

‘What is the use of lifestyle research in housing?’

A case study from the Netherlands

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Abstract

At the turn of the century the supposed change from a supply oriented to a demand oriented housing market and the increasing complexity of the multicultural society have boosted the development and application of lifestyle research in the domain of housing in the Netherlands. Lifestyle is expected to provide a surplus value compared to more traditional housing indicators such as socio-demographic and socio-economic variables. But lifestyle is also a contested concept in housing research. The validity and reliability of the concept have been questioned and housing scholars are critical about the necessity of lifestyle as an added value for housing research and housing practice. Nevertheless we see an increasing interest of housing professionals in lifestyle methods developed by different agencies, although in the field of practitioners and administrators it is a contested concept as well. In this paper we want to fuel the discussion about the added value and necessity of lifestyle research for the domain of housing. We will compare the lifestyle methods used in the Netherlands and present the results of case studies, i.e. projects in which these methods have been applied in the housing domain. In order to assess the surplus value of lifestyle research we use interviews with involved agencies and professionals.

Keywords: Lifestyle, demand side, housing preferences, policy research

Introduction

In the Netherlands, as in most European countries, housing policy has undergone fundamental changes in recent decades. The policy focus shifted from supply to demand and from government-dominated social housing to a more market-oriented approach after the 1970s (Smith and Oxley, 1997, p. 506). This shift occurred a little bit later than in other western European countries (van der Heijden, 2002, p. 330) and had been mainly operationalized in the 1990s. We see accordingly that in that decade the emphasis on the specific preferences and lifestyles of dwellers in relation to the identities of living environments became more and more evident in policy reviews and documents (for example, Ministry of Housing, 1997a, 1997b; VROM-raad, 1999). A consumer-oriented stance towards housing has been the leading policy principle in the latest White Paper on housing (Ministry of Housing, 2000). In this White Paper much attention was paid to the different housing preferences for households with different lifestyles and in different stages of their life-cycle. The policy interest in this differentiation has also been connected to the

ethnic diversity of the Dutch population. In the parliamentary debate, questions were posed on whether enough attention was being paid to ethnicity as a source of diversity in housing demand and supply (van der Horst and Ouwehand 2011). Housing research, using lifestyle typologies, which fits very well in this stance towards consumer-oriented policy, emerged at the end of the turn of the century. This use has been connected to the research of housing preferences as well as to research in the field of neighbourhood management and housing allocation.

In the field of neighbourhood management and housing allocation, lifestyle is mostly used in connection with (potential) problems as a result of ‘conflicting lifestyles’ or, more dramatic: ‘the clash of lifestyles’. The diversity of the population, regarded as an advantage by scholars like Jacobs (1961) and Sandercock (1998) is not always experienced as such by residents (see for instance Putnam 2007; Permentier et al. 2008). The increase of sociocultural heterogeneity in neighbourhoods has raised questions for professionals regarding neighbourhood management. Sociocultural diversity has often been connected to ethnic diversity. Experienced problems such as conflicts, nuisance and noise, and the deterioration of collective spaces are often implicitly associated with the ‘clash of lifestyles’. In the Netherlands, we observe a trend of using lifestyle as a matching criterion in housing allocation in order to create more homogeneity *within* heterogeneous neighbourhoods. The use of lifestyle as an instrument in research of housing preferences has been less associated directly with ethnic diversity. This demand for more homogeneous neighbourhoods in more heterogeneous districts cannot be seen separate of the consequences of processes like globalisation, immigration and individualisation for the composition of neighbourhoods.

At the same time that the use of lifestyle typologies has increased and is being developed in the Netherlands mainly by commercial research bureaus as SmartAgent Company (Hagen 2001), Motivaction and Experian, the concept is debated (Ouwehand 2001, Pinkster & Van Kempen, 2002; Van Diepen & Arnoldus, 2003; RMNO 2004, Heijs et al. 2005). It has been criticised by some scholars for the indefiniteness and the static and simplified view of society. It has also been criticised regarding the possible in- and excluding effects of social cultural segmentation policies. How does that relate to an increasing heterogeneous composition of the neighbourhood population? There is also the question whether or not these concepts actually ‘work’. Is lifestyle a reliable or a very dynamic concept that changes with each stage of life? Does it stimulate the realisation of specified housing conditions and the recruitment of specific target groups? Does it lead to a less heterogeneous population regarding lifestyles? Is that achieved by choice of the residents, or by enforcement of housing institutions? And if it leads to a less heterogeneous population, does that contribute to a higher satisfaction by the residents by reducing the problems associated with diversity? To answer these questions we have started a research project in 2009 with support of the Dutch NICIS Institute, fifteen housing associations, four municipalities and a private developer and building contractor. The whole research project is aimed at the use of life style typologies as well as branding, and will be finished in 2012. It contains three parts: lifestyle and housing preferences, branding and lifestyle in area development and lifestyle in housing management and housing allocation. We will limit ourselves in this paper to the use of lifestyle as a concept in research of housing preferences.

In the past housing preferences, stated preferences as well as revealed preferences (also addressed as behaviour or housing choice), have predominantly been related to socio-demographic characteristics such as size and composition of the household, age and income. With, for instance, the increase of prosperity this approach has more and more been seen as insufficient. Social stratification of residents solely on social demographic characteristics as income, age, stage of life, ethnicity or gender has been seen as insufficient for research of housing preferences (Van Diepen & Arnoldus 2003, p.11; Devine et al. 2005). These structural data do not give enough insight why people come to a certain preference. Households with totally different background variables may have the same housing preference and in reverse, households with the same background variables may have totally different preferences. There are lots of

small, senior households that still prefer to live in big (semi-)detached houses as well as there are families that prefer to live in apartments. It is for these reasons that the debate on the development of other dimensions in housing research have gained support. That has resulted in rather different methods for research of housing preference and choice (Jansen et al. 2011). The use of lifestyle is one of these strands of methods that have been developed in recent years. In the Netherlands we see mostly a number of lifestyle methods that have been developed by different commercial research companies and only a single finger exercise by academic researchers (Jansen 2011).

Although it is necessary to place the use of these methods in a theoretical background, the focus in this paper is on how these methods have been used in practice in the Netherlands and the effects of those applied methods. In recent years a number of academic studies in the Netherlands have already been realised with an emphasis on the theoretical background of the lifestyle concept and a strong emphasis on literature study (Pinkster & Van Kempen, 2002; Van Diepen & Arnoldus, 2003; RMNO 2004; Heijs et al., 2005, 2009; Jansen, 2011). We want to contribute to the debate between scholars and practitioners in a more fruitful way than by setting aside the developed methods as indefinite, doubtful and unnecessary (Heijs et al. 2009) without arguments based on a thorough study of the practice of these methods. We want to give a proper insight in the applied methods, in the reasons why professionals have commissioned lifestyle research and in the results of lifestyle research.

The Concept of Lifestyle

The concept of lifestyle, nor the discussion on the definition of lifestyle is new in urban studies. As there are numerous scholars of different disciplines active in this field, sociologists, cultural anthropologists, human geographers, marketing researchers and so on, there are also numerous definitions. But also within disciplines the definitions differ. In different studies (Ganzeboom 1988; Pinkster & Van Kempen 2002; Van Diepen & Arnoldus 2003; Heijs et al. 2005, Jansen 2011) these concepts and definitions have been described and analysed. We won't rehearse that discussion here in length, we will limit ourselves to a short description of some key issues and end up with some points of interest for our paper.

Weber (1922) already used the term 'Lebensführung' ('way of life') and the term 'Stilisierung des lebens' (lifestyle) for persons in a certain status-group, based on as well social economic as on cultural resources. Lifestyle ('Lebenstile') is described as 'the behaviour and rules used within a certain status group in those social interactions that are outside the economic sphere, which one regards in order to belong to a social group and by which one can distinguish oneself from others' (Ouweland et al., forthcoming). This behaviour is led by the individual's choices (Lebensführung) but these choices take place within a limited number of opportunities, depending on one's structural position in society. Economic classes and status groups are in this way connected but do not completely coincide. Almost simultaneously, in the Chicago School lifestyle and way of life is used as a concept in urban research (Zorbaugh 1929; Wirth 1938). Decades later Herbert Gans (1968/1991) distinguished five 'ways of life' for urban residents. From the end of the seventies, the work of Bourdieu has been very influential (Parker, 2004; Devine & Savage, 2005). Bourdieu builds on the work of Weber and distinguishes economic, cultural and social capital. Lifestyles are seen as a product of the volume and the interaction between economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984). Bourdieu elaborates that in a combined figure in which, the social dispositions and the spaces of lifestyles are given on the background of a co-ordinate system with the volume of the capital on the vertical axis and the composition of the capital – cultural or economic – on the horizontal axis (Bourdieu 1984, p. 128-129). Bourdieu emphasizes the connection between lifestyle and what he calls the 'field' and the 'habitus': lifestyle is not based on rational choice or something that needs agency. His concept of lifestyle differs from that of Veblen who sees it as a conscious strive for distinction (Bourdieu 1989). Different scholars have commented on Bourdieu's concept of life style. Ganzeboom (1988) states that the important difference in stated preferences and revealed preferences of different generations have not received much attention. Bourdieu assumes an obvious path of someone's life, but people make also

rationale choices (Anderiesen and Reijndorp 1989, p.3). Gerhard Schulze states in his book 'Erlebnisgesellschaft' that the cultural hierarchy has lost ground to a much more horizontal experience society like a market model, due to growing wealth and opportunities (in Germany). "Where the cultural capital of Bourdieu will be built up through the years according to the lines of the philosophy of life, the choice on the experience market is a question of the moment. Why shouldn't these choices differ from moment to moment and from domain to domain?" (Van der Wouden and Kullberg, 2002).

Jansen states after describing the way lifestyle has been conceptualized in different disciplines: "The approaches show important differences in their definition of lifestyle and in the factors through which it is expressed and through which it can be measured. The concept of lifestyle may vary from a limited characteristic to a broad spectrum of behaviour and various psychological and social variables. Unfortunately, this problem is typical of the concept of lifestyle. (...) However, despite the differences between the many definitions of lifestyle, the way in which most definitions agree is that the purpose of lifestyle is to provide a context within which the behaviour of one or more actors can be understood, especially in terms of the stability, coherence, and purposefulness of action (Michelson and Reed 1974). Chaney (1996) argues that lifestyles help to make sense (but not necessarily justify) what people do, why they do it, and what doing it means to them and others." (Jansen 2011, p. ...). The great variety in definitions by different authors has not brought her to the conclusion that research of lifestyle does not make any sense. In contrast with Jansen, Heijs and co-authors come to the conclusion that lifestyle research is unusable and unnecessary after a literature study of the usefulness of lifestyles for policy development in the Netherlands: "The study shows that the current significance of the concept is doubtful for various reasons: the indefiniteness of lifestyles; the static and simplified view of society that is often presented, which is partly caused by the methods used; the uncertain relation to types of residential environment; and the unproven necessity of using lifestyles alongside or as a substitute for more traditional variables." (Heijs et al. 347). We think that is a too rigid stance. We have to take the criticism and warnings of the different scholars that scrutinized lifestyle research in mind and we have to be aware of the differences in concepts and definitions. But at the same time we see in the Netherlands much support for lifestyle research by private developers, municipalities, housing associations. This has brought us to the conclusion that it is very interesting to conduct a research that focuses on the use of lifestyle research in the Netherlands in practice.

The research design

In this project we aim to analyse how lifestyle typologies are being used in research of housing preferences in the Netherlands, how they differ from each other and how reliable these methods are (see: Ouwehand et al. forthcoming). A consortium supervises the research project. The funding is spread over the consortium partners: NICIS Institute (1/3), a number of local involved actors (15 housing associations, 4 municipalities and a private developer, together also 1/3) and the OTB Research Institute for the Built Environment, Delft University of Technology (also 1/3). The central question is:

Which lifestyle typologies are being used in research of housing preferences in the Netherlands, what is the validity and reliability of these methods? Why and how are they being used in practice and what is their surplus value?

This question has been elaborated in a number of specified questions:

1. *How is lifestyle being defined by the different bureaus, what are the differences and on what theories are these concepts based?*
2. *On which characteristics and questions have these different bureaus based their methodology? Which methods and techniques have been used to identify the different typologies, on what number of*

respondents has clustering being executed? What is known about the reliability of the different methods by testing and retesting?

3. *Which relations are being assumed between lifestyle typology and residential environment characteristics, based on what research?*
4. *How have these methods evolved in recent years, which alterations have been applied and for what reason?*
5. *What has been the reason in practice to use lifestyle research, how has it been executed and with what results?*
6. *What is the surplus value of research on housing preferences based on lifestyle typology, compared with other forms of research on housing preferences?*

To be able to give an adequate insight in the different applied methodologies we have first explored which lifestyle methods have been used in the Netherlands in the last decade. We have identified four methods, developed by four different bureaus. To analyse these models, we studied the available documents and had interviews with the different (commercial) research bureaus. Secondly we executed short studies of a number of cases where these methods have been applied in practice. In these case studies we analysed the available documents, we had interviews with concerned key persons and, if possible, compared the results of the lifestyle research with other available data. Thirdly, we compared the different methods. The preliminary results of the study were discussed in an expert meeting with housing professionals of the different case studies and the urban counterparts. In order to give those that are not acquainted with the Dutch practice some background, we will shortly describe the four main lifestyle methods that are used. In the next section we will compare the four methods to give a concise answer to the first four questions. The following section gives the results of our case studies, thus answering the fifth and sixth question. We end up with conclusions and discussion.

Existing lifestyle methods in the Netherlands

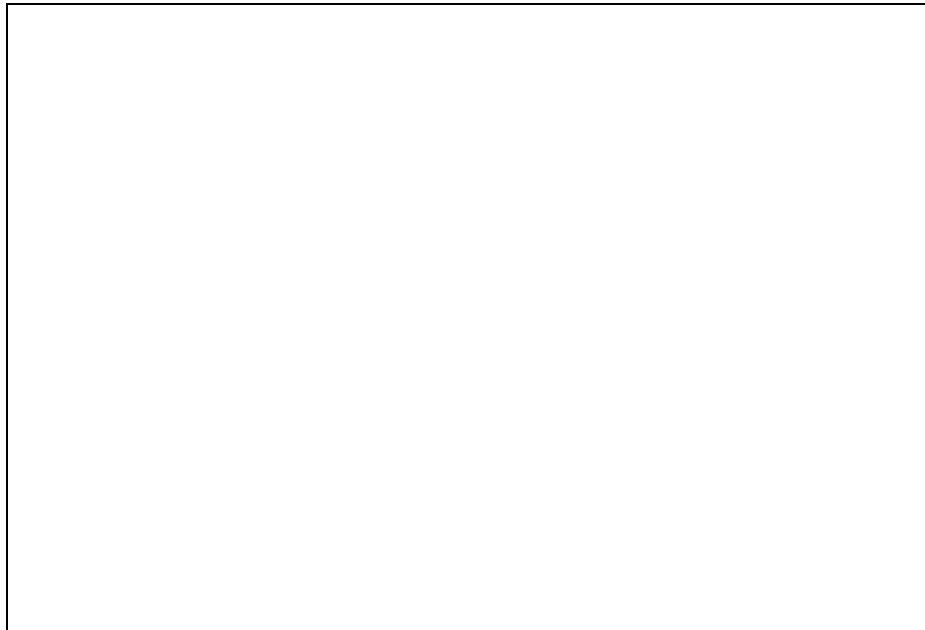
There is an enormous variety in lifestyle typologies with regard to housing that have been used in the Netherlands as well as in other countries (see for an inventory: Jansen 2011, appendix 1), but there are actually only four that could be typified as a firm method that has been used in different situations. These methods are: the BSR-model from SmartAgent Company, the Mentality-model from Motivaction, the MOSAIC-model from Experian and the WIN-model from TNS NIPO. As far as we have been able to get an insight, the model of SmartAgent Company has been most often used and the WIN model less often.

BSR-model of SmartAgent Company

The development of the Brand Strategy Research (BSR) model started in 1987 by a marketing company and has been placed by a separate company, SmartAgent Company (SAC) in 2000. The BSR-model is a psychographic model that provides insight in the background values, needs and motives of people within a certain domain. It can be different for different domains as housing, government and medical care. Consumers strive for specific end values in satisfying their needs. SAC prefers to use the term ‘perception of the environment’, the entirety formed by needs and motivations that give direction to the action of people. Knowledge of these end values can help to explain and predict consumers’ behaviours. Examples of these end values are: status, harmony and security. SAC is expressly not mentioning the action or behaviour itself. Action or behaviour is an expression of different drivers and SAC is in search for this motivation behind the action. Certainly in the domain of housing, where much action and actual choice is determined by market situation and constraints, a behaviouristic set up of the model will offer not much explication in what people really want, according to SAC.

The BSR-model is based on three dimensions: a sociological dimension (ego-orientation versus group-orientation), a cultural dimension (not-normative versus normative), and a psychological dimension (introvert versus extravert). The questionnaire that they are using to develop the typology is based on originally 140 and nowadays 149 concise key words including questions about: sport activities, personality characteristics, hobbies, professions, household characteristics, leisure activities, holiday preferences and values (Van Hattum, 2010). SAC used cluster analysis techniques to explore the data provided by about 2500 respondents in 2000. It resulted in six distinct categories: 'the dynamic individualists', 'the unrestrained', 'living together', 'the entrenched', 'the retired', and 'silent luxury'. At the start of their model, SAC stated that the sociological and cultural dimension were most dominant in determining the perception of the environment of people. After they rearranged their model in the midst of the first decade of this century, they see the sociological and the psychological dimension as most dominant in determining one's perception of the environment. Those two dimensions yield four quadrants, the 'perceptions of the environment' or 'worlds'. The motivation to discern four groups is based on marketing considerations. "It is difficult for people to think in more than two dimensions. We have to reduce something abstract to something that can be communicated rapidly and clear", as was stated by a representative of SAC in our interview with them. SAC has not given those worlds a name, but always indicates by their colour: the red, yellow, green and blue world. The (local) parties that are using SA and their model also talk about those worlds using the colours. Figure 1 shows the different end values that belong to the four worlds and table 1 gives the description of the worlds.

Figure 1 Psychographic segmentation by SAC



Source: Hagen, 2010

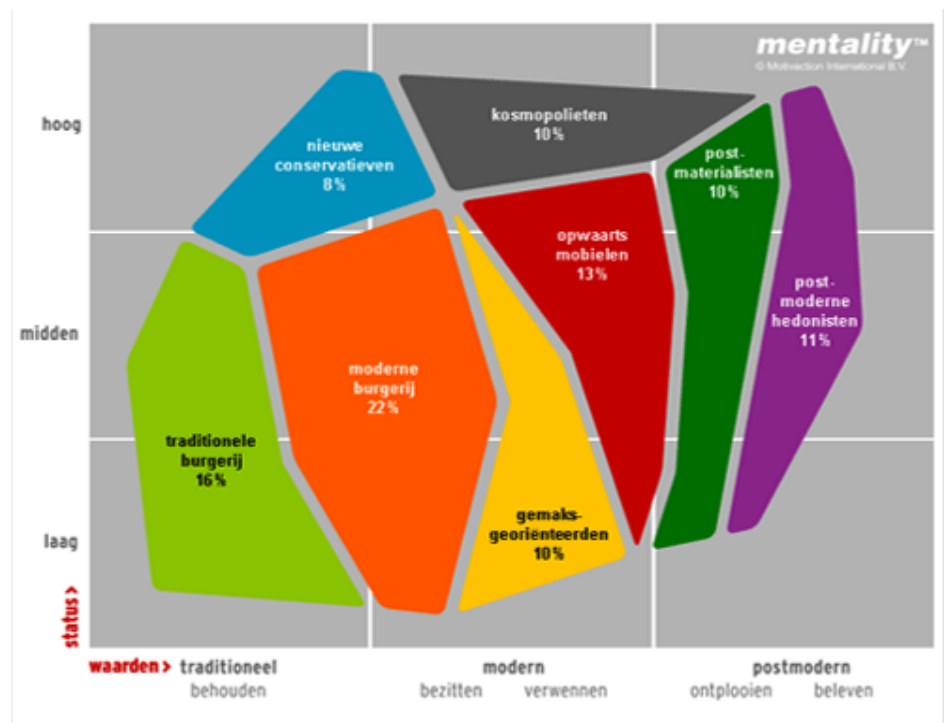
After the initial classification scheme, a short version of the questionnaire was used to place respondents into the four worlds. This questionnaire contains five questions about: personality characteristics, household characteristics, preferred occupation, hobbies and leisure activities and values. Recently, the short questionnaire has been extended with questions on preferred dwelling atmospheres and preferred ways of living.

Table 1 The perceptions of the environment or ‘worlds’ of the BSR-model of SAC

Worlds	
Yellow world	Open-minded people with a cooperative attitude towards others and the society. Looking for harmony, in search of an optimum balance between family, work, living situation and society. The slogan is: “We will work it out together”. The common norms and values of society are being used implicitly as starting-point.
Green world	Group oriented people, but the group is not the ‘open’ society but a ‘clan’. Belonging to this clan, for instance the family, the neighbourhood, gives them a feeling of safety: “Together we’re strong”. The norms and values of the clan are endorsed. This may lead to clashes with others groups with different norms and values.
Blue world	People with a strong individualistic character, ambitious and oriented to pulling the strings in life. Being in power is a central motivation. People with that attitude are successful in general. Their own individual norms and values are their starting-point.
Red world	Strong individualistic people, but with an open attitude towards society. Because they will also take their own norms and values as a starting-point, this often expresses in a progressive attitude. It is not so much their own career that is the central point, but to be able to give full scope to one’s natural gifts and to express oneself in a society that may be changed for the better.

Mentality-model by Motivaction

In 1997 Motivaction started developing the Maturity-model, based on the French Socio Vision model. This value and lifestyle research makes it possible to divide consumers into different segments, based on their values or attitude to life and to address them accordingly. Motivaction has also used a long list of statements and key words that are valued by the respondents. The company has developed a general model, but also domain specific models like ‘YoungMaturity’, ‘EthnoMaturity’, ‘Citizenshipstyles’ for the public sector and also a specific model for the domain of housing. The Maturity-model is based on two dimensions: the vertical axis is formed by the socio-economic status (high, middle, low) and the horizontal axis by values: from traditional (‘preserve’) via a modern orientation (‘possess’ and ‘indulge’) to a postmodern orientation (‘develop’ and ‘experience’). According to Motivaction, people that belong to a particular status group will show specific behaviour, attitudes and preferences and will organize everyday life in their own distinctive way. Motivaction defines a maturity or social environment as: “groups of people with corresponding characteristics, attitudes, fundamental values, targets in life, esthetical identity and consumer patterns”, based on Uetzhofer and Ascheberg (Lampert and Spangenberg 2009). The model, see figure 2 and table 2, discerns eight social environments. Annually Motivaction tests the model by face-to-face interviews under a representative sample of 1,250 persons that gives a current view on daily life and the changes in the undercurrents in society. Based on these measurements, the volume of each category may be determined. “If you look at it from a demographic point of view, you see that the category traditional citizens is diminishing (...). Groups with a modern orientation will grow”, posited Motivaction when we interviewed them.

Figure 2 The Mentality-model

Source: http://www.motivaction.nl/sites/default/files/mentality_modellen.pdf

The names and descriptions of the different groups are given from left to right and from top to bottom, in table 2. Motivaction used also a specific model for the domain of housing, with seven groups, but is not using that normally anymore, as it is easier to promote one model.

Table 2 Mentality Model typology by marketing organization Motivaction

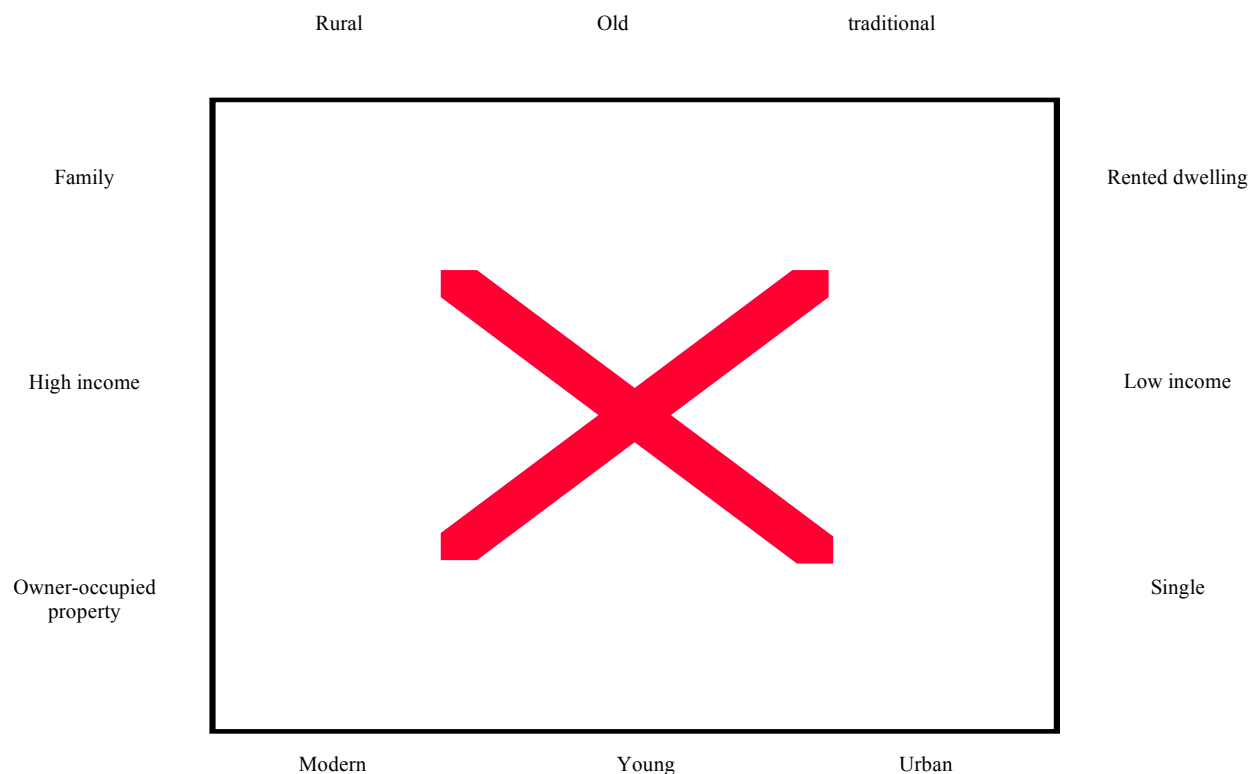
Lifestyle category	
Traditional citizens	Moralistic, conscientious and status-quo-minded middle class that stick to traditions and material possessions.
New conservatives	Liberal/conservative upper social class that is all in favor of technological development, and opposes social and cultural innovation.
Modern citizens	Conformist status-minded middle class that strives for a balance between tradition and modern values such as consumerism and hedonism.
Leisure group	Impulsive and passive consumer whose main aim is to have a carefree, pleasant and comfortable life.
Cosmopolitans	Open and critical cosmopolitan citizens who integrate values such as fulfillment and experience with modern values such as social success, materialism and hedonism.
Upwardly mobile	Career-minded individualists with a definite fascination for social status, new technology, risks and excitement.
Post Materialists	Idealists with a critical view of the social structure who want to develop themselves and who take position against social injustice and stand for the environment.
Post-modern hedonists	Pioneers of the experience culture, in which experimentation and breaking with moral and social conventions are goals in themselves.

Source: www.motivaction.nl/wat/modellen/mentality-instrumenten.html

MOSAIC-model by Experian

Experian, an international marketing firm, has developed the MOSAIC-model to be able to identify the most important target groups. The company gathers as much information on the Dutch citizens at address level as possible, including actual behaviour information and consumer patterns. Richard Webber, University College London, developed the classification. The data sources consists of demographic, socio-economic and consumer characteristics, financial behaviour, possessions, tenure and mortgage situation, characteristics of the residential area and psycho-demographic data. Experian sees socio-demographic characteristics as a solid base for the prediction of consumer behaviour. The 'hard data' play the most important role in the MOSAIC-model of Experian. The influence of the value orientation, as measured with the Rokeach clusters and provided by TNS NIPO (see also the next model), play a limited role. With cluster analysis the groups were formed on six dimensions: demographic (old versus young and family versus single), social status (high versus low income), tenure (owner-occupied versus rental), location (rural versus urban) and values (modern versus traditional). The Dutch households are clustered in ten groups and as much as 44 types. The groups have got names like 'the free spirits', 'the fighters', 'successful families', 'country family life', 'the well-to-do' and for instance 'the traditionalists'. Each group knows a number of subdividing types. There are for instance seven types that form together the group of the traditionalists (yellow, left in the centre of figure 3): conservative families (G22), young couples (G23), brave lads (G24), satisfied families (G25), orderly villagers (G26), hard workers (G27) and green enjoyers (G28). The groups and types are related to each other in the MOSAIC tree (figure 3).

Figure 3 The MOSAIC tree



Source: Flyer Experian, undated

WIN-model of TNS NIPO

The abbreviation WIN stands for: Waarden-segmenten in Nederland (Value segments in the Netherlands). TNS NIPO, a large research company in the field of marketing and opinion, developed the model in the first decade of the 21st century. The model divides respondents based on their value orientation and socio-demographic characteristics into eight groups and these groups are subsequently filled up with further information on behaviour and opinions. TNS NIPO uses the value classification that was developed by Rokeach (Rokeach Value Survey). According to Rokeach (1973), personality is a hierarchical system that consists of 18 ‘end values’ and 18 ‘instrumental values’. The end values refer to things people want to achieve like happiness, comfort and love. The instrumental values can be seen as the means to achieve the end values. Instrumental values are referring to desired behaviour as openness, honesty and reliability. Data from 1500 respondents were explored using correspondence analysis (TNS NIPO 2003). A concise description of the eight segments is provided in Table 3.

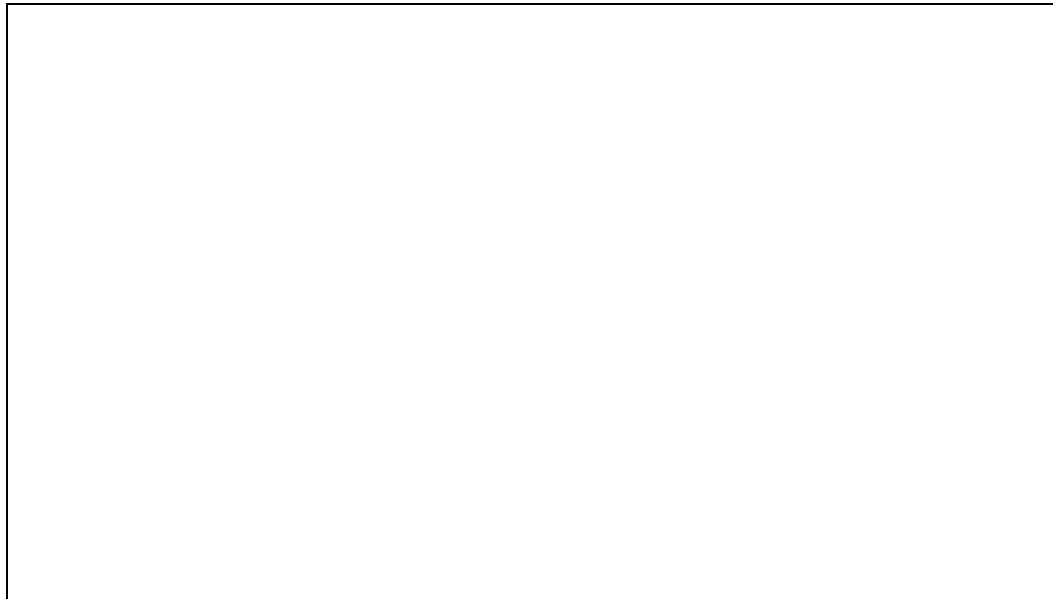
Table 3 WIN-model typology TNS NIPO

Typology	
Broad-minded group	Progressive people with a good education and many ideals, committed with society and the environment, critical, self-realization is important, pragmatic when it comes to authority.
Committed group	Attaches a great deal of importance to harmony and stability, security, with a social attitude. Sympathetic to authority, politics should take care for a more honest and harmonious society
Caring group	Are concerned about the well being of others, social. Lifestyle is sober and altruistic. Traditional values are important, positive about authorities.
Conservatives	Concentrate primarily on their own living environment, conformity. Family and friends are central, Not materialistic, but likes some luxury. Suspicious against authorities.
Hedonists	Convivial people. Pleasure and enjoyment, both physical and emotional, come first. Not so much interested in social and political issues. Indifferent to authorities.
Luxury-seekers	Very ambitious and yearn for success and recognition, achievement. Looking for a comfortable life. Interested in society, but with a negative stance towards authorities. Using facilities and in an egocentric way.
Business-like group	Ambitious and independent; focused on self-development and highly educated, hard working, autonomous and creative. Luxury, but also altruistic. Believe in progress and technology, are not impressed by authorities, well informed.
Balanced group	Are closest to the average for the population as a whole, average. Sometimes changing points of view, in the middle of all other groups.

Source: Flyer TNS NIPO, edited by the authors

The eight groups are placed in a model with two dimensions: a vertical axis with the orientation on others on top and an orientation to oneself at the bottom, and a horizontal axis with on the left the orientation towards self realisation and on the right of preservation. As diagonals TNS NIPO gives the dimensions of education (high left on top) and age (old right on top), see Figure 4.

Figure 4 The eight segments and the relation with socio-demographic data by TNS NIPO



Source: Hessing et al., 2004, p.3

Comparison of the lifestyle methods

In order to answer the first four questions, we make a concise comparison between the lifestyle methods. The four companies use the term lifestyle in a rather cautious and ambiguous way. Often they use other terms like 'perception of the environment', 'world', 'mentality' or 'social environment'. SAC, Motivaction and TNV NIPO emphasise that it is about value orientation and prefer using that term but all the companies are using the term lifestyle as well, as the methods are known by that term. Between the four models there are important differences in the sources of data they are using (table 4).

Table 4 Used data in the lifestyle models

	value orientation	data on behaviour	socio- economic data	socio- demographic data
BSR-model SmartAgent Company	x			
Mentality-model Motivaction	x		x	
Mosaic-model Experian	x	x	x	x
WIN-model TNS-NIPO	x	x		x

All companies use data on value orientation, but whether and the importance of the use of other data, differs a lot, especially whether they use behaviour (consumer information) as an ingredient for their segmentation as Experian and TNS NIPO are doing. However the use of data differs in discerning their lifestyle groups, in practice, SAC and Motivaction always combine their lifestyle research with supplementary research of other information such as socio-economic and socio-demographic data.

The models discern a different number of dimensions and groups that they use (see table 5 and 6).

Table 5 Used dimensions in the lifestyle models

	number	description dimensions
BSR-model SmartAgent Company	3	sociological; psychological, cultural
Mentality-model Motivaction	2	value orientation, socio-economic status
Mosaic-model Experian	6	income, household composition, tenure, location, age, value orientation
WIN-model TNS-NIPO	2/4	value orientation, sociological/income, age

Table 4 Used data in the lifestyle models

	number	description groups
BSR-model SmartAgent Company	6	residential perception groups
	4	perception of the environment, worlds
Mentality-model Motivaction	8	mentalities, social environments
	7	residential perception groups
Mosaic-model Experian	10	groups
	44	types
WIN-model TNS-NIPO	8	groups

The number of groups gives insight in the preciseness of the information and the measure of the possibility to go into details in the different groups: segmentation with 44 types gives more detailed information than with four groups. In segmentation with 44 types it will be possible to aim at the specific groups within a certain area, or within a certain fragment of the market, for instance a certain cost level, or housing typology such as apartments. The choices that have been made by the companies have much to do with their marketing and company philosophy. SAC diminished the number of groups from six to four to be able to communicate easier with their clients. As a representative of Experian stated: “You can chose between 1 to 16,000,000 clusters, that is the choice of the researcher” (the population of the Netherlands is about 16,000,000 people – the authors).

We cannot say anything specific about the validity and reliability of the methods as the companies only give rather general information and are keeping more detailed information for themselves as their trade secret. Of course we can understand that they take that position as they have invested money to develop the models and want to regain that money by exploiting them. All companies stated that the models have been developed with the aid of cluster analysis, that their model has been stable by tests and re-testing. Although we understand the secrecy of the companies, we would like to test the validity and stability of the models ourselves, or in a joint exercise with the companies. Experian proposed to cooperate in such an exercise in which respondents could be tested in the different models, but that is a rather complicated exercise. It requires the cooperation of a large number of households to fill in the questionnaires of SAC, as well as Motivaction as TNS NIPO (Experian is using the TNS NIPO data as well).

When in practice lifestyle research is adapted to a local situation, the companies make use of their general model and available local data, in addition SAC and Motivaction may use specific surveys under local households, either by Internet or on paper and either aiming at the total population or a representative sample. Whether the results are representative or not is difficult to judge, but it is risky to project the results on national level at the local level of 100 dwellings, without gathering other information as well.

There is no general answer to the question which relations are assumed between the distinguished lifestyles and the characteristics of the housing and environment. MOSAIC and WIN are very general models, not very much specified for the domain of housing. They provide supplementary information, but that is also the situation in the other two models, although there is at least some indication what it should mean for housing. As a matter of fact, it mostly comes down to tailor-made advice in the different situations where the involved research companies also use other available information.

As we have seen, some of the companies have changed their model in the last decade. SAC shifted from six residential perception groups to four worlds, in order to communicate easier. SAC also changed from the sociological and cultural dimension to the sociological and psychological dimension as the two most dominant dimensions determining the lifestyle, but they keep saying that it is a three dimensional model. They have added new concepts to their model and are busy to relate it to more fine tuned data about the liveability in neighbourhoods. Motivaction has almost left their specific model for the domain of housing. Motivaction has not changed the Mentality-model, although they have presented changes in the volume of the different groups over the years. Experian has only recently entered the housing research market, without changes until now. TNS NIPO has only done some research, mostly on national level and has neither changed their model. The BSR-model is most used and best known in the housing field.

Results of the case studies

We have done five case studies to answer our last research questions:

De Grote Woontest (The Big Housing Test), City Region of Rotterdam

The BSR-model has been used twice in the city region of Rotterdam, an area with about 1,1 million people, two large-scale researches about the housing preferences as well as the housing satisfaction and liveability of the residents. In 2004 13 local parties were involved and commissioned SAC, 12,000 respondents reacted. In 2008 the research was repeated, with 9 housing associations, the city of Rotterdam, the Rotterdam regional authority and 15 private developers involved, 20,000 respondents reacted. We have interviewed the researchers and eight professionals of the local parties.

Lochtenbergh, Stokkasselt, Tilburg

Housing association WonenBreda commissioned Motivaction to do a research. They wanted to have more information about the housing preferences of people that might be interested in the development of 20 new houses for sale in the rather difficult renewal area of Stokkasselt, 550 respondents reacted. We interviewed four involved professionals.

WBO Wonen Oldenzaal

Motivaction was asked by housing association WBO Wonen in Oldenzaal to conduct a lifestyle research in four neighbourhoods in Oldenzaal, a municipality with around 32,000 people, to be able to make more differentiation in their housing management. Motivaction analysed the situation, making use of socio-demographic, socio-economic and other data that are available in large datasets. After a first analysis, Motivaction visited the neighbourhoods to taste the atmosphere and consequently finished their report. We interviewed three involved professionals.

De Alliantie

The marketing and communication section of the development department of De Alliantie, a large housing association with stock in the Amsterdam and Eemvallei region, has purchased the MOSAIC-data from Experian to have more information about possible interested groups when developing new projects.

There is no specific research carried out, it is a set of data that they use to analyse the possibilities. We have interviewed one professional

City of Almere

Almere is a booming city with now 190,000 residents. The national government has asked Almere to grow in the coming decades to 350,000 residents, 'De Schaalsprong'. The project group Almere 2030 has commissioned two studies, a social agenda and a socio-economic exploration. In both studies the city worked together with Experian and used the MOSAIC-model to get a grip on the enormous amount of data. We interviewed one professional.

As we are not able to go into details in the different cases, we will sum up the most important findings.

Reason to use lifestyle research

Life style research fits in a client-oriented approach said almost all interviewees. Client-oriented is not only a noble goal, in most situations it was a necessity, in Rotterdam but also in Tilburg both in a very weak market situation. Another important reason is to improve the communication, in Oldenzaal within the housing association, but also with other local parties. In Rotterdam the joint organisation with so many parties involved, was meant to create a shared perspective of the situation. In Oldenzaal another motive was to get more insight in which groups of residents would go along with each other and which combinations would cause trouble.

Results of the lifestyle research

In almost all cases the involved professionals were satisfied with the results and they state that they have gained more insight in the orientation of the residents/clients. In Rotterdam it has also created a shared analysis and a shared vision about the policy that was needed, although there have been some critical remarks as well. The actual, material results are very different in the five cases. In Rotterdam the results of De Grote Woontest changed the city and regional housing policy on some important points. It contributed importantly to a new combined strategy for the southern parts of Rotterdam including a shift in the housing programme with a much more suburban programme for South. In Tilburg, on the contrary, the result has been nothing: the developed plan for the vacant site turned out to be a fiasco with no interest at all. The new project manager later paid no attention to it and developed a very lean and mean project for the cheapest part of the market, a real value-for-money project, but not the values where lifestyle is about. The market was so weak and tight that there was no other opportunity. The results in Oldenzaal were approved, but it also turned out that it was very difficult to use the eight groups of Motivaction in even the internal communication in the housing association. The groups were understandable for the more abstract thinkers of strategy and policy, but not easy to handle for the caretakers and client-workers. The 'back-office' professionals at De Alliantie and the city of Almere were satisfied with working with the MOSAIC-model.

Surplus value of lifestyle research

The four companies that exploit lifestyle research-models all expressed that 70-80% of the action of residents on the housing market depends on socio-economic and socio-demographic characteristics. Lifestyle gives supplementary insight, is what they say. The basis for the exploration of housing preferences should be provided in exploring these data. That is also what we have seen in the different cases: the surveys that were held were containing lots of questions that you will see in standard housing preferences or housing satisfaction research. The surplus value that comes to the fore in the different case studies is the possibility to express the psychological and socio-cultural differences in neighbourhoods

and thereby to give more colour to the picture of the neighbourhood and market. This function also helps the different involved parties to communicate easier with each other.

Conclusion and discussion

We started this research because we saw a strongly divided world in relation with the use and necessity of lifestyle research in the domain of housing. Academic researchers mostly were very critical, while professionals in practice had a very positive stance towards lifestyle research. We may conclude that a large part of the criticism still stands: there is a wide variety in definitions used, which makes it impossible to compare the results. The concept still opens up a lot of discussions which data should be included in the independent variables, and whether behaviour should be seen as an independent or a dependent variable. We are still not able to make objective comments on the stability of the different models.

But we have also gained insight in the motivation of using lifestyle research and we have concluded that lifestyle research is adding an extra layer of information on a field that is of much interest for housing and is also very urgent: the socio-cultural composition of neighbourhoods and the market. We have seen the value of lifestyle research in the communication between professionals and we may consider that also as a critique on the more standard research in housing preferences and satisfaction. We would state that it is more fruitful to mix in this discussion with professionals and to invest energy in finding answers for the expressed demands of the professionals and to work towards more accepted and shared perspective on lifestyle research.

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