

Abstract [Oral Presentation]

Managed lifestyles: sustaining age-restricted communities within retirement-living developments

Dr Sam Clark, Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University

This paper draws from doctoral work that presented and interpreted the stories of nine actors involved in the design, construction, management and inhabitation of third-age housing in the UK¹. The study integrated original storytelling with architectural survey, analysis and design techniques; bringing together the social science practice of participant observation with architectural post-occupancy evaluation of an industry product (the ‘retirement chalet’). This practice-led research – sponsored by a national property developer of private, age-restricted housing – foregrounds ‘designerly’ modes of inquiry, resulting in design-relevant feedback for those involved in the production of retirement-living environments.

The paper references two research stories – *Resident Owner* and *Chalet Manager* – which represent multiple informants ‘found’ during short residencies, involving the researcher staying overnight at retirement chalets and engaging in the social life of the shared lounge, as a form of cultural immersion. *Resident Owner* highlights how older UK consumers lack exposure to high quality housing and are committed to making their purchases work; reporting an enthusiasm for the social architecture, over-and-above the physical environment. While *Chalet Manager* portrays the central role staff play in the promotion and maintenance of this social architecture; ‘untapped’ experts in the lived-experiences of the products they share with customers. It highlights grey areas with respect to customer expectations and customer care, as well as the challenges presented by ageing cohorts of resident owners with ambitions to reshape *their* chalet environments.

Conference Sub-themes: *Environments for ageing in the 21st century; Transitions in Older Age; Open Theme*

Selected for ‘*Multidisciplinarity*’ Flagship Symposium

¹ Sam Clark, *Architectural Reflections on Housing Older People: Nine Stories of Retirement-Living* (Unpublished PhD thesis, Newcastle University, 2018)



Inside a typical Pink & Knight development;
walking the hotel-styled corridors to reach the guest suite.

Vignette III
Chalet Thresholds
~ Corridor Interiors ~



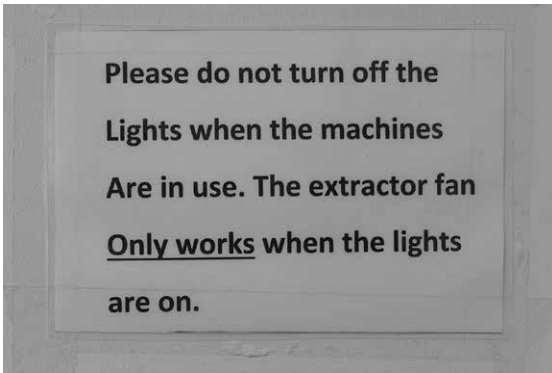
Apartment entrances as viewed from the corridor in one case study development. Here residents are home-making by appropriating pieces of this shared space; owned by Pink & Knight and managed by CMS.

Vignette III
Chalet Thresholds
~ Apartment Entrances ~



Traces of resident use of shared lounges within Pink & Knight case study developments. Here we can read the tension between space that is presented - marketed even - and utilised. There is a blending of material cultures and practices from archetypal hotel, home and nursing home. In one lounge residents were debating how to accommodate their 'library' - a corner with dedicated table and/or shelves?

Vignette V
Photographic Surveys
 ~ Shared Lounge ~



This aspect of the Chalet Manager's practice - notifying residents - is made visible on the walls and doors of the chalet. There is a variety of notices ranging from social postings on the notice board to 'polite notices' conveying instructions and/or advice on the use of chalet facilities.

Vignette VI
Chalet Working
~ Notifying ~