing trends in Denmark today (and in other countries) seem to go clearly in the direction of expansion of dwelling sizes. In combination, the immensely large significance of the home identified solidly by literature and supported by this paper's findings, i.e. homes are an integrate part of our self-perception, self-assessment and self-expression in relation to others, the importance for households of meeting such ideals of domestic spaciousness is grand. This is not to say that social acceptance inevitably requires an enormous home, but rather that ideals play key parts in defining socio-cultural contexts of normality, acceptability and status. Consequently, the home becomes a material translation of the identity of its occupants, and domestic spaciousness becomes a key driver of social status. By examining six cases of housing choices going in the opposite direction of this, the paper has examined the extension of such conventional ideals of the home and their role in the perceptions of home of the case study households. These households have all deliberately chosen compact living, and a reasonable assumption could thus be that conventional ideals of home are unimportant to them. Furthermore, five of them live in localities where ideals of spaciousness are toned down: Urban inhabitants generally live on less space than other population groups, and the paper shows how choosing compact living is more socially accepted in the socio-cultural environment of the city.

However, the paper finds that conventional ideals of the home are far from unimportant to the households under study. By contrast, the households are highly aware of being behind on points from the start, because they live compactly, and consequently, they look to other elements of conventional ideals and consciously apply them in order to create decent homes, as they phrase it themselves, within the context of compact living. By prioritising comfort, functionality and aesthetics, the households integrate elements in their compact homes, which (as the paper demonstrates) are key features of current ideals of the home.

Altogether, the key point of this paper is to demonstrate both the importance and the complexity and relativity of social norms and ideals, as well as to demonstrate how homes must be understood in the dynamic nexus of the human, the practiced and the physical environment. Studying the six cases of compact living in a contemporary Danish context has shown that despite making unconventional housing choices and living in local environments where such choices are more

common, conventional ideals of the home do matter – and do affect perceptions of home and ways of making home.

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CHAPTER 9. CONCLUSION

The dissertation rounds off with this concluding chapter. The first section presents the main overall findings of the dissertation. Some reflections on the methodology of the study follow, and finally, the implications of the dissertation for future research and for compact living in future urban housing are discussed.

9.1. MAIN FINDINGS OF THE DISSERTATION

The purpose of the dissertation has been to explore urban compact living in a Danish context: the motivations for choosing it and the ways it is practiced and experienced. Compact living is here defined as middle-class households living on much less space than is conventional for the household type and household size in question. Not only is this a new phenomenon in housing and settlement patterns internationally; it is also a new research field, which is still emergent. Consequently, the knowledge required to answer the research question has been lacking, and this dissertation has aimed to fill out the gap. To allow this new field to unfold itself, including the unexpected, the ambiguities and the complexities, the study has taken an explorative, qualitative approach. The dissertation is built up around an ethnographic case study designed to explore, grasp, comprehend and understand urban compact living. The case study consists of six carefully selected examples of urban Danish compact living. However, one case is based on a rural form of compact living, but is included because it is a self-built tiny house, whereas urban compact living in Denmark today is overarchingly set in existing traditional flats. The tiny house thus offers valuable information unattainable in the other cases, because it is fully customised and tailor-made specifically to its occupant's imaginaries of home. The case study has combined ethnographic methods (qualitative interviews, notes, photo elicitation, home tours, and log keeping) with methods borrowed from architecture and design research (drawing, mapping, diagrams). Methods and analyses were designed to shift perspectives between humans, their practices, and the physical environment; that is, inside the dwellings as well as in the surrounding neighbourhood and beyond. Studying the motivations behind urban compact living and the ways of practicing and experiencing it entails studying the making of home. This dissertation builds on a large body of literature that has established the importance of home and the way in which it reaches far beyond questions of housing choice. Home is

understood as a relational engagement and as a process of practicing, doing or making home. In addition to this structure, the theoretical framework of the study is built up by the concepts of housing choice, perceptions of the city, lifestyle, and spaciousness; all playing key roles in the making of home in urban Danish compact living. The main findings resulting from this study of urban Danish compact living are assembled in the following.

ALL ABOUT LIVING IN THE CITY

The first main finding is that urban compact living is not necessarily driven by ideals of sustainability, anti-consumption, freedom from material possessions or the aestheticism in a minimalistic way of life. In this case study, urban compact living was not chosen out of an idealistic preference for it, although it is still about values and attitudes. Building on current housing choice research, the study denotes these values and attitudes as expressions of lifestyle. The lifestyles identified in the case study are profoundly centred on the city. A key finding is how households' daily activities within urban space do not constitute radical new patterns. In fact, the daily life activities of the households are argued to be transferrable to other physical environments. They go to school, work, and sports, and run practical errands, while leisure time is spent at home, visiting friends or family, or making trips to the city centre or the countryside. This challenges assumptions that urban compact living inevitably changes life in the urban environment, for instance by households relocating domestic practices to urban space due to the spatial restrictions of their dwellings. By example, the case study households prefer squeezing together at home for dinner parties or birthdays instead of moving events to a local restaurant. Their attachment to the city is rooted in emotions, values and attitudes rather than activities or behaviour. It is based on a strong appreciation for the city *as it is,* for the specific, yet intangible, ambience and energy that they ascribe to the city. Living in the city allows them to live that ambience. Thus, living in the city is paramount to the case study households and is the driver of their housing choice. Underscoring this is the study's single rural case, as it stands out as being motivated by ideals of personal freedom. This finding is in line with research on tiny houses, and thus suggests strong influence of context: urban compact living (in a Danish context) is set within a boiling-point housing market; rural compact living is not. In both the rural and the urban cases, however, compact living is a means to realise otherwise unattainable imaginaries of home by cutting costs. For the rural case, this has to do with self-determination and control over the home; for the urban cases, it has to do with being able to afford to live in the city. The high prices and boiling-point housing market in cities currently put severe financial restrictions on the housing choices of the urban middle-class. The study thus demonstrates the paramount importance of living in the city to the case study households. Their imaginaries of

home are area-centred as opposed to dwelling-centred. This shows how home is not necessarily a dwelling; home can be the neighbourhood, the city or something else.

The perception of the city emerging from the case study is one of the city as vibrant, progressive and inspiring, and living within this environment is paramount for the case study households. Yet, nearly as paramount is the wish not to live in suburbia. This does not entail a discarding of qualities like quietness, peace, natural surroundings, or open space, but rather a temporal dosing of it in a reciprocal balance with the intense, bustling city life. Peace and quiet gain their qualities, not in their own character, but by way of contrasting with city life. The narratives of city and suburbia voiced in the case study mirror the persistent historical narrative of city and suburbia as perfect opposites. The city is defined, understood and narrated by contrasting it to suburbia. Thus, rather than worlds apart, city and suburbia are intricately entangled adversaries, and this dichotomic narrative aids an understanding of the motivations behind urban compact living: By distancing themselves from living in suburbia, the case study households connect themselves to living in the city. Despite being a highly spacious environment in physical terms, suburbia is depicted in the case study as claustrophobic in social terms. It is represented as a dull, reactionary place of social control, self-sufficiency and materialism. The city, on the other hand, is perceived as physically compact and yet socially spacious: a bustling atmospheric hub of progressiveness and liberatedness. The dissertation demonstrates how spaciousness is not solely physical, but social or human too. Spaciousness is perceived, interpreted and experienced by humans within a cultural, personal and socio-structural context. This perspective reveals how physically spacious suburbia can be interpreted as a place of social claustrophobia, and when ascribing to this interpretation, as the households do, urban compact living makes sense.

The case study thus underscores how home is about belonging and attachment – and accordingly about detachment and distancing too. By distancing from somewhere or something, such as life in suburbia, individuals or groups can attach themselves to somewhere or something else, such as life in the city. Home is about what is desirable *"for someone like them"* (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020: 597); home-as-belonging thus applies on multiple scales. The case study further confirms this in the following way. Urban compact living is an unconventional housing choice in relation to macro-scale ideals of home in a society like contemporary Denmark, yet much less so within an urban context. As a study participant points out, *"other families live relatively small too; it's not like if we lived in the middle of a detached-house neighbourhood"* (Case #1). Again, suburbia is portrayed as the contrast, and the feeling of being out-of-place according to macro-scale

norms is moderated by smaller-scale norms in the urban environment, attaching less weight to dwelling sizes and reflecting how city dwellers generally have less living space available to them. Conventions of a normal or an appropriate home are thus adapted in space and time.

MAKING HOMES, NOT REVOLUTIONS

The second main finding is that macro-scale ideals about a good home or an appropriate home are in no way irrelevant to urban compact living. On the contrary, they are highly present in the making of home by the households in this study. The study demonstrates how urban compact living is not necessarily motivated by a wish to revolutionise conventional ideals of home, and accordingly, making home in urban compact living is not per se about recasting the typology and usage of dwellings. Neither in terms of style nor in terms of the dwelling morphologies are the case study dwellings replicas of the radical minimalistic aesthetisation of small-sized dwellings characteristic of current architecture and design targeted at compact living. As illustrated by one of the study participants, *"generally, I'm in favour of thinking outside the box, but regarding this, I'm quite satisfied that every box has its own function. I think it produces calm to know about the functions of the different rooms".* This cannot be explained by attributing an unawareness of conventional ideals of home to the case study households. On the contrary, they exhibit acute awareness of the content of such ideals and of their own deviation from them on one particular parameter: spaciousness. This is not to say that domestic spaciousness determines social acceptance, but rather that ideals of home play key parts in defining socio-structural and cultural contexts of normality, acceptability and status, as argued by a broad body of recent literature on home. The households in the case study are highly aware that small-sized homes are associated with marginalised population groups[59] and connote low social status. Ideas of normality, appropriateness and decency take up central places in their perceptions of what constitutes 'a good home'. As demonstrated above, they are comfortable challenging ideals of spaciousness in the surrounding environments, yet when regarding ideals of spaciousness inside their own dwellings, things are more complex. Creating an appropriate home or, as a study participant calls it, *"a home-home",* is central to the processes of making home in the case study as a way for the study participants to approach conventional ideals to their best efforts. Being behind on points regarding domestic spaciousness, they catch up by finding alternative points elsewhere in prevailing ideals of home, particularly in terms of comfort, functionality and aesthetics. Yet integrating these into the compact

[59] And with housing for particular target groups like students or the elderly.

Figure 38. The cases living in areas on the fringe of the city orient themselves towards inner neighbourhoods, to which they attach a distinct urban ambience and in which they feel at home. Left: The high-street next to Agnes' (Case #5) flat on the fringe of Copenhagen. Right: Frank and Tanja's (Case #6) building in Aarhus located in a fringal low-density neighbourhood characterised by industry, drive-in retail and heavy traffic.

dwellings give rise to challenges in the households' interaction with the materiality of their dwellings. For instance, everyday comfort elements like large couches, dishwashers, and milk steamers all take up space. Aesthetics can too: for some, a proper home contains objects of sentimental value, trinkets or a piano, although functionality begs for things to be discarded too. For others, a proper home is bright, airy and open, yet the need for individual privacy begs for a subdivision of the dwelling into smaller, darker and denser entities. Thus, a cardinal point is the constant priorities and compromises to be made, underscoring how home is about balancing the multiple dimensions upon which home touches.

MAKING HOME IN THE CITY

Finally, a third main finding ties the findings of the first and second findings together: The case study shows how home is not necessarily restricted to the dwelling. To the urban households of this study, home is the *whole* city or the *whole* neighbourhood. Not in the sense that their domestic lives are relocated to urban space, but in a mental sense. This puts the compromises of making home *within the dwelling* into perspective. In their perception, relocating to the suburbs would condense their homes, because they perceive suburban life as socially and physically confined to small, secluded cadastral islands. Their urban dwellings may be compact, but mentally, they largely become a tool for situating life in the place that feels like home. And as the urban environment is socially spacious in their eyes, compact living makes perfect sense.

9.2. METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

Having presented the main findings of the dissertation, the following section will reflect on the methodology behind the production of this knowledge.

The point of departure of this study was to take an explorative approach. Aiming to capture, grasp and understand a new and emergent phenomenon, the research has been designed to allow the empirical field to speak for itself with space for paradoxes and uncertainties. This is the background for applying a qualitative ethnographic case study. This approach turned out to have essential influence on the answers to the research question. Set within a context where trends of micro living, tiny living, downsizing, or the like, are bubbling amongst developers, architects, policy makers, and media internationally, it would be obvious to link households like those studied here to some of the buzzwords of these trends: minimalism, sustainability, anti-consumerism, and a revolutionising approach to the very idea of home. Accordingly, the cases would come to show ways of practicing home that turned the dwelling as we know it upside-down and perhaps

moved domestic activities out into public space. However, this did not occur. As demonstrated by this dissertation, the households under study applied every effort to approach conventional imaginaries of a proper home. Instead, their ways of making a break with conventionality turned out to be through their housing choices: With open eyes, they deviated from norms of living in a spacious, i.e. low-density, environment, because their lifestyles are centred on the city. Thus, the empirical field contained surprises (of course, one might add), and these would have been inaccessible, had the research been designed to measure pre-defined categories or test binary questions.

Seen in an opposite perspective, the case study approach does not hold information about the prevalence and patterns of urban compact living. However, such an approach is not the way forward to study a phenomenon as relatively unknown in research as urban compact living. Instead, a path for future research could be to test the themes, connections and patterns identified in this case study on a larger scale; see section 9.3 regarding this.

The very limited size of the empirical field strongly complicated the recruitment of cases. As accounted for in Chapter 3, finding cases that matched the set definition of urban compact living (and in one case, rural) without lowering the criteria and while keeping an eye on variety in the sample proved very difficult. Substantial portions of patience and perseverance along with a number of different recruitment channels were employed (social media, public media, private networks and professional networks) to find the six cases. However, the recruitment troubles did not extend to troubles gaining acceptance from the households once identified. Given the comprehensiveness, depth and private character of the sphere under study, it could be expected that households were reluctant to participate, yet this was not the case. One reason for this seemed to be that the households were happy with their housing situation and wanted to share their experiences. Another reason may very well be that the households themselves drew the limits of what to share and what was too private for the study. Acknowledging the delicateness of doing research within the domestic sphere, this study was not designed to directly witness, but to *reconstruct* the lives of the households and the dwellings. This entailed that the data was filtered and interpreted by the study participants. However, the ethical considerations were weighty, and to counter challenges of validity, a varied collection of methods were applied to capture home-making from different angles and through different channels. Furthermore, a layer of critical reflexivity was incorporated in the interviews, as data from the other methods was discussed and debated there. For instance, visual data like photo elicitation sheds light on other perspectives than the practice-oriented logs from the dwellings, and furthermore, both types of data were elaborated and debated at the interviews.

Another methodological challenge was to assess the conventionality and unconventionality of the case study households' ways of practicing home; not in terms of assessing the unconventionality of their housing choice, as this is founded in actual figures of residential settlement patterns of the population, but in terms of their perceptions, experiences and practices within and in connection with their dwellings. Ascribing to a qualitative epistemology and applying the case study method, the dissertation abstains from assessing representativity and conducting direct comparisons. Thus, the challenge of relating the home-making processes in the case study to questions of unconventionality has been approached in two ways. First, by continuously focussing on the relationship between the physically compact dwellings and the practices and experiences of the study participants. This directs focus on identifying whether and how the spatial restrictions affect ways of practicing home rather than comparing the cases with an intangible idea of 'the normal'. Second, by focussing on the role of norms and conventionality in the study participants' own narratives and reflections. A key finding of the study is how norms and conventionality play very central roles in the study participants' perceptions of themselves.

A final comment should be made in connection to the diversity of methods and data types. Being a trained sociologist, as a researcher I was continuously faced with a challenging balance between allowing for new insights and perspectives while remaining solidly grounded in my professional foundation. Consequently, I had to attend to constant care and reflexion in the application of methods borrowed from architecture and design, as well as in the interaction between the different types of methods and data. This remained a focal point throughout the study: from the research design process, through the data collection process and the analytical process, to the communication process.

9.3. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Urban compact living may form just a small corner of the housing landscape. Yet, if this corner is to be part of future urban housing, and increasingly becomes the object of political, commercial, social and cultural attention, knowledge about it is necessary to qualify and inform current debate and representations of urban compact living. This dissertation has taken one step in that direction, but the field is far from fully traversed. The following section discusses the implications of this dissertation for future research by pointing to four points of particular importance:

The first is to study the temporal development of the content of urban compact living. In this dissertation, urban compact living is defined as a frame that sets specific conditions for making home. Yet the concrete processes of making home

can develop over time within this conceptual framework. This includes motivations behind the choice of housing and location, but also concrete daily-life practices and experiences. For instance, the compliance with conventional ideals of home identified here might become adjusted as urban compact living evolves over time. Perhaps later research will perceive the cases examined in this dissertation as embryotic versions of urban compact living, because more revolutionising ways of home-making have developed. Furthermore, examining urban compact living within different spatial contexts would be fruitful too. Whereas this study has only examined a Danish context, urban compact living may relate to highly different ways of making home in other spatial contexts. The profound significance of macro-scale ideals of home as well as the local housing market situations demonstrated in this dissertation strongly point to the influence of cultural and socio-structural contexts.

Secondly, if urban compact living evolves over time and gradually becomes more common in an urban Danish context, quantitative studies of it will be highly informative: How much does the phenomenon grow, in which kinds of urban neighbourhoods, amongst which kinds of (middle-class) households, and in which kinds of housing? Will the cases studied here deviate markedly from other cases of urban compact living? Do the themes and attention points identified in this study, e.g. privacy, decency, or social spaciousness, recur as patterns on a larger scale, and which shapes do they then take?

The third important point is to further examine the role of lifestyle for housing choice in a qualitative perspective. This dissertation supports arguments that more empirical diversity demands more diverse analytical perspectives, arguing that urban compact living households are a minority, and accordingly, that their housing choice cannot per se be explained through economic and demographic factors. Therefore, this dissertation calls for further examination of the influence of lifestyle within different contexts. Accordingly, this is relevant for various fields of housing choice research, not just in connection to urban compact living. Furthermore, the dissertation argues that qualitative methods with attention to coherent narratives and ambiguities are necessary to capture the relationship between lifestyle and housing choice; a relationship that often seems to fall between categories of quantitative approaches.

The fourth and final important point is for future research to draw attention to the ways compact living reaches beyond the physical environment of dwellings and urban space. Urban compact living must not be reduced to a question of physical dwellings and environments. Dwellings may be targeted at compact living, but living entails lived life, with all the complexities outlined in this dissertation. The quality of such dwellings lies in their qualities as homes. Dwellings become homes

when they become part of human living. This is why this study has explored compact living and not compact dwellings and has argued that focus is on the interaction between humans, practices and the physical environment. In this way, the dissertation inscribes into Boccagni & Kusenbach's (2020: 602) appeal for research that studies both the aspirational dimensions of home and *"what people actually do to make themselves at home"* in the given social, structural and cultural situation. This applies to examining the field of urban compact living, in particular, and to future research on home in general.

9.4. COMPACT LIVING IN FUTURE URBAN HOUSING

Before rounding off the dissertation, the implications of its findings for the future of urban compact living in Denmark should be discussed. The background of this study is that Danish urban areas, and those of other countries as well, are experiencing increasing population growth resulting in a substantial lack of housing, particularly affordable housing. At the same time, examples of households deliberately downsizing on physical possessions, dwelling sizes and consumption, celebrating this as ways of approaching ideals of sustainability and personal freedom, are emerging internationally. This has led to an interest from developers, policy makers, architects, designers, and popular media in the prospects of what this study defines as 'urban compact living': Middle-class households that do have other genuine options on the housing market, but choose to live in much less space than conventional norms would have, in high density urban environments. The three-year process of conducting this research project has clearly underscored the increasing interest in the topic: As the researcher I have been approached by visual, audial and written media channels curious about the topic and its future prospects (e.g. Elsøe, 2019). Local governments have invited me to debate compact living (in urban *and* rural contexts); the City of Copenhagen has even established a panel on affordable housing, on which small-sized housing has been a recurring topic (Sørensen, 2020). Commercial actors are looking into the topic, for instance a business conference on small urban dwellings is planned for June 2021 (Byens Ejendom, n.d.). However, urban (and rural) compact living is a new phenomenon, and accordingly very limited knowledge about it exists. If compact living is to be part of urban housing in the future, even just as a small fraction, producing solid, substantial, and detailed knowledge is a prerequisite for developing it on properly qualified grounds. Policy makers and the housing industry, on their part, have a responsibility for basing future housing developments on such knowledge. This dissertation has identified two crucial points of consideration for future approaches to urban compact living, and these are stated below.

Figure 39. Urban compact living is not just a question of square metres – it is about making home in the city.

COMPACT LIVING IS MORE THAN JUST A QUESTION OF PHYSICAL SPACIOUSNESS – IT IS ABOUT LIVED LIFE

Integrating compact living into future urban housing should not lead to an uncritical discarding of physical spaciousness as a domestic quality. This study shows that physical spaciousness is far from redundant to good housing conditions. Compact living can foster pressing needs for alternative approaches to home-making in light of spatial restrictions, and furthermore, these alternatives cannot always compensate fully. Consequently, compromises have to be accepted. The case study identifies particularly two cordial points in which tough priorities are made: First, between privacy, on one hand, and brightness and openness, on the other: Obtaining privacy often entails physical division of the interior space, which then creates smaller, darker and denser rooms as opposed to open and bright spaces. Second, between storage space and a light interior: The aim of keeping a light and slender interior requires conscious and constant furniture and organisation choices, yet feelings of homeliness can be tied to physical objects, e.g. of sentimental value. Thus, physical spaciousness is not redundant to good housing conditions. However, it is not a precondition either. The case study shows the mental and social gains of increased physical togetherness within households and of downsizing on physical belongings; and it has shown how certain tools can compensate, to some degree, for spatial restrictions. In particular, flexibility of the physical environment and efficient use of space are helpful. Contemporary architects and designers have created innovative examples that, to varying extents, match the practices of making home identified in the case study. The impact of generations of architecture and design working to optimise functionality must not be underestimated, starting of course from the minimalistic subsistence dwelling referred to in the dissertation, but evolving substantially over time to include examples like the Danish classic 'Boligens Byggeskabe': an affordable storage solution of adaptable and customisable modules targeted precisely at what could be termed as middle-class households (Karlsen, 1968). In other words, instruments exist that can change the experience of domestic spaciousness. Thus, physical spaciousness is neither a precondition nor redundant to good housing conditions, and the debate on urban compact living should not be based on assessments of physical spaciousness alone.

However, physical spaciousness has been a key element in ideals of good housing throughout the development of the Danish welfare society. Small dwellings are associated with poor living conditions. In urban planning, floor area is a key quality indicator; for instance, the City of Copenhagen (2019) has set specific minimum size requirements for housing units in new developments. Yet the latter is slightly thawing; for instance, Copenhagen planning authorities are accepting

lower size requirements in 50 % of new units as compared to previously 25 % (City of Copenhagen, 2019[60]). Urban compact living is part of the reason for this: Simply through its appearance, it challenges norms of spaciousness and prompts reflections that if middle-class households voluntarily make this housing choice, urban compact living might work in practice. Such shifts in policymaking perspectives can be identified outside the large cities as well, as emerging examples of tiny houses challenge existing views of this housing type. The other part of the reason for the slight thaw in policy attitudes towards urban compact living is of course necessity: Cities have a housing shortage, particularly affordable housing, and this is becoming ever more serious. As cities run out of building land, squeezing in more units into less space is considered a possible alternative way forward. This dissertation demonstrates, however, that the question of good housing conditions is complex. It reaches far beyond floor area or other objective measures (for instance, window sizes or distances to neighbouring buildings).

Questions of good housing relate to the lives led within and around the dwellings. Urban compact living is thus more than compact dwellings; it is continuously produced as an interplay between humans, their practices and the physical environment. For instance, numerous innovative examples of housing and interior targeted at urban compact living have emerged internationally in recent years, yet this dissertation demonstrates the importance, and complexity, of relating them to the lives to be lived in and around them. For instance, some design solutions are discarded by the case study households based on arguments of lacking functionality in practice or not being realisable by 'ordinary people'. Combined with the finding that the households are strongly influenced by conventional ideals of home, one could argue that they simply lack imagination and creativity. Perhaps, yet their practices of home are affected by their imaginaries of home, and revolutionary living was not the motivation behind urban compact living. If urban compact living continuously evolves, the application of innovative solutions may become more easily accessible, more familiar (hence, less dangerous), and more common. Furthermore, home-making is about belonging, about expression of lifestyle, and the clear-cut aesthetics of current design solutions do not necessarily match those of compact living households. Altogether, the process of home-making is a relational engagement *between* humans and some portion of the physical. Home-making is thus personal and demands personalisation, not necessarily in the sense of laying the bricks with one's own hands, but in the sense of making an imprint somehow and making a

[60] Here the minimum requirement is a gross size of 40 or 50 sq. m. depending on neighbourhood; whereas the remaining 50 % must make up a gross average of 95 sq. m. (City of Copenhagen, 2019).

connection between the physical dwelling and oneself. The home-making process of future occupants may be challenged if dwellings are ready-made down to the smallest vase on the table, or if they are highly inflexible in their physical structures. Consequently, allowing for the concrete practices of urban compact living to take multiple forms depending on the imaginaries of home of the individual households at the given time may be key for supporting good housing conditions. The point of departure must be compact *living*, not compact *dwellings*.

THE CITY AS THE DRIVER: TRADING HOUSING CONDITIONS FOR LOCATION?

The second key point of attention for future approaches to urban compact living is the risk of trading good housing conditions for the right location. This can arise when the city, as in this case study, is the paramount driver behind urban compact living. Throughout the development of the Danish welfare state, the city has been perceived as the antithesis to ideals of a good living environment. Despite being internationally praised for their liveability, the appropriateness of Danish cities as living environments is still challenged by macro-scale, weighty ideals of home. Yet to the cases of this study, the city is perceived as a highly liveable environment, to the extent, in fact, that the wish to live in the city is the key driving force behind their housing choices. They perceive the city as a high concentration of amenities, activities, impressions, surprises, vibrancy, liberatedness and progressiveness. The city is physically compact and socially spacious. However, they attach these attributes to inner urban neighbourhoods like 'Latinerkvarteret' in Aarhus or Copenhagen's 'Vesterbro' and 'Nørrebro', and these are high-density areas with almost no space left for new housing. Contrary to debates that cities are being pushed towards a suburban character, this case study does not identify a longing for changes to the urban environment amongst the case study households. By contrast, they have a strong appreciation for the city as it is, and the households living in neighbourhoods on the fringe of the city long for an expansion of the character of inner urban neighbourhoods. One could reasonably question whether this positive perception of the city would diminish, if cities still had the character of a hundred years ago or the character of cities in other countries[61], and this underscores the importance of context: Danish urban compact living is situated in cities that are safe, clean, and offer high-quality living and housing conditions. This is key for the assessment of this new phenomenon in a Danish context.

Nevertheless, the strong aspiration to live in the city, as identified in this case study, entails a willingness to compromise on other parameters. While the cases

[61] Research suggests that this would be the case; see e.g. Kerr et al. (2020) or Lilius (2014).

in the study are generally happy with their housing conditions, they do accept quite substantial compromises. Such willingness to compromise on dwelling-related qualities in return for particular area-related qualities can generate substantially poorer housing conditions and can be exploited for financial gain. The problem is that urban compact living could become a fashionable label attached to high-priced, poor-quality housing for the purpose of justification. Consequently, in this lies a responsibility of policy makers, researchers, developers, and other housing professionals to prevent worsening housing conditions in the name of urban compact living.

URBAN COMPACT LIVING – POINTING FORWARD?

The findings of this dissertation have a number of implications for future approaches to compact living as part of urban housing in Denmark. Urban compact living has valuable potentials, but realising them is no straightforward task. Denmark has built up very high living conditions for the wider population over the past generations, and housing conditions are a key part of these. Resultant worries that urban compact living will overthrow these accomplishments are understandable. Furthermore, they are justified – in part. This dissertation has demonstrated that urban compact living does not automatically compromise living conditions, but it has also demonstrated that it entails a risk of this happening. Accordingly, integrating compact living into future urban housing without compromising on the living conditions involved is a matter of walking a tightrope. It is a matter of not reducing compact living to a question of floor area or window sizes. This is the reason why the dissertation has examined compact living and not compact dwellings. Compact living must be perceived as a form of *making home* – as an ongoing process of relational engagings between people, their practices and the physical environment. These are not only complex and multi-dimensional; they are also subjective, contextual, dynamic and ambiguous. For policy makers and housing professionals, regulating and planning for this is difficult, as it begs contextuality and qualitative assessments. By contributing with new knowledge and insights, hopes are that this dissertation can qualify decision-making and aid walking the tightrope.

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