

# Changeable Space as Temporary Home

## A Qualitative Exploration of Life in an Experimental Student House

Judith Thomsen & Aksel Tjora

Nordic Journal of Architectural Research  
Volume 19, No 3, 2006, 10 pages  
Nordic Association for Architectural Research  
Judith Thomsen, PhD-student at the Dep. of Architectural Design and Management, NTNU, Trondheim, & Aksel Tjora, Associate Professor at the Dep. of Sociology and Political Science at NTNU, Trondheim

TOPIC: TIME-BASED DWELLING

### Abstract:

Changeable Space as Temporary Home. A Qualitative Exploration of Life in an Experimental Student House.



This article reports from a study of living experiences in a time-based and experimental student house, “TreStykker”<sup>1</sup>, that was designed and then subsequently constructed in Trondheim, Norway, during a student workshop in the summer of 2005. The use of the flexible solutions provided by TreStykker has made the project relevant for a reflection of “time-base” as architectural design premise. In this article, the term time-based denotes a non-permanent house, where moveable elements are used to change its interior space, adapting it to different needs from time to time. By analysing interviews and diaries of the inhabitants, three themes dealing with living experiences have emerged: (1) the dwelling as a changing scene, examining the daily use of flexibility and changeability of the

room; (2) social life as collaboration, examining issues of social life and privacy; and (3) the dwelling as image statement, examining the meaning ascribed to the house by the inhabitants. Our findings in this specific case indicate that the flexible solutions engage the inhabitants in creating their home environment. Enthusiasm in (re-)creation of the house is a way of generating attachment to a temporary home. On the practical level, the space supports various social activities, but limits privacy, and therefore collaboration between the inhabitants is needed. Further, the experimental housing form supports the contemporary lifestyle of the inhabitants. In general, aspects such as adaptability of the living space and the possibility for social interaction are considered important to increase personal attachment to one’s place even if a person only stays for a short period.

### Key words:

Student housing, temporary housing, experimental house, flexibility, lifestyle

## Introduction



– I live in a large box with no walls and a lot of windows all the way round. And in the room there are three boxes one lives in. The boxes are exactly the same size as your bed with a few

shelves. It's very nice and social but it's quite obvious that you have to have a lot of consideration for the others as well. And people often ask: - don't you have anywhere you could hide yourself away or be by yourself? (Anne)

The way in which houses are spatially organised and rooms are designed and distributed, may provide or restrict possibilities for privacy and social life. Ideas on how social relations are materialised in buildings (Østerberg 1998), as plans, forms and location of houses, may tell us about the anticipated needs and uses when they were planned and built. Beside information about presumed social activities of the users, the spatial organisation is also a reflection of societal values that may depend on period, culture and societies (Hanson 1998).

The functions ascribed to the rooms of a dwelling usually define their sizes and the overall organisation of a house. They may also be seen as a limitation in the use of a dwelling's rooms for non-ascribed purposes. Instead of different rooms for different purposes, TreStykker provides a multi-functional room that can be customised for different purposes, making it possible for three students to share a limited space and still adapt it to different needs.

In this article we present the evaluation of an experimental student house. The main questions addressed are: How do the residents make a home in an experimental house? How do they use the special possibilities of TreStykker? And, how do they experience and cope with problems that arise?

We will emphasise that even though it is not possible to generalise findings of the TreStykker research to modern living as such, the actual "avant-garde-ness" of the project has produced some interesting reflections concerning qualities and challenges related to life in a flexible dwelling. We will argue that these themes are relevant, in varying degrees, to different forms of time-based dwelling and perhaps also to more permanent housing.

## The TreStykker Project

Three NTNU<sup>ii</sup> students initiated TreStykker in Trondheim during the spring of 2005. Later, 35 students of architecture from Bergen, Oslo and Trondheim participated in the workshop to design, finance and build a small experimental student house during the summer of 2005. The workshop was run independently by the students, but mentored by the architectural firm 3RW Architects from Bergen. Around 70 local companies and organisations supported the project financially with a sum of approximately 2 million NOK. The proposed solution can be regarded a result of the students' fields of study, their personal experiences and lifestyles, as well as a critical point of view towards existing (student) housing solutions. The project group's overall intention was to propose a different way of designing and conceptualising a student residence.

The project resulted in a unit that provides a 45 m<sup>2</sup> open space, containing an open kitchen and a separate bathroom (see drawing).

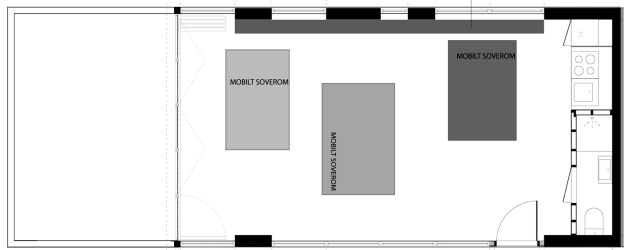
The unit is constructed of massive-wood elements. Two of the four outer walls consist mostly of large floor-to-ceiling windows and doors, rendering the main living space open to passers-by, as well as providing great views. The location is strikingly visible and centrally located in a large parking lot in downtown of Trondheim. The unit is designed for



The sleeping boxes during daytime



three inhabitants, with moveable "sleeping boxes" (see pictures) about a size of 2,5 m<sup>2</sup> as minimal private spaces. The boxes are not designed alike, but each has its own characteristics. They can be opened and closed by folding and sliding wall elements. The boxes have openings to let in air and light when closed. The sleeping boxes, tables and small storage boxes on wheels represent the flexibility of the house, and are the most unusual elements in the unit compared to a common housing solution. The furniture was designed for the house and the students did not bring any other furniture except two beanbag chairs.



Drawing of the floor plan, showing the open room and the size of the sleeping boxes within.

On the whole, ordinary student housing projects do not provide flexible accommodation for students, and are often characterised by a repetition of housing types. TreStykker suggests a different variant of shared housing, providing minimum private space and asking for - or rather demanding - maximum social visibility and interaction.

TreStykker is meant to provide the inhabitants with the freedom to adapt their space to immediate personal requirements. In fact, the inhabitants have to work actively with their in-door arrangement and the creation of their housing environment. However, the intended freedom can become a limitation if the inhabitants are not willing to make use of the changeable elements, or feel a need for more privacy.

### Students as dwellers

Students, as all other people, are not a homogeneous group, but have different social, economic and cultural backgrounds. Still there are certain common factors characterising the time spent as a student. The student life is an important phase that marks the establishing of an own “housing career” comprising the choice of how, where and with whom to live. The term housing career refers to the use of housing facilities according to life phase and economic possibilities, including individual choice and strategies. A housing career goes through different phases, each characterised by specific patterns of housing needs and preferences. These preferences are also dependent on societal norms, economy and personal background (Frønes 2003). It is not possible to conceptualise housing preferences of “the students” in general, but some major tendencies for different cohorts may be identified.

The extension of youth in the life cycle, prolonged time of education, and also the changing role of young women are decisive for the emergence of new establishment pattern

of young people (Frønes & Brusdal 2000). A consequence of this development is a postponed settling-down of young people, so that it is more usual to stay longer in temporary dwellings than before (Støa & Sandnes 2001).

The search for individuality, personal identification, and the definition of one’s own lifestyle in the culture of Western societies has become increasingly important, especially for young people (Miles 2000). Young people are involved in a wide range of leisure pursuits, which are often consumption-based and supposed to highlight individuality (Furlong & Cartmel 1997). Also housing preferences can be seen as a part of people’s consumption patterns and choices. Consumption is partly a cultural act, and different social groups use consumption items to signal their belonging to a specific group (Gram-Hansen & Bech-Danielsen 2004).

In his work about housing consumption patterns due to generation, life cycle and ethnicity, Frønes (2003) states that at the moment housing preferences of young people and students are focused around central locations and the proximity to leisure time facilities. It is assumed that the representation of an appropriate “image<sup>iiii</sup>”, representing one’s lifestyle and personality through a place to stay, plays a more important role among young people’s housing preferences today.

### Research Methods

TreStykker is analysed as a single unique case in the context of student housing, but may provide an understanding of how such a dwelling functions and is experienced in a real-life context.

Based on insights from architecture and sociology, a combination of various qualitative research methods has been used to collect data about the use and the perceptions of the dwelling unit. *Semi-structured interviews* were applied to address expectations and experiences of flexibility, privacy, social life, and general thoughts about the experiment. *Group interviews* were applied to allow for discussions between the inhabitants, to catch inter-subjective experiences and shared stories from their life together in TreStykker.

*Diaries* on weekly bases were written by the students to reflect on the housing situation and its development. Diary methods have been used in various research projects where personal detailed records are regarded as useful data (Dingwall 1997).

The students who lived in TreStykker during the study were two male students, Peder<sup>iv</sup> and Kristian, and one female student, Anne. Kristian studies architecture and was one of the initiators of the project. His experiences with TreStykker must be seen in the relation to this background. The initiators of the project advertised the dwelling, and Anne and Peder were selected as the new inhabitants. In January 2006 the first dwelling period of 5 months came to an end, and Kristian and Anne moved out, leaving place for two new students. The empirical data in this article is collected from the first period, with the first 3 inhabitants. Further analysis of the whole period will be reported later<sup>v</sup>.

The different data collection strategies made us able to some degree to test statements put forward. The group interview providing a highly interactive setting with chances to influence each other, whereas the diary method providing time for self-reflection. The interview material was transcribed, coded on basis of themes arising in the informant's statements, and then compared to the themes of the diaries.

## Findings

### *The Dwelling as a Changing Scene*



View on the river from the window of a sleeping-box.

Even if TreStykker may not be *the* prototype for new student housing, the physical statement made on privacy, flexibility and use of space contribute to general considerations about housing and what housing *could be*. Before moving in, many expectations for the use of the room and the sleeping boxes were uttered:

The boxes are a bit weird. That's actually what I like best about it. The room should almost have been a bit bigger so that we could have the possibility of actually moving the boxes into a corner and then suddenly having a dance floor. (Peder)

Reflecting on the flexibility, Peder thinks that human beings quickly establish a routine, which is what he expected from the use of the boxes. However, he hoped that they

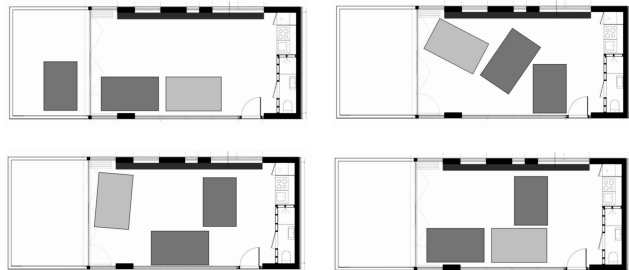


Interior of the house: Storage shelf covering one wall of the room.

would move the boxes around occasionally, at least in the beginning to find a practical solution. Also Kristian expected the boxes not to be moved several times per day. But once in a while, when a new room constellation was required they would take advantage of the flexibility.

Hence, the dwelling can be compared to a changing scene, where room constellations are time-based. The open room is the main scene, which is used to sleep, to eat, to work, and to party. The sleeping boxes and other furniture on wheels are the requisites to alter the scene according to immediate needs:

Everything can be moved around. The boxes can be re-built to become sleeping boxes or furniture during the day, and we can use the boxes to create new spaces. And you can shape it according to mood, state of mind, as required, with a few simple manipulations. (Peder)



Sketches showing some possible arrangements.

The room has to function for weekday activities as well as for the weekend. A division can be made between private and social activities, as when having guests. Kristian describes the advantages of the flexibility in social situations, compared to other dwellings:

The house can be adapted to different social situations. One can make the house bigger by moving and tidying the furniture and the sleeping boxes so that the room is for many people. One groups together in a special way when there are a lot of people here. (Kristian)

When having guests, the students use the unit's flexible qualities efficiently. Even if they found some basic configurations of the room suitable for daily use, they report about *infinite* possibilities in using the room. They are curious to find out if they will manage to find new and better solutions each time they want to create a different space. It seems that it has become a kind of competition to create new rooms and scenes every time they invite people:

And we have been very aware of trying to create new rooms for each party as well. And it becomes a sort of theme. We can make a big room, which is more like a nightclub. We can make several small rooms that make it bit more sort of loungeish. And you also see that people move around according to how the boxes are standing. (Peder)

To change the dwelling's ambience and try different scenes for parties is a learning process about how the spatial constellations work out. The boxes were also moved onto the veranda to gain more space. One of the boxes was even moved onto the porch before a party, but it caused unexpected difficulties to move the box back in. Despite of these problems of practical character, the various possibilities to adapt the space to different occasions and the possibility to divide the space within the dwelling into different zones are regarded as very important. The students name several examples where they organized two rooms within the unit:

... I placed my box so that we created a small room with our boxes and in that way we got two rooms in the house - the small private room and the one where the kitchen is. I thought it was an exciting way of organizing it. (Peder)

As important as the boxes for the creation of different arrangements is the other flexible furniture:

For several days the tables (on wheels) have stood together as a sort of island. (Peder)

In the diary Peder reflects on the fact that the boxes once were not moved around for several days. He thought it was interesting to see how quickly patterns would develop if people did not engage in the creation of the living environ-

ment. People less willing to adapt the space would end up with a more or less permanent arrangement. Still, after having lived in the unit for some time, the students agreed that the sleeping boxes functioned well in many occasions. All the students saw a big potential in moving around the boxes to maintain a changeable space.

Each box must also be changed on a daily basis to provide other functions available to all inhabitants. The bed in Anne's box is for example converted into a sofa during daytime, by sliding the mattress out of the box's back wall. Although the students' comments are often enthusiastic, they do also reflect difficulties with the housing form, as Anne writes in the diary:

I use the sofa that belongs to my box less and less because it takes up a lot of space and makes [the box] bothersome to move around. (Anne's diary)

It was also criticised that there is hardly any place for storage. Therefore, there is a need to be tidy so as not to bother the flatmates. More storage would be helpful to avoid untidiness. Storage and functionality are just as important in time-based housing as in more permanent housing types.

Peder emphasises in the interviews and diaries that the room is too small to use the whole potential of flexibility and that the link between the boxes and the room should have been considered more carefully.

Anne recalled the reason for moving to TreStykker as curiosity. For a short period it is possible to explore an experimental housing form without being bothered too much by problematic aspects. When she was asked what she thought is most important for a temporary dwelling situation, she answered that it was that daily life would function and that you do not feel that it is all just temporary. Because of the temporary situation it is also more difficult to develop an attachment to a place. Level of standard and the quality of design were also discussed as a matter to compensate for challenges as being temporary. Peder emphasised that the level of comfort and quality was much higher than in other places he had stayed before.

The TreStykker approach was based on a belief that moveable elements and the flexibility provided would invite to

adaptations and changes of the daily scene. In this case the flexible solutions firstly seem to have created a high level of involvement in the organisation of the everyday space. And secondly, this appears to have fostered an attachment to the house. More generally, it could be asked if the adaptability of the dwelling in fact contributes to the creation of a "place of one's own" in an easy way.

### **Social Life and Collaboration**

The TreStykker housing design is different from other shared housing, where a private room is usually provided for each inhabitant. Why did the students in the TreStykker project propose such a physical solution? The starting point may have been general considerations made on student housing as a social way of living. It is supposed that students often consider meeting places as especially important, though they are not always provided in student houses. Social arenas can be either part of a dwelling or located outside of a dwelling to serve as meeting point for inhabitants of different dwellings. In our case, the whole dwelling is *the* meeting point. Examples from the interviews and diaries have documented a high degree of socializing and great need for collaboration, as prerequisites for this housing form.

The students did not expect much private life when moving into the unit. All three of them emphasised that their need for privacy was low, and according to themselves probably lower than it would be for many other people. Intimacy might become a critical aspect when living so close together with others, Peder said, but he did not expect this to become a problem for himself. He sees the main intention of the project as challenging the degree of privacy people expect having at home. Kristian said that everybody needs to spend some time alone, occasionally, but he was more interested in living together with others in a common place, than in a place with more private sphere.

The experiences of the students show that when living so close together, it is important to take each other's activities into consideration in the planning of the daily life. According to Anne, a high level of tolerance was needed, as well as not being too dependent on specific personal habits. The low level of privacy has been pointed out frequently, especially in public discussions of the project. In Norway,

a country with an average of 50 m<sup>2</sup> living space per person (Frønes 2003) the voluntarily abandonment of a spacious private area is difficult to explain to many people. However, also students with a collective attitude sometimes look for privacy:

I had a visit from a mate on Sunday and I discovered that my box could be used for talking about love life and that sort of thing. We put two Beanbag chairs in the box and closed the canopy. And it became a nice private sphere even if the other two were in the room "outside". (Peder)

Despite of Peder's discovery, Anne commented that there never was time for privacy. She prefers to lead private conversations with her boyfriend or close friends outside of the house. Anne also mentioned that this housing form would be very convenient for a couple, where questions of privacy were not as relevant as when sharing with friends. A better sound insulation of the sleeping-boxes would at least increase the level of privacy, and is also to recommend generally for shared housing. Problems in regard to privacy are mostly due to acoustics. Therefore, it is also an advantage to have a similar day/night rhythm to not disturb each other. Anne noticed that she avoided going to bed earlier than the others, because the boys then would have to take special considerations and be quiet.

The meaning of social life is frequently accentuated and seems to be more important than privacy for the inhabitants. The students think that the room works well as a social meeting place in various social settings, even better than other places they have lived in before. Still, in some situations they see the difficulties of reduced private life, for example when having girl- and boyfriends as frequent visitors. Anne also sees difficulties for people who are more at home than she is:

Of course it depends a lot on what sort of life one has as well. If one is a lot at home it might not be that favourable. If you're at home to work and the others are home as well, trying to work is hopeless. (Anne)

The housing form and the spatial organization of a dwelling influence on social life of the inhabitants, and may foster or hamper different forms of behaviour and use. Anne thinks

that the housing form invites her to socialize with her flatmates more than she probably would have in another type of dwelling:

I appreciate that it's social. Specially if I come home and think I'll just go to bed and then you sit down with the others and chat and play cards and make something nice to drink. You're not forced to be social but encouraged to be more social than you would normally be. (Anne)

Hence, the attitude of the inhabitants is also important to make this housing form function well. At the moment, the lifestyle of the students matches (or can be matched!) with the requirements of the housing form. Still their living situation is likely to change after some time, and a housing form that is so dependent on the collaboration of the dwellers is hardly imaginable to be more than a temporary solution.

### The Dwelling as Image Statement



Detail of the façade

A building has several functions. First of all it is a protective shelter against climatic influences and danger. Moreover, the spatial organisation of a building should provide an optimum support of social activities. Beside these utility functions, buildings mediate cultural and symbolic meaning to the outside world. This includes aesthetics and design issues, as well as people's interpretation of a building's appearance (van der Voordt & van Wegen 2005). When appreciating a physical solution, people may feel that they can identify with a building because of the embodiment of certain ideas they support. Therefore, the way people dwell may reveal information about their way of life and be part of the expression of a lifestyle. Lifestyle can be defined as a part of one's self-identity, constructed through specific behaviour and consumption goods, influenced by existing societal structures and personal decision-making. Giddens (1991) describes lifestyles as routinized practices:

the routines incorporated into habits of dress, eating, modes of acting and favoured milieus for encountering others; but the routines followed are reflexively open to change in the

light of the mobile nature of self-identity (Giddens 1991:81).

Miles (2000) states in his work on youth lifestyles that young people are more active in the creation of their lifestyles today than they have been at other times. He suggests also that a person's lifestyle is not simply a mirror image of consumption habits, but that consumption provides a language or code within which lifestyles are constructed. The "language" or "code" as Miles (2000) puts it, mediates information or images to other people about a person's lifestyle. A person may also use these languages or codes, consciously or unconsciously, as a manner to construct a certain image of oneself in public or amongst friends. The idea of what to represent to the outside world is also important for the development of identity among young people. To adapt modes of consumption, pursue certain leisure time activities or to wear a specific type of cloths are ways of showing one's belonging to a specific lifestyle group (Miles 2000). In the case of TreStykket, it can be asked if the students see a supportive image in the dwelling's 'unusualness' for the development of what they perceive as their lifestyle.

A lifestyle is not solely determined by consumption and conscious adaptation of styles, as the term and clichés ascribed to it imply. Lifestyle has become a notion of contemporary living that pervades every person's life due to increasing options and choices within our society (Giddens 1991). The dwelling is a part of the choices people make. According to the students, TreStykket does not match every student's way of life, but only students who have certain "characteristics":

They are sort of creative, dare to gamble and take a few chances, to be a bit risk willing. You have to be social, flexible and tidy. It's "experimental" students or people who are interested in being in on things. (Anne)

Peder is aware of how he signals to his surroundings by making specific choices. He offers a clear definition of his personality and his aims in the interviews and diaries. Before moving in, Peder reflected consciously about the image of the dwelling and its connection to his way of life:

It's a unique chance for me to take part in something special. In general I think it's fun with something a bit out of the

ordinary. I seek to stand out a bit as a person normally. Mostly through what I do and when the chance of doing something new and a bit crazy turns up, it's definitely welcomed. (Peder's diary)

Furthermore, Peder had even the expectation to change his lifestyle while living there, and regards this dwelling experience as important for his personal development:

It's been an important part of my new hope of a different lifestyle. It's been an important transition in my development. Yes, I've become a bit more nomadic. My lifestyle has changed a bit to match TreStykkker. And then it in a way becomes a part of one's personality as well. (Peder)

Peder describes 'nomadic' more closely in an interview as being minimalist, just having a few things in a bag, being ready to leave. Nomadic living could also be interpreted as related to time-based housing.

Anne's attitude towards TreStykkker is more relaxed, but she thinks that her active lifestyle matches the unit's dwelling form better than other students' way of life would. She does not consciously focus on any image for her lifestyle and appears more ambiguous towards identifying with TreStykkker than the others. She is even not sure if she identifies with being a part of TreStykkker, but sometimes she feels proud of living in the house:

No, I don't identify with or feel like a "TreStykkker". But every time I talk to someone about it a lot of people ask: "Is it true you live there?" Yes! I am a bit proud of it then. (Anne)

Anne thinks it is important that the place she lives in does not have a negative reputation among her friends:

It's good that it doesn't have a bad reputation. If it had been like: "Oh, poor Anne who lives there. It's so awful and I don't understand how she..." then it's obvious that it's not something positive for oneself. (Anne)

Kristian says he identifies with the house, and he believes that his friends identify him with it as well. He demonstrates that the opinions of other people may play an im-

portant role for his definition of his own lifestyle. Generally, friends are important for young people having left their parents' home. This relation usually defines the standard, status and prestige of a way of life, and (housing) attitudes are re-produced and discussed when interacting with the parents or with friends (Mayer 2002). The opinions of others may either positively or negatively influence one's perception of a place. It is clear that the students are engaged in a positive notion of the house in public and among their friends. They appreciate that people are interested and curious about their dwelling.

## Reflections

Buildings are not timeless objects and have always been adapted to changing purposes over time. As a vision or a manner to create adaptable dwellings, flexibility has for a long time been a relevant issue in architecture. One can argue that programs and user needs change more rapidly nowadays, and therefore time-based buildings represent ways of approaching sustainability and adaptation to changing user needs.

Flexibility in housing should not necessarily be seen as moveable elements but may include a "neutral" plan solution, where no specific use is pre-ascribed to rooms, for example with all rooms of equal size. Flexibility can be based on different time-spans. Some flexible solutions may be changed within a couple of minutes, while others involve greater effort and would occur less frequent.

In a temporary housing situation it is an advantage to be able to adapt the interior without much effort to different needs over time. Even small adaptations may serve to develop a more personal feeling towards a home. It should be a goal to create a varied - or rather a variable - offer of housing units for students.

One of the biggest challenges for a time-based dwelling, as a student house, is to create a pleasant solution that appeals to students' lifestyles. It is a mistake to think that most of all students have the same requirements and preferences. Students' lifestyles are not uniform and the perception of a good dwelling, and the effort one is willing to invest in such, differs from person to person.

In the case of TreStykkker, the housing form matches the



momentary independent and explorative lifestyle of the students. It is seen as supportive element to represent a lifestyle, where also friends' acceptance plays a significant role.

Concerning young people's housing preferences, there is evidence that they are willing to trade-off size to other housing qualities, or for a special location. It is therefore especially important to consider alternative housing forms for young people and students (Støa & Sandnes 2001).

TreStykker focuses on other qualities than private space. The adaptability of living space and room for social interaction are both considered important elements, as well as level of standard and design quality. Good standard is more than spaciousness, and little space may be compensated by architectural innovation and design quality, to improve a positive feeling towards a dwelling, even if only time-based.

The daily routine of living is different in TreStykker from what most people are used to. It requires an active participation of the inhabitants. The students themselves conclude about the applicability of the housing form, that other people think the housing form is exciting, but it would be too experimental for many people. It is too far from what people understand and expect from a dwelling. Even if this solution might not be convenient for everybody, the flexibility in TreStykker has proven to be a good way of engaging people in the creation of their living space and thus generating an attachment to a temporary home.

TreStykker creates doubtlessly an exiting and explorative living environment, but reveals also practical difficulties: The acoustics of the boxes should be improved to increase the private sphere. The boxes should be constructed lighter and easier to be handled by one person. The storage for private and common belongings is also a practical problem that should be addressed better when developing similar projects. The flexibility of the boxes could have been used more efficiently if the common room would have been bigger.

The advantages and disadvantage of the different spatial constellations were not explored in particular in this article, but could be an issue for further investigations.

The *ideas* and *elements* incorporated in this project may be seen as *sources of inspiration* for architectural practice. It may

be further discussed to which extent flexibility and changeability is adequate and practical for time-based buildings in general. It is important to take opinions and preferences of contemporary students into consideration, to be able to build satisfactory housing for these temporary dwellers.

## Acknowledgements

We wish to thank the three students that were willing to participate in this study, our research assistant Torbjørn Fjærli, Jonathan Ogilvy Millar for language assistance, Eli Støa, Sven Erik Svendsen, Åshild L. Hauge, Rolf Johansson and Inga Britt Werner for useful comments, and the TreStykker project ([www.ntnu.no/trestykker](http://www.ntnu.no/trestykker)) for the collaboration and for giving us permission to use pictures from the project in this article. This article is part of the PhD in architecture for Judith Thomsen, the first author.

## Authors



*Judith Thomsen* is a PhD-student at the Dep. of Architectural Design and Management, NTNU, Trondheim. [judith.thomsen@ark.ntnu.no](mailto:judith.thomsen@ark.ntnu.no)



*Aksel Tjora* is Associate Professor at the Dep. of Sociology and Political Science at the NTNU, Trondheim. He is doing social research on organisations, information technologies and material culture. [akselht@svt.ntnu.no](mailto:akselht@svt.ntnu.no)

## Notes

- <sup>i</sup> TreStykker: tre = three (num.) or tre = tree, wood (subst.), stykker = pieces
- <sup>ii</sup> Norwegian University of Science and Technology
- <sup>iii</sup> *Image* is used in this context as: a picture of oneself that a person wants to mediate to the outside world.
- <sup>iv</sup> All names are fictional
- <sup>v</sup> Further reports from the TreStykker project will be reported as part of Judith Thomsen's PhD-project at the Department of Architectural Design and Management, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, NTNU.

## References

- DINGWALL, R. (1997) Accounts, interviews and observations. In Miller & R. Dingwall (Eds.), *Context & method in qualitative research* (pp. 51-65). London: Sage Publications.
- FRØNES, I. & BRUSDAL, R. (2000) *På sporet av den nye tid*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- FRØNES, I. (2003) Boligkonsum – generasjon, livsløp og etnisitet. In S.E. Svendsen (Ed.), *Rammen rundt våre liv – forskning om bolig og levekår*. Norges forskningsråd. Trondheim: Tapir akademisk forlag.
- FURLONG, A. & CARTMEL, F. (1997) *Young People and Social Change. Individualization and risk in late modernity*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- GIDDENS, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- GRAM-HANSEN, K. & BECH-DANIELSEN, C. (2004) House, Home and Identity from a Consumption Perspective. *In Housing, Theory and Society 2004*; 21:17-26.
- HANSON, J. (1998) *Decoding Homes and Houses*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MAYER, V. (2002) *Wohnpräferenzen von Jugendlichen in Wien. Ein Beitrag zur Kultur- und Sozialgeographie des Wohnens*. Wien: ISR- Forschungsberichte, Institut für Stadt- und Regionalforschung, Heft 27.
- MILES, S. (2000) *Youth lifestyles in a changing world*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- STØA, E. & SANDNES, A. (2001) *Smått og flott - arealeffektive boliger for ungdom*. Trondheim: Økobygg, Husbanken, TOBB og SINTEF Bygg og miljøteknikk.
- VAN DER VOORDT, T.J.M. & VAN WEGEN, H.B.R. (2005) *Architecture In Use. An introduction to the programming, design and evaluation of buildings*. Amsterdam: Elsevier / Architectural Press.
- ØSTERBERG, D. (1998) *Arkitektur og sosiologi i Oslo: En sosio-materiell fortolkning*. Oslo: Pax forlag.