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The Importance of Comfort Indicators in Home Renovations

Literature, governmental and policy goals reveal a need to merge the, until now separately considered, concepts of Universal Design (UD) and Energy Efficiency (EE) in home renovations. Using the concept of Comfort as a framework that unifies UD and EE a list of 21 comfort indicators was developed based on literature research and a set of 3 qualitative studies.

The indicators were developed to describe comfort at home from the perspective of residents so that they may be used by the residents to better understand their renovation needs, to communicate those needs with professionals, and so that policy can be better targeted accordingly.

This poster discusses a survey with 145 homeowners to check whether these comfort indicators were indeed important from a homeowner's perspective when building or renovating their home. Of particular interest was how important the indicators are relative to each other; and if there are any inter-relations between them. The investigation included the important triggers and goals of renovation, their relations to each other and to socio-economic data.

Among other things the results show that the list of comfort indicators used can be considered reasonably concise and complete. The indicators fall into 3 groups in order of importance with EE associated indicators located somewhere in the middle pack. This order remains similar regardless of whether the respondents' plan to build a new home, renovate, or have no concrete plans yet.

An increase in comfort and an increase of the energy efficiency of the home are the most common triggers and goals for renovations. There is little change between the reasons why people started to think of a renovation (triggers) and the final goals of the renovations. The involvement of an architect seems to have no effect on this.

The deeper understanding of comfort indicators, as a link between EE and UD, and their importance for homeowners supports our efforts to develop a user-focused synergetic merger of UD and EE in practice and research. The indicators can be used to build communication or assessment tools that bridge the gap between homeowners and professionals of all types involved in home renovations.