

Danish bathroom stories

– a socio-technical study of what the present renovation boom is about

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This paper explores changes in ordinary daily behaviour in relation to bathroom renovations in Denmark. Much suggests that new expectations evolve in connection to such renovations and that these changes could have long-term environmental impacts. The aim of this paper is to get a deeper understanding of how the production and reproduction of cultural meanings are interconnected with the changes in the bathroom. On the basis of general remarks about cultural meanings in connection to the bathroom, I discuss some general characteristics of modern bathroom ideas. My point is to elucidate the simultaneous rootedness and contextual determination of bathroom ideas. Hereafter, I examine two empirical examples in order to study the actual process of bathroom renovations. Through this, I carry out an empirical unfolding of the interconnectedness of material, social and cultural dimensions in everyday life. These two examples show how cultural meanings connected to the bathroom are changed through the process. The bathroom setting changes, the informants' routines changes and the role of the bathroom changes. An example of new cultural meanings is how an element of pleasure is added to the idea of showering as a duty. The two examples also show how specific contexts trigger specific changes. In conclusion, the paper points out that renovations are part of a revolutionising of everyday life and its surroundings. Here, various contextual connections are made and varying driving forces are at play. It also points out that new dimensions supplement the existing bathroom ideas during the renovation process. Finally, it raises the demand for a more thorough analysis of potential inherent long-term changes in our bathroom ideas.

Framing the theme

The purpose of this paper is to elucidate how the production and reproduction of cultural meanings are interconnected with bathroom renovations. In this section I will elaborate on the theme and the approach. Finally, I will explain the outline of the paper.

Aim

In her book on “Comfort, cleanliness and convenience”, Shove (2003) points out the importance of studying invisible forms of practice: the construction of normality and the dynamics of habit and routine. Her point is that we should acknowledge that action itself is often too narrow a focus. Using Goffmanns terms, her idea is that we start looking more into the production of the scenery, the lightning and the setting (Shove 2003:2). Following this approach she shows that experiences of cosiness and wellbeing are on the move, thus changing people's ideas about how things should be and what people should do. She argues that these are important changes in our way of life, which could have significant long-term environmental impacts. Her argument is that what really counts in environmental matters is “the big, and in some cases, global swing of ordinary, routinised and taken-for-granted practice” (Shove 2003:9). By setting ‘the environment’ aside as the main focus of attention, it becomes possible to analyse the processes underpinning the ordinary consumption and the escalation of demands.

The issue of normalisation is connected to a sense of community in society. In each of our specific everyday lives we carry out normalised actions, e.g. routines. Normalisation covers a range of interconnections and cannot be easily explained. It consists of a complex network of actants. However, a

central point is that this network is imbued with cultural meanings. By this, I mean different unpronounced ideas about e.g. how to behave and do things in society. The phenomenon of normalisation is shaped and re-shaped through an on-going process of co-construction between technological, societal and cultural dimensions. This indicates duplicity with regards to daily truisms. These apparently common and self-evident routines of everyday life are imbued with complex interconnections, both on an individual and societal level. This calls attention to the fact that even though we do not reflect on our routines, we do not ‘just do things’. Rather, we do things as a constituent part of networking dynamics. These dynamics play a crucial role in the way we do things and perceive things and often the individual normalisation is knitted together with a more common sense of normalisation.

In my PhD project “Culture in the bathroom”, the perspective of looking into normalities of everyday life is interesting. The overall aim of the project is to understand the cultural and social challenge of replacing the water closet with a more sustainable technology. The project emanated, because there seemed to be some cultural barriers with regard to the possibility of replacing the water closet with urine diverting toilets or composting toilets. Such barriers would probably render the idea of implementing a more sustainable wastewater system difficult. Inspired by the issue of normalisation, the intention of the project is to set the environmental motive aside as the main focus. This would render it possible to explore the daily truisms connected to our way of using the toilet, thus exploring the cultural and social rootedness of the water closet. For methodological reasons, I have chosen to broaden the focus of my analysis so that it now covers the bathroom as a whole. A narrow focus on the toilet would have been inexpedient in such a complex context. The study is basically about the inscription of the bathroom in different webs of meanings, and thus about modern rationales and ideas connected to the bathroom.

The present paper is a spin-off of the PhD project. My intention is to carry out a preliminary analysis of the co-construction of cultural meanings. Bathroom renovations make an excellent case in studying changes in daily behaviour. These kinds of renovations are a process in which the co-construction of bathroom ideas is more explicitly visible. Several things are revolutionised through this process, thus elucidating both the former and the new situation. Studying the case of bathroom renovations is also interesting, because it seems to have become quite popular in Denmark recently. This could indicate that these bathroom renovations might be part of a more long-term process of changing normalities. The main idea is to carry out an empirical analysis in order to elucidate how these changing normalities are reflected in specific qualitative stories.

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Approach

In contrast to studies with a technological focus on e.g. the appropriation or domestication of a certain kind of technology, the starting point in my approach is much broader. It is not a focused study of technology, but rather of changes in everyday life situations. This means that the perspective of ‘everyday life’, e.g. Gullestad (1989) and Bech-Jørgensen (1994), imbue the approach. Technology as such is not given special attention, but is part of the broader analysis of everyday life. As will appear from my examination of the general patterns, mainly three theoretical fields, being STS, sociology and anthropology, supplement the overarching perspective of everyday life. These theoretical fields help to inform the content of my everyday life analysis.

To follow an everyday life approach in a study can mean a lot of things. The idea of applying an everyday life perspective was originally derived in order to pick up on the set of activities and relations denoted as 'everyday life', which often fall out of common analysis in disciplines concerned about e.g. state, market and family (Gullestad 1989:18). According to Bech-Jørgensen (1994:150), it is impossible to define exactly what everyday life is about in a sociological sense. Instead, she points at the general notion that 'everyday life is the kind of life we live every day'. This embraces the simultaneous simplicity and complexity of everyday life. Gullestad (1989:19) advances that studies of everyday life can be a kind of micro orientation, where the researcher is engaged in describing society from beneath. Her idea is to watch people in their social and cultural contexts. Following in these footsteps, I perceive the everyday life perspective as this kind of context in which I can study present bathroom ideas. The everyday life is a complex junction, since it brings together different activities and relations through space and time. In general, I would point at the material, social and cultural dimensions as being essential in this regard. The earlier mentioned fields inspire these three dimensions.

The main centre of my attention is at the level of cultural meanings; also what I just call 'ideas'. I consider the bathroom as a meeting place of different ideas and rationales. Our bathrooms are imbued with social and cultural meanings and these are reflected in the way we arrange and use our bathrooms and also in our conception of expectations and needs. In our daily use of the bathroom we do not think about these basic ideas, but nevertheless they do exist. A good example of this, is the point that failure to conform to existing standards of e.g. cleanliness might engender strong feelings as disgust and revulsion (Shove 2003:79). This point at the fact that there do exist some kind of ideas about social order and propriety, even though we do not think consciously about these.

Geertz (1973) inspires my approach in this regard. He describes cultural research as being an interpretative analysis in search of meaning. He interprets culture as some kind of webs of significance, in which man is suspended and which he himself has spun. His idea is that culture should be seen as a context, within which behaviours, institutions and processes should be 'thickly described' (Geertz 1973:14). His way of thinking suggests that culture should be studied through behaviour and by inspecting events, and not only through symbols or abstract ideas. This supports my idea of understanding the cultural challenge through an actual study of bathrooms and bathroom routines. My analysis of bathroom ideas is still in its preliminary phase. So far, I would like to elucidate how meaning is imbued in the bathroom through different dynamics.

Outline

The character of this paper is explorative. The idea is to get more acquainted with the whole issue of normalisation. As I have probably hinted, I perceive normalities at both an individual and societal level. A macro-orientated perception of normalisation would explore the idea of a common linkage and so-called 'society-based normalities'. A micro-orientated perception of normalisation would explore the idea of a contextual determination and so-called 'individually-based normalities'. A combination of these two perspectives would enable me to look into the intersection between 'society-based' and 'individually-based' normalities. The outline of the paper reflects this duplicity of normalisation. Firstly, I put forward some general reflections inspired by some of my preliminary analysis of bathrooms, including my qualitative interviews. Secondly, I examine two empirical stories. The empirical examples will focus on elucidating the context in which the individual routines change. In the concluding section I will relate the two parts of my paper and to sum up important points.

General reflections on cultural meanings in the bathroom

In the first part of my study, I have carried out some preliminary analyses of the bathroom. I have carried out a literature review on the history of the bathroom and made a small review of Danish magazines about dwellings. This has given me an insight into general changes in bathrooms. Based on this, I would like to contribute with some more general thoughts about the way in which bathrooms and bathroom routines have common linkages of cultural meanings. I wish to illustrate the general dynamics of the rootedness and the contextual determination of bathroom routines. This kind of macro-orientation can give insights into some of the general movements that seem to be happening in our cultural meanings and our way of organising our lives. Since this is work in progress, I will only touch upon these issues very generally.

The bathroom as rooted entity versus contextual determination

In the year 2000 in Denmark, only 4,4% of the occupied dwellings did not have a bath or shower, while 1,6% did not have their own toilet (Danmarks Statistik, 2001). This shows that you can hardly find a home in Denmark without some kind of bathroom. It suggests that the bathroom has become a normal standard in society. Mediated by the building industry, common bathroom norms are integrated through the process of building new houses. Hereby, the bathroom gets standardised in certain ways. A look into different house-building periods shows different standards of bathrooms, e.g. displaying changes in the size of the room, its placement in the dwelling and different aesthetic appearances. The physical setting of the bathroom is somehow interconnected across society. There thus exist certain 'guidelines' for bathrooms. This calls attention to a connection between the bathroom and social conventions and expectations. The bathroom has social importance. To go into detail with the cultural meaning of the bathroom would take me too far. I just wish to make a few points. Lupton and Miller (1992) describe the bathroom as a laboratory for handling bodily wastes. This illustrates the importance of cleanliness in relation to the bathroom. Shove (2003) argues that ideas on cleanliness reflect issues of social order and morality. Seen in this view, the bathroom mirrors a kind of homely institutionalisation of bodily maintenance. It is a place where our bodies are being prepared before we carry out any social relations. One of my informants clearly reflects this meaning of the bathroom, when he tells me that he feels obliged to take a shower each day before going to work. Without a shower he feels dirty and thus not suitable for going to work. This emphasises the connection between individual practice and social expectations about how to appear. Our preoccupation with cleanliness and appearance fills up a substantial part of our everyday life. We do not think consciously about the social values of the bathroom and its standards, but we implicitly live up to these through our bathroom routines.

Looking more generally into the way we organise ourselves in society, I also perceive common joints. An important component part of our society is its 'systems'. Physical examples of such systems could be our transportation system, where certain timetables apply to the logic of the availability of e.g. trains. Socially we are also part of these kinds of logical systems. A good example of this could be the rush hours on the highway. These reflect common working hours. In my interviews I often see a clear change in bathroom routines from weekdays to weekends. This also reflects the way in which people are part of a social system and how this interacts with their way of arranging their personal life. Through our everyday life we are reproducing different kinds of such social systems. My idea here is not to depict people as herds of sheep being pushed around by a shepherd. My point is more generally to point out that we should remember to recognise the anchored dynamics, which shape and reshape common joints, and that these are part of the co-

construction of bathroom ideas. Each of us has a bathroom, each of us knows how to use it and also why we use it. These common joints between us show that people are bound together by common joints, materially, culturally and socially.

Bathrooms are also contextually determined. My interviews show that each informant unconsciously makes the bathroom and bathroom routines conform to his/hers own situation. An example is that one informant describes how his wife uses the spa bath after a hard day of work in the garden in order to loosen up her wince muscles. This is not some kind of tacit duty, which is a result of certain expectations in society. Rather, it is a specific context in which the bath is used. Each of us has a specific composition of everyday life patterns: some work, others do not, some have children, others live by themselves, etc. These patterns interact with our way of life and our way of arranging and using the bathroom. The organisation of our everyday life interacts with our bathroom ideas. It shapes and reshapes our demands, expectations and needs. Through life we are also experiencing different phases, thus producing and reproducing new roles, new situations and changes in demands. For instance, some of my informants have accepted humble circumstances during their studies, while having other more demanding expectations after their graduation. One can also imagine the significant implications on the organisation of everyday life, when having an increase in the family.

Looking at technologies from a contextual point of view emphasises the interpretative flexibility of technologies (Bijker 1995). Technologies are imbued with meanings and these change from situation to situation. A good example of this is how the bathtub in many ways is fundamentally different than the shower: they inscribe different time frames. People use them for different purposes in different situations. Another thing is that people often interpret technologies in their own way, meaning that some would perhaps use their bathtub as a shower and thus alter the imposed time frame. The development of bathroom arrangements reflects shifting ideas on e.g. whether to bathe or shower (Quitza and Røpke, in prep.). Standards have an imposing character, but they are simultaneously part of an ongoing process of interpretation in which the individual and the specific context play an important role.

Present developments

Since the 1960s in Denmark, a lot seems to have happened to our bathrooms. During this time, bathrooms were mostly uniform and arranged so they almost looked like laboratories. Today, bathrooms are seldom uniform: they can now be found in a variety of forms and arrangements (Quitza and Røpke, in prep.). The material structures and standards of the bathroom are to a certain extent being burst out. Rearranging the physical setting of the bathroom has become normal. Both minor and major adjustments take place, thus changing the interpretation of the bathroom. The informants' descriptions of their bathroom renovations show that they are often engaging themselves in a creative process of remaking their bathrooms. Mostly, this process is about the aesthetics and the comfort of the bathroom. Many informants express their ideas on how to arrange the bathroom in order to make it pleasant and comfortable. Very often, they have actively taken part in the decisions about what to choose and how to arrange it. This shows the active pursuit of ideas in the process of rearranging the bathroom.

There also seems to be fundamental changes in the ways we use the bathroom. As mentioned earlier, the bathroom is much about pursuing the 'right' appearance. Formerly, the right appearance was mostly about getting rid of sweat and dirt. Today, we seem to be experiencing a greater bodily

focus. A study of Danish people's time-use demonstrates that an average Danish female uses one hour each day on personal hygiene and appearance, and males use a little less (Bonke 2002:55,68). This is more than earlier. I also see how bathrooms are furnished with products and technologies that can help us in our pursuit: hair conditioners and dyers, equipment for hair removal, make-up, cremes and so on. Our appearances have become an important subject in our society. People are concerned about their looks.

The above indicates important changes in bathroom routines, which may be occurring. These changes are part of the ongoing co-construction of bathroom routines. An important point in relation to this co-construction is that the tying between the bathroom and the organisation of everyday life seems to have become stronger in time. During the 1960s the bathroom was a uniform room given low priority and with few specific purposes. Today, many people seem to consider the bathroom as a constituent part of their life, it is something they can adjust and integrate in their way of life. This is reflected in the variety of bathrooms and bathroom practices, which can be observed. Leaflets on bathroom arrangements indicate a variety of arrangements and equipment, such as the relaxing bathroom, the luxurious bathroom, the functionalistic bathroom, the minimalist bathroom and the romantic bathroom. Producers differentiate themselves through new designs or functions. This shows the variety of choices to choose from, and it probably also reflects new kinds of practices and interpretations of the bathroom. These changes are most likely interconnected with the modernisation of our society, which I will shortly touch upon in the following.

Many facets of our society have changed through the process of modernisation. A few examples are changes in family patterns and work conditions, not to mention the variety of technologies we have discovered and implemented. Such changes are also changing the fundamental conditions of our society. Each time period is characterised by some specific properties. An example of an important present phenomenon is the hectic life. Seen from the bathroom perspective this is reflected in magazines by the idea of the bath as a pleasure. Here, the bathtub is proposed as a way of getting some time on one's own and a way of withdrawing from the hectic life. Another example, which show new needs in bathroom standards, are the rush hours created by the combination of our working hours and the increasing preoccupation with appearances: we all simultaneously need to use some time in the bathroom. This is probably part of shaping new standards regarding the number of bathrooms in the home or the number of users in the bathroom, it being e.g. a room for multiple users instead of a single user room. Of course, these changes are also influenced by the fact that people are becoming wealthier and have greater opportunities to fulfil their ideas.

Another important point I would like to mention is the duplicity of individualisation. Our society today is marked by a more individualised approach. The strong binding to traditions have been dissolved and replaced by a variety of choices, e.g. going from uniformity to variety. Beck (1997:211) believes that 'traditional bindings and social connections have been replaced by secondary instances and institutions, which mark the individual life story'. This means that the individual is becoming freer from the traditional bindings. Nevertheless, the individual is simultaneously also influenced by new institutionalisations and new pressures. In the example of the bathroom, I see that there is an increasing margin with regards to the design and use of the bathroom: it varies. At the same time, I also see a greater preoccupation with our appearances, which is part of shaping even more extensive pressures on our use of the bathroom. I think that such dualities are interesting to analyse further.

Summing this general section up, I hope to have indicated that interpretations of the bathroom may be on the move. A long-term process of reshaping the meanings ascribed to the bathroom and our

way of using it seems to be occurring. The bathroom is no longer only about keeping us clean and taking care of wastes. New standards seem to be emerging. The bathroom seems to be increasingly perceived as a place of wellbeing, where people can e.g. pamper themselves, relax, enjoy, be together, work out and so on. This is happening as constituent part of a cultural, social and material co-evolution in our everyday lives.

Examining two empirical stories

In my study I have so far carried out four interviews. The aim of these interviews is to learn about people's routines and their thoughts about their bathroom and how these are connected to their daily life. The interview guide has a broad starting point in themes about people's bathrooms, exploring e.g. how it looks, how they use it, what it means to them and what kind of changes they have carried out. My informants have been chosen on the basis of several characteristics with the aim of making the composition as varied as possible. In the selection, I have made use of bathroom renovations by explicitly choosing some informants that have carried this out. For this paper I have chosen to make a thorough analysis of two of these interviews. I have condensed different meanings in the interviews and explored the interconnectedness of these through mind maps. My focus has been on the informant's reasons for doing bathroom renovations and on how this was interconnected with their everyday life.

The examination of these interviews entails a shift in perspective, compared to the former sections. My perspective here is mostly micro-orientated, since I wish to unfold the individual stories of the informants' bathroom renovations. My point here is to show how bathroom renovations change both the individual bathroom routines and some of the individual cultural meanings connected to the bathroom. I am concerned about the processes that these bathroom renovations are part of.

Starting all over again

Katrine is in the beginning of her 30s. She has recently divorced her husband. At first she just stayed in their apartment, but in time she got eager to move away from all the memories and into a new flat. Three years ago she was offered another flat in the same building and she decided to move. Her and her 8-years old son now live in this new flat in Copenhagen. When Katrine first took over the flat it needed a lot of work. She has repaired it completely, including a renovation of the bathroom.



Pictures of Katrine's bathroom after the renovation.

Photo: Maj-Britt Quitzau

Katrine's bathroom renovation is interesting, because it looks like an incidental and straightforward renovation on the surface. Nevertheless, this actually conceals some major changes in her life and her perception and use of the bathroom. When confronting her with the question of why she renovated the bathroom, she answers that it was because the existing one was so distasteful. It was not possible to make her comment more precisely on this, but her remarks clearly show that the bathroom was worn-out, dirty and inconvenient. Analysing her reasoning, it is difficult to figure out exactly why such a grand scale renewal was necessary. This is closely related to the fact that Katrine has always been accustomed to live with small and functional bathrooms. A thorough cleaning of the bathroom and replacement of the equipment would have raised the standard of the distasteful bathroom, into what she has been used to. Instead she chooses to totally renovate the bathroom.

Reflecting on her expectations to the bathroom, she stresses that these in some ways have changed. Her point is that she has never had any demands on bathrooms, except the possibility of getting cleaned. With her new bathroom she has developed new impressions of what a bathroom can offer and she is a bit reluctant towards the idea of giving these attractive features up. Analysing her routines before and after the renovation, it is clear that these have changed. Her new bathroom is a bit larger than what she has been accustomed to. To her, it has meant a tremendous advantage that she now has the possibility of creating a showering area by drawing a shower curtain. She was used to shower in a small room, where one almost sat on the toilet while showering. To her, the big difference is that a shower at present does not imply an effort in order to prepare the room for showering and also that she has more room for movements in the shower. She argues that these changes have meant that she now takes longer showers. It has also meant that she has developed an idea of the shower as something exquisite. Instead of being a necessary evil, it is now described as something inviting and exquisite. Showering has become an enjoyment:

Katrine: *"Yes, then (when her son is in bed) I go into the shower. Because then I have the time. Then there is quiet and peace, and then I can, if I want to stand there for 10 minutes, I can do this, and if I want to stand there for half an hour, well then I can do this... Magnus' (her son) and my time, when we're at home are 100% 'Oliver-time'. It's all about him, right. (...)"*

Interviewer: *"What about this daily shower in the evening, what does it mean to you?"*

Katrine: *"I just think it's nice. It's so relaxing. 'Aaaaahhh'. Then you relax. And you, 'aaahhh', I think it gives such a tranquillity, when one has been in the shower. I think one gets so 'ppff' (she puffs out), not that one get tired, but one just relaxes, gets some tranquillity into the body (...)"*

The above indicates the importance of the changes in the setting. The extended shower space and the use of shower curtains change the conditions of the shower. Ultimately, these conditions influence Katrine's perception of and her use of the shower. However, another important point needs to be made. The bathroom renovation occurs in the wake of Katrine's divorce and it is my belief that this influences the way the situation has evolved. Katrine mentions that the movement to another flat was a way of escaping all the memories. She seems to have needed to start all over again. Even though the offered flat turned up as a coincidence, the choice of coming to grips with this battered flat seems to emphasise Katrine's need of getting on with her life. My guess is that Katrine implicitly accepts the challenge of renovating the flat in order to surmount her situation. This probably marks a shift in her way of handling the renovation. It becomes a process of creating a world of her own, where the process itself is as important as the result. In connection to this, it is also important to emphasise that the patterns of her everyday life take a sudden turn. After the divorce she has become a single parent. Katrine describes the kinds of restrictions this imposes on her and how it influences the daily rhythms. She is much more bound to the flat than before and she feels that her

everyday life has become more tied up with time. Much indicates that these changes have meant that she now prioritises the home. She also emphasises the importance of enjoying her and her son's shared time. Practical duties such as cleaning and washing the dishes have become something she fiddles about with alone in the evenings, when her son is in bed. Her statements about the bathroom fall into the same picture: cosiness has become an important issue for her. In continuation of this, the shower has become a way of enjoying some time on her own in the evenings. The shower does no longer only have the cleaning effect. It is now also a way of relaxing and getting some tranquility into her body.

The underlying motivation for the changes in her life seems especially to be the changes in her patterns of life and her way of handling this. On the other hand, the way these changes are worked out in detail seem highly influenced by the practical realities, which come about, and of the new patterns of everyday life, which creates new kinds of needs and new perceptions. Her story shows the contextually determined mix of different dynamics and how these are interconnected. Katrine's story is especially suited to elucidate a reactive path of development, where the changes in her routines represent unpronounced and embedded changes in her everyday life.

Acting out repressed dreams

Betina is in her mid 30s. She is married to Svend and they have a 6 years-old girl and a new-born son. They both have an artistic education and work. They live in a small house in the northern part of Sealand and have lived there for about 4 years. Before the renovation they had a very small bathroom. Betina describes this as being primitive and miserable with only a toilet, a sink and a hand shower. By utilising an unused wing in the house they have expanded and renovated the bathroom completely, while simultaneously creating an entrance in the house. This renovation process has been extensive, because the unused wing needed to be restored.



Pictures of Betina's bathroom after the renovation.

Photo: Maj-Britt Quitzau

The bathroom renovation was timed with the expected increase in the family. Not primarily, as it might suggest, because this entailed new kinds of needs. But rather, because it was an occasion to improve the bathroom situation in the house. Betina emphasises the need to establish more appropriate conditions for nursing the baby than the cold and narrow bathroom. Nevertheless, her background story shows that they have had even more primitive conditions with their other child, thus emphasising a more complex incentive. An important aspect is, of course, favourable practical and

financial possibilities at the time, but it also seems as though Betina has had some kind of repressed bathroom dreams. The following dialogue shows how she not only relates to the practical issues, but also to the issue of taking advantage of the situation in order to 'do it':

Interviewer: *"Then I thought that...you could tell me about why you chose to carry out this renovation. You say that it was from one extreme to another. So what made you take the decisive step?"*

Betina: *"It was simply because...it was when this one here (the baby lies in her arms) was on the way. So it was kind of a convenience-thing. That...if it was to function, so to speak. (Pause). So, I thought the other bathroom was too primitive. It was too cold to nurse him out there. So, it was, so to say, an occasion to say 'ok we'll do it now'. And when we do it, then we just do it real nice. Nice, in the way that we prioritise that it has got to be a big bathroom in relation to...so it's actually enormously big, you could say, compared to the amount of space we generally have. It may be a bit irrational that it's so big, because we could, without a doubt, have used a guestroom or...one could have done it half the size. That was the original thought, and then have used the other half as a guestroom. But we thought, so to speak, that when we had to make a bathroom, then why not prioritise it...prioritise this room. (...)"*

Although it might have been one of the incentives, the result of the renovation was not a rational improvement of the usability of the bathroom for nursing the new-born. Betina herself points at the irrational size of the renovated bathroom. The size seems to be a result of the combination of making a more usable bathroom and pursuing Betina's dreams about a bathtub. The idea of a more usable bathroom is of immediate importance, because of the inappropriateness of the small house. In this regard, the newly constructed entry and bathroom offers new possibilities, in the form of more space for storage and the possibility of having a washing machine and a tumble dryer. On the other hand, the bathtub dream is about Betina's enthusiasm for bathtubs. Betina does not explicitly point this out as a motivation for renovating the bathroom, but through my analysis of the interview it is my conviction that it plays an important role. Betina grew up with a bathtub, but she has never had one herself. Nevertheless, she speaks about bathtubs as a matter of course and has fought in order to get one in her bathroom. Using the bathtub is clearly not a coincidence, it is something she wanted and has worked for. It seems as though she has had some kind of repressed dream about having a bathtub on her own, which she now gets a possibility of realising. This becomes even more obvious, as she has been using her mother's bathtub occasionally, while not having her own.

Betina's case is especially interesting, because she has been seeking her new routines through the bathroom renovations. What really matters is her baths, which greatly infiltrate her ideas on what a bathroom should look like. The reason for her bathtub enthusiasm is not conspicuous in the interview. It seems clear that bathing has nothing to do with getting clean, since she uses the shower regularly for that purpose. She talks about the bathtub as a kind of meditation-time and does also make parallels to issues of health. Besides, she also uses it as a way of being together with her daughter. In the renovation of her bathroom, she has tried to follow the picture of her dream-bathroom. In a magazine, she got the idea of creating a bathroom in touch with the garden. Her main idea was to be able to sit in the bathtub and enjoy the view of the garden. Unfortunately, this dream could not be realised, because the window could not be lowered enough. Nevertheless, she is planning to elevate the bathtub so that she can look out the window, while using it. This shows how the idea of having a bathtub in her home has supported the renovation of the bathroom and the way some of her routines have evolved.

The motivations for renovating the bathroom seem to be interwoven with Betina's bathtub dreams. She does not discover new ways of doing things or rearranging the bathroom. Rather, she follows some kind of repressed dream about having a bathtub on her own. It is most likely that this idea arises from her childhood, where she was accustomed to use a bathtub. For some reason, the idea of the bathtub has lasted even though she has never before had a bathtub on her own. For her, the bathroom seems to be an inherent amenity. She has never before pursued this dream of having a bathtub, but has relied on the opportunity of borrowing her mother's bathtub once in a while. The timing of the situation meant that her dream in this case could be substantiated by the practical conditions. These were things like the arrival of a new-born, the inappropriateness of the house, the availability of an unused wing and the simple fact of being able to carry out an extensive renovation. Starting from her bathtub enthusiasm, the bathroom renovation and the changes in her routines seem to follow a more or less predictable pattern. In her case, the active pursuit of her dreams seems paramount, while other everyday life issues, such as patterns of everyday life are more or less indistinct.

Reflections

The two cases illustrate changes in the appearance and the use of the bathroom. Both Katrine and Betina were accustomed to more primitive forms of bathrooms. In their former routines it seems as though their use of the bathroom was a necessary evil, some kind of duty. The renovation reshapes the bathroom completely. They gain more space in the rooms compared to earlier and the aesthetics of the rooms change. Katrine gets room for a shower area, while Betina gets room for a bathtub. In both examples, the bathroom becomes a more useful room. They both only refer to their primitive rooms as something used for showering, going to the toilet, etc. In the renovated bathrooms the amount of activities in the bathroom are extended. They both talk about being together, practical issues such as laundering and enjoying some time in the shower or bath. In both examples, the bathroom becomes a totally different setting. This inspires new ways of using it. This illustrates that the renovation process entails new interpretations of the bathroom and how to use it.

The two examples especially highlight the changes regarding the shower and bathtub. In Katrine's case, her perception of the shower changes, since she now connects an element of luxury and enjoyment to her daily shower. She extends the duration of the shower and she uses the occasion to take good care of her body. Here, she stresses the importance of the easiness of taking a shower and also the tempting setting of her new bathroom. Unconsciously, her daily shower becomes a way of dissolving the time-restrictions that she encounters as a single parent. It creates the opportunity for her to have some time on her own. This emphasises a shifting role and interpretation of the bathroom. Earlier, it was primarily a necessity, now it has become an inherent piece of her everyday life puzzle. Betina also adds an element of luxury and meditation time to her bathing routines. In her case it is rather an extension of her activities than a change in perception. The bathtub is an introduction of a 'new' daily routine, which she uses in parallel to the frequent showers. She prioritises the bathroom in a way she has never done before. The new bathroom becomes a realisation of a sought-after situation. Both examples suggest that new dimensions be supplemented to their ideas about the bathroom. New meanings are connected to the renovated bathrooms and this seems to support the idea of fundamental changes in the bathroom standards.

An interesting observation is that in both cases they do not change their routines in a continuous way. Katrine is unaware of the possibilities of a new bathroom and Betina has had this repressed dream, which has not been carried out. It is a happening, which triggers the changes. As part of this happening, different elements get intertwined and fall into place. In Katrine's case the development

is rather coincident and involving a great deal of fundamental changes in the organisation of her life. Betina is more consciously aware of the changes, since she is more determined to follow specific ideas and obtaining a specific goal: the bathtub dream. In her case it is rather that combination of a dream substantiated by practical conditions, which shape the renovation process. This shows the complexity of the production and reproduction of bathroom routines. In Betina's case, the ideas about the bath as a pleasure are more apparent. In Katrine's case the new meanings sort of get in from the back door. So the two examples have opposite driving forces. Betina is driven by the idea of a bathtub, but eventually it is the timing of the situation, which makes it possible to carry it out. Her movement and the distasteful bathroom drive Katrine, but eventually it is the circumstances, which make the changing routines possible. This emphasises the encapsulation of such changes in ideas in the circumstances of everyday life.

Concluding remarks

Throughout this paper I have tried to elucidate how normality is produced and reproduced in everyday life. My main point has been to show how bathroom ideas are changing. The bathroom renovations have proven to be an excellent way of elucidating some of the dynamics that occur in the process of changing routines. The two cases show that bathroom renovations are entangled in a complex and contextually determined cohesion. In each story, the dynamics leading to changes in routines are joined together in different ways and interconnect different elements in the process.

The two examples illustrate that meanings connected to the bathroom are changing in connection to the renovations. It is difficult to single out exactly what have happened to the bathrooms. My impression is that the rooms are enlarged, made more pleasant and that they have become more usable. I have especially pointed out, how the two women add an element of pleasure to the bathroom after the renovations. This mirrors changes in the role and interpretation of the bathroom. It moves away from a status as a necessary evil towards having a more interconnected role in their everyday life activities. I think this supports the idea that fundamental changes are occurring in the bathroom. A more detailed look into the new situation would probably call attention to several shifts in common perceptions about the bathroom. An example is that the bathroom becomes a place of self-attention instead of being primarily a place of cleaning and handling wastes. Another example could be the idea of being together in the bathroom instead of using the bathroom as a private place. This shows how the individual changes are interconnected with changes in more common-based ideas.

Katrine's story seems to illustrate how the organisation of everyday life influences our bathroom ideas. This supports the general thought of considering the sociological implications of e.g. the modernisation process. Her shower becomes a way of unwinding from the everyday life conditions. It could be interesting to make connections between the individual stories and more general considerations about what is happening to our everyday life. On the other hand, Betina's story illustrates the more individualised situation, where the renovation of the bathroom is a pursuit of a dream. In her case, she follows an already existing idea. I am not sure whether this idea has a more general anchorage or not. Her situation shows the importance of own beliefs and ideas and how these may be repressed through time by certain conditions. It is interesting how different driving forces and conditions trigger the two processes of bathroom renovations. This indicates that shifting normalities are put into practice in different ways. The changes, that this renovation results in, also indicate that the bathroom routines are becoming more out-turned. By this, I mean that they are not only a reflection of common norms, but also a reflection of e.g. conditions of everyday life and individualised ideas.

In this paper I have not examined the common joints between the qualitative stories. As mentioned above I have some ideas about common joints, but this needs to be studied in more details. My belief is that the bathroom renovations mirror an ongoing long-term process of changes in the general normality of the bathroom. I would see these 'socially-based' cultural meanings as building components, which the individual puts into practice through contextual happenings. It is interesting how this ongoing process of changing normalities is carried out so individually and so contextually determined. It could be interesting to further study these tensions and correlations between common and individual bathroom ideas and how they co-evolve. This way, I could explore the way in which common cultural meanings are put into everyday life practice.

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