



# Doom or Hope?

which stories should we tell to motivate domestic energy retrofit?

- **Part 1:** The climate story – a journey of discovery and action
- **Part 2:** Home for the Common Future (HCF)

**John Doggart**

**Yekatherina Bobrova**



# 40 years ago –

Low energy Housing became practical

**ENERGY EFFICIENT!**

**5-STAR COMFORT!**

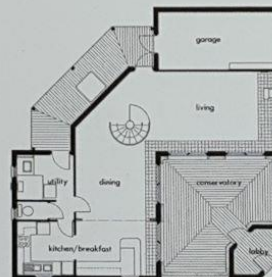
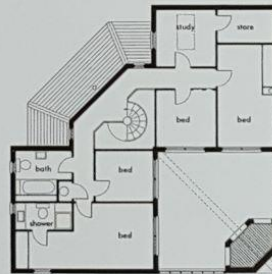
**PLANNERS HAPPY!**

FutureHome 2000 at Homeworld 1981

Futurehome, Homeworld '81 exhibition, Milton Keynes – an early example of prefabricated timber frame housing in the UK.

**WELL PUBLICISED!**

The ground and first floor plans of Futurehome, Milton Keynes, showing the relationship of the main living spaces to the conservatory.



**AFFORDABLE!**

**HIGHLY RECOMMENDABLE!**

# Three must-win battles

□ **BELIEF:** expose the size of the disaster

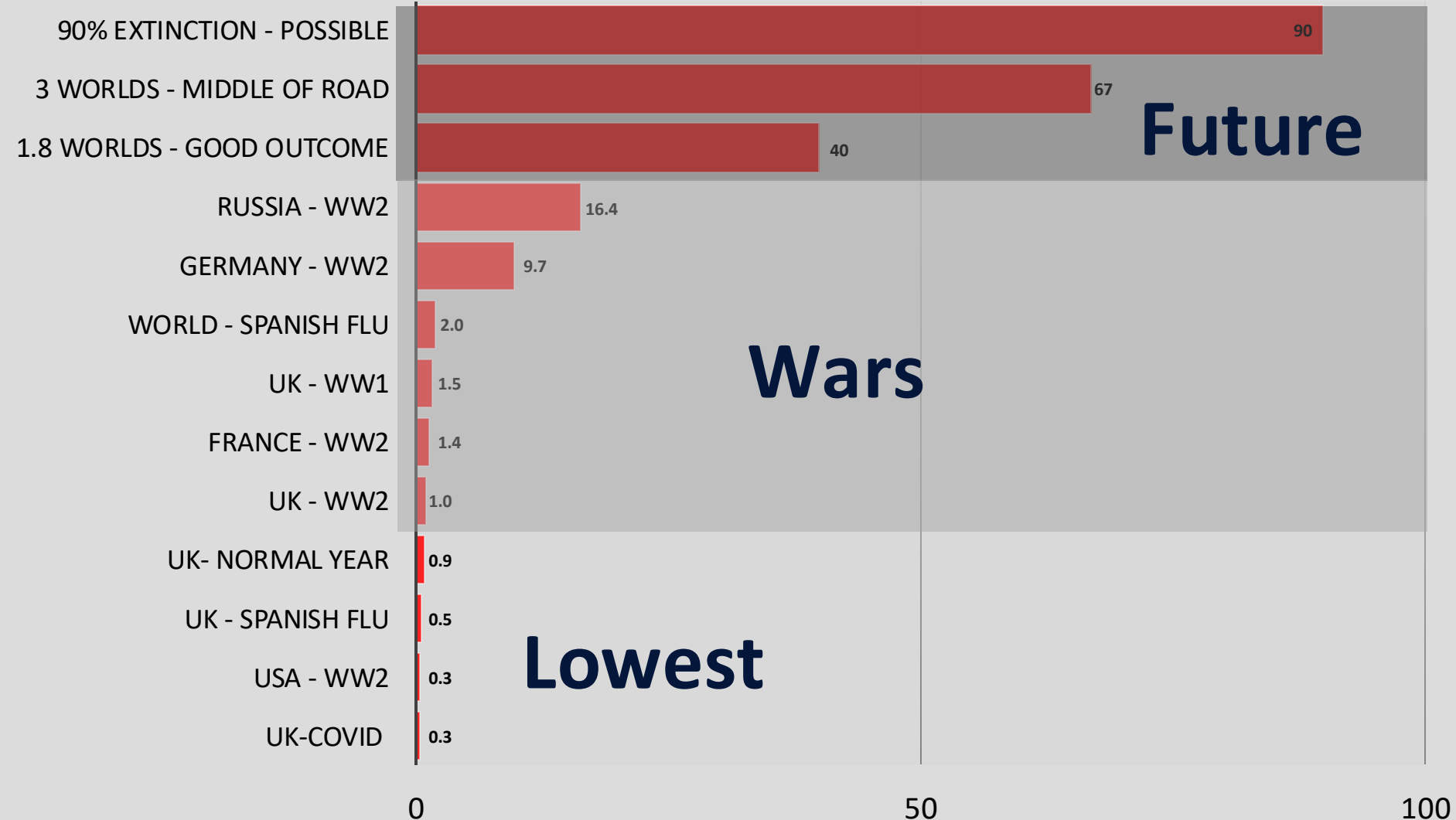
□ **TRUTH:** prevent misinformation & lies

□ **URGENCY:** act with COVID-like speed

# Historic and likely deaths (post-COVID)

Death as % of population

% Population



Future

Wars

Lowest

Death rate data -  
Wikipedia



**NOT TRUE** – The Mousetrap Thesis: "Build A Better Mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door"



**TRUE** – Stories are remembered 22 times more than any other form of communication.

# The seven stories of the world

The pathway channels to remembrance and belief

Source: Christopher Booker





# STARTERS ORDERS 7

LET'S TRY







# The winning ingredients



# Doom WITH hope

Today's dominant overstory:

*Earned Dystopia*

**FRANKENSTEIN**

Three stories against doom:

*Youth Mutiny*

**HUNGER  
GAMES**

*Techno Savior*

**IRON  
MAN**

*Global Awakening*

**EAT PRAY  
LOVE**

New narratives to reach new audiences:

*Messy Utopias*

**FUTURAMA**

*Indigenous &  
traditional story as guide*

**SAND  
TALK**

*Normalising  
sustainable activity*

**MODERN  
FAMILY**

*Action as adventure  
and community*

**LORD OF  
THE RINGS**

*Character-led  
climate action*

**ERIN  
BROCKOVICH**

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CENTRE FOR RESEARCH INTO  
ENERGY DEMAND SOLUTIONS



Fast-tracking  
Low-Energy Use  
via Retrofit



**Yekatherina Bobrova**

# Home for the Common Future (HCF)

Bringing hope: the role of emotions in telling  
stories to motivate domestic energy retrofit



UK Research  
and Innovation



Engineering and  
Physical Sciences  
Research Council



Economic  
and Social  
Research Council

# Retrofit: cognition vs emotion

- The promotion of energy retrofit to homeowners is an important policy strategy to reduce operational energy use in dwellings and mitigate climate change.
- We typically focus on the **cognitive** (logical) aspects to motivate retrofit decisions, such as savings on energy bills and health considerations.
- What about **emotional** aspects of decision-making about one's **home**?



Figure 2. Word cloud of the associations with the word home in the cases



# Home-meanings framework

- To encompass both the emotional and cognitive aspects of energy retrofit decisions, we developed a **home-meanings** framework around the concept of **perezhivanie** (emotional and cognitive experience).

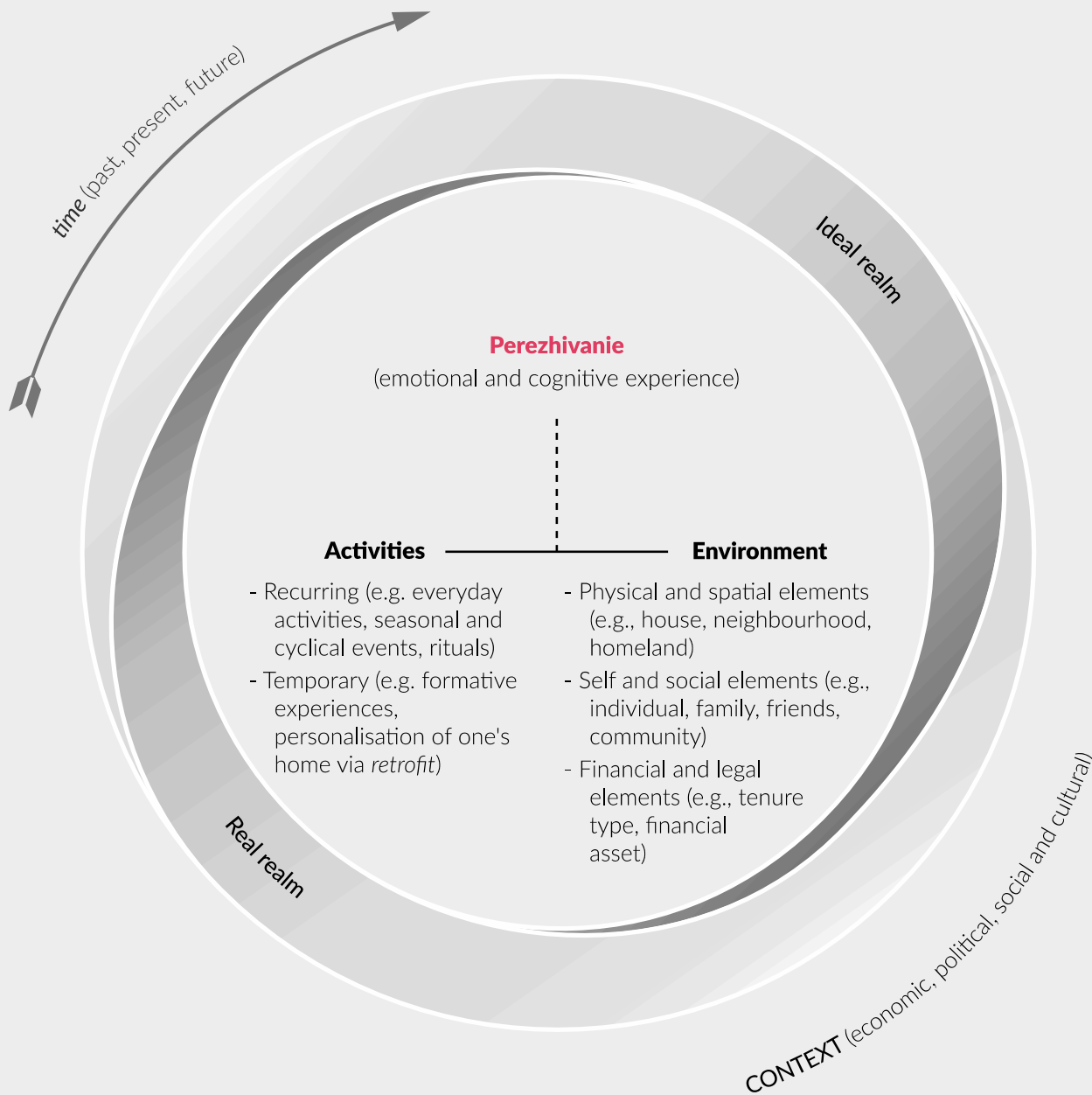


Figure 4. Home-meanings framework

Vygotsky, L. S., 1971. *The psychology of art*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

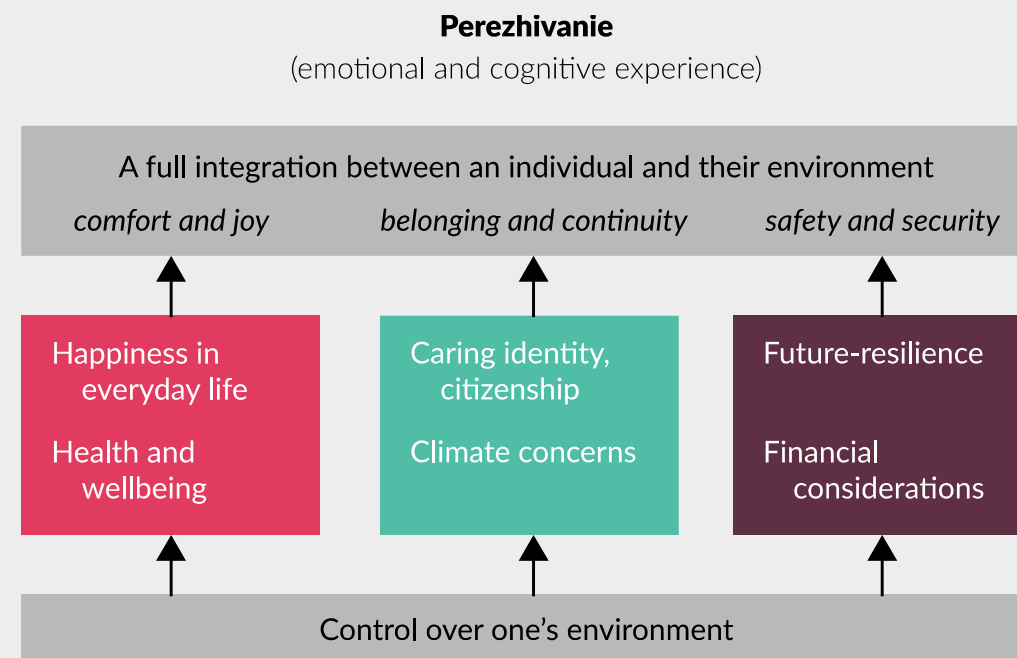
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# Benefits of low-carbon homes

We identified five themes of **positive experiences** associated with low-carbon dwellings:

- i. Control over one's environment
- ii. Happiness in everyday life & Health and well-being
- iii. Caring identity, citizenship & Climate concerns
- iv. Future-resilience & Financial considerations
- v. Full integration between and individual and their environment



**Figure 5.** Five themes of positive emotional and cognitive experiences associated with low-carbon dwellings



# Control over one's environment

C7: “Overheating is always a shading problem. The way you **control** it, you have more shades in the day, and you open your windows in the night. That is how you keep it cold.

You can see [showing monitoring data] we went up to 30°C because that is how I wanted it. But then I had enough. So, I closed that and opened the windows in the night. Then it didn't warm up that much anymore. So, it's really up to me. To be honest, I love it, I really, really love it. So, it's up to you but in a Passivhaus **you can control**”.

# Health and well-being Happiness in everyday life

C7: “When it comes to **energy efficiency**, which, actually, I don’t think many people understand that is also a **part of feeling cosy**. That you have good air in the morning, you don’t have draughts, you have a constant 20-22°C... it is quiet... I think it’s a part of feeling cosy, for me at least”.



# Climate concerns

## Caring identity

C9: “**Future**, secure. It’s all about the future, that’s how we see it. We don’t do this for us, we are not doing this for ourselves to be honest. Because in my lifetime, what I am doing now, has no impact on my lifetime. **It’s all about the future.**”

# Financial considerations

## Future-resilience

C4: “I like the idea of being **self-sufficient**. The fact that I got a solar panel, helps me to feel that.”

C6: “Even on the coldest winter day, we know we can heat the house with the power cut for three days in snow [because of the configuration of the on-site heating technologies]”.

# Full integration between an individual and their environment

## *Joy, happiness and comfort*

C1: “It is like **the best house I’ve ever lived in** [laughing]... in the kind of environment — thermal, light, finishes...”

## *Belonging and continuity*

C4: “I’ve **put my stamp on it**. I have certainly not built it, but I have, to a certain extent, created it”.

## *Safety and security*

C8: “... **economic security in the future** ... Certain things are guaranteed that you are going to have to pay for. No matter where you are in life. From council tax to energy bills and to utilities. And as you do get to fixed incomes, you get older, it’d be nice to mitigate some of those costs.”



# HCF heuristic

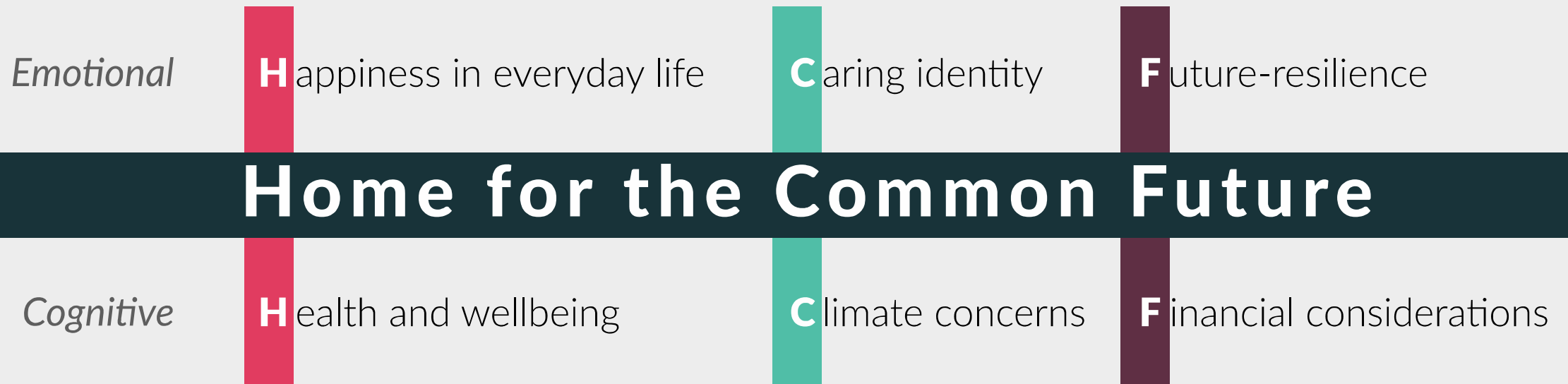
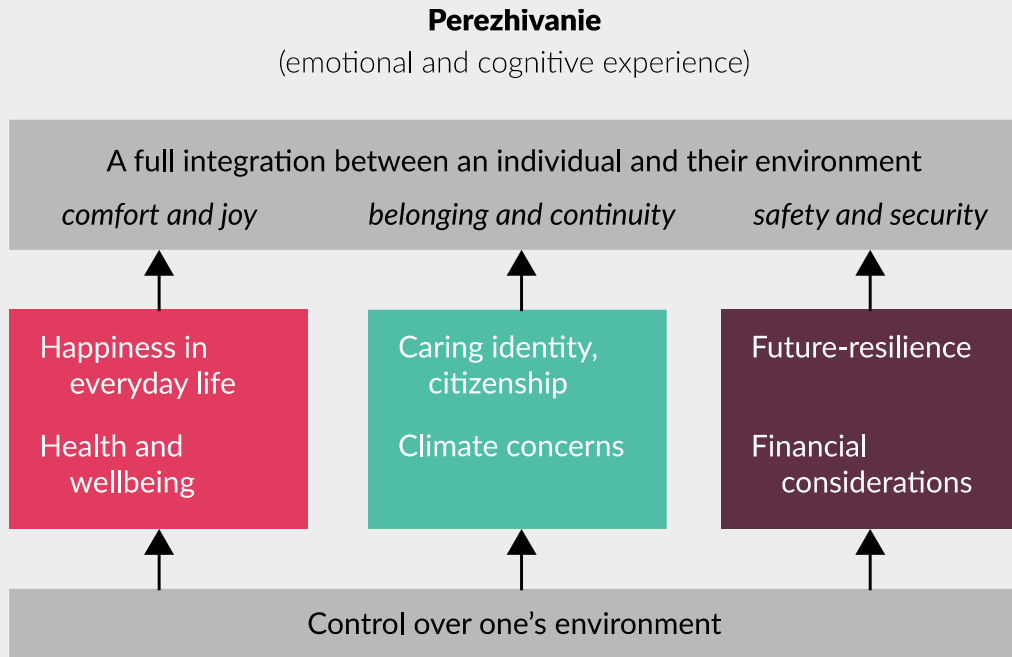
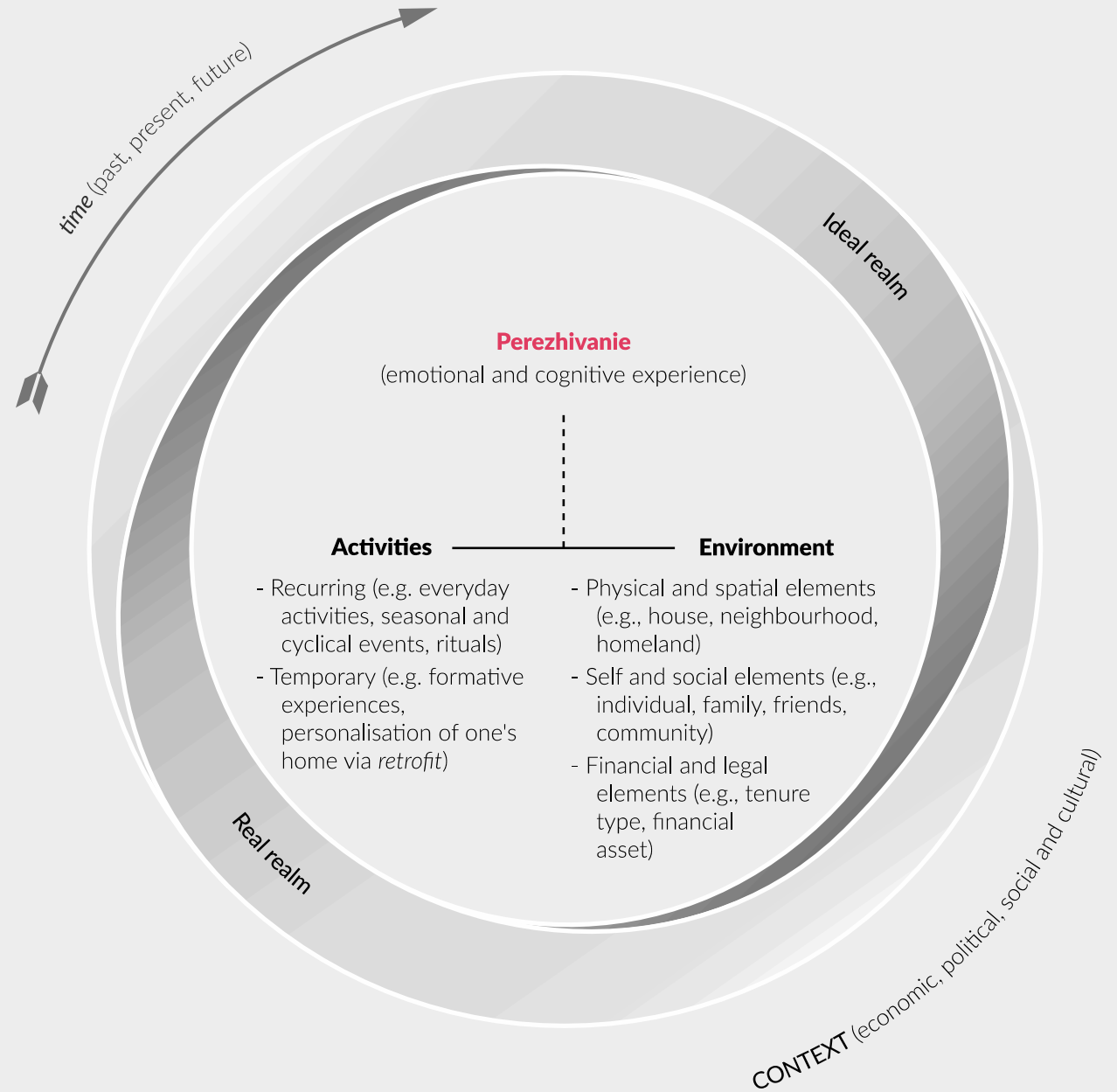


Figure 6. Home for the Common Future (HCF) heuristic to promote low-carbon dwellings

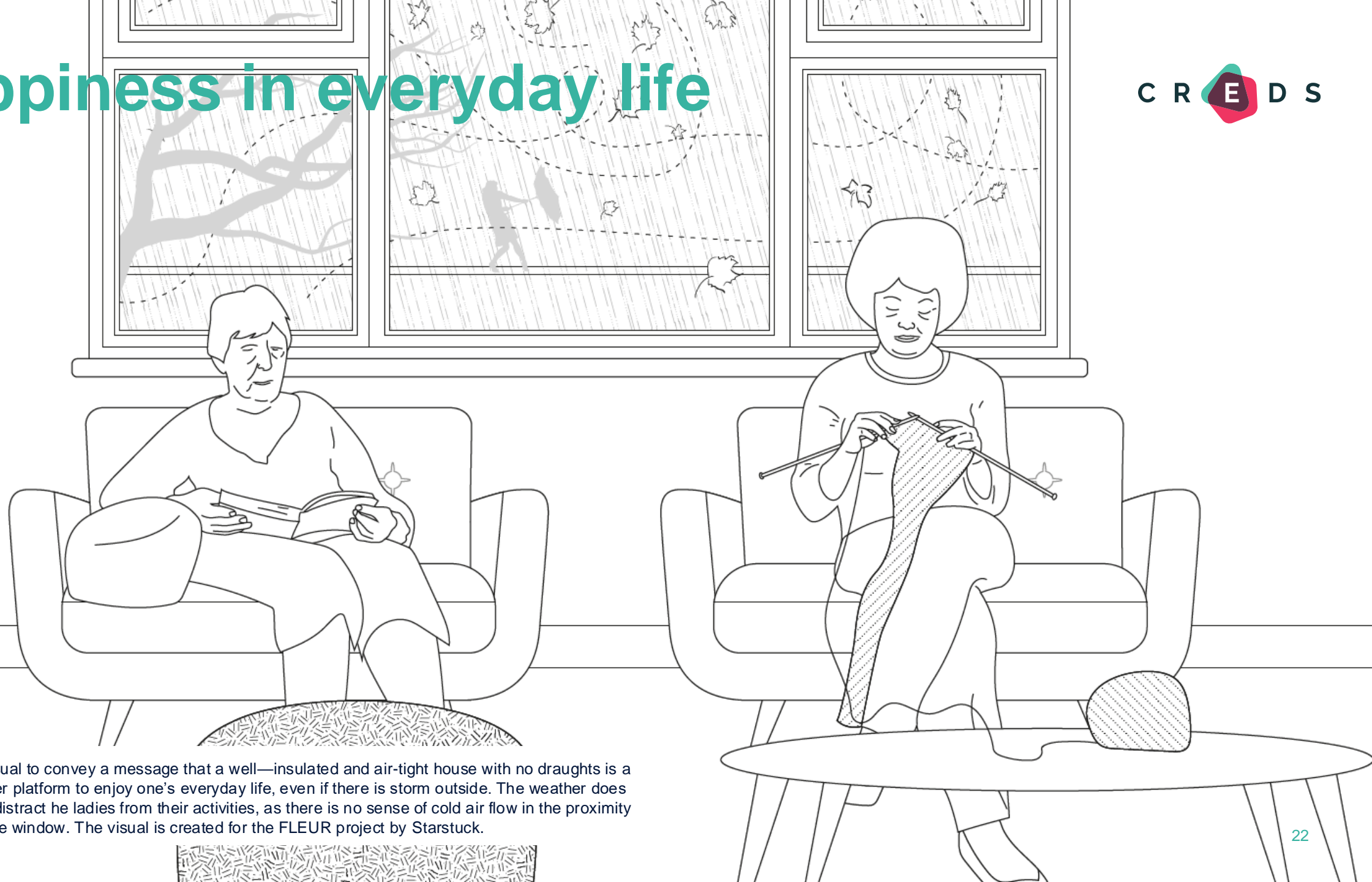


**Figure 5.** Five themes of positive emotional and cognitive experiences associated with low-carbon dwellings



**Figure 4.** Home-meanings framework

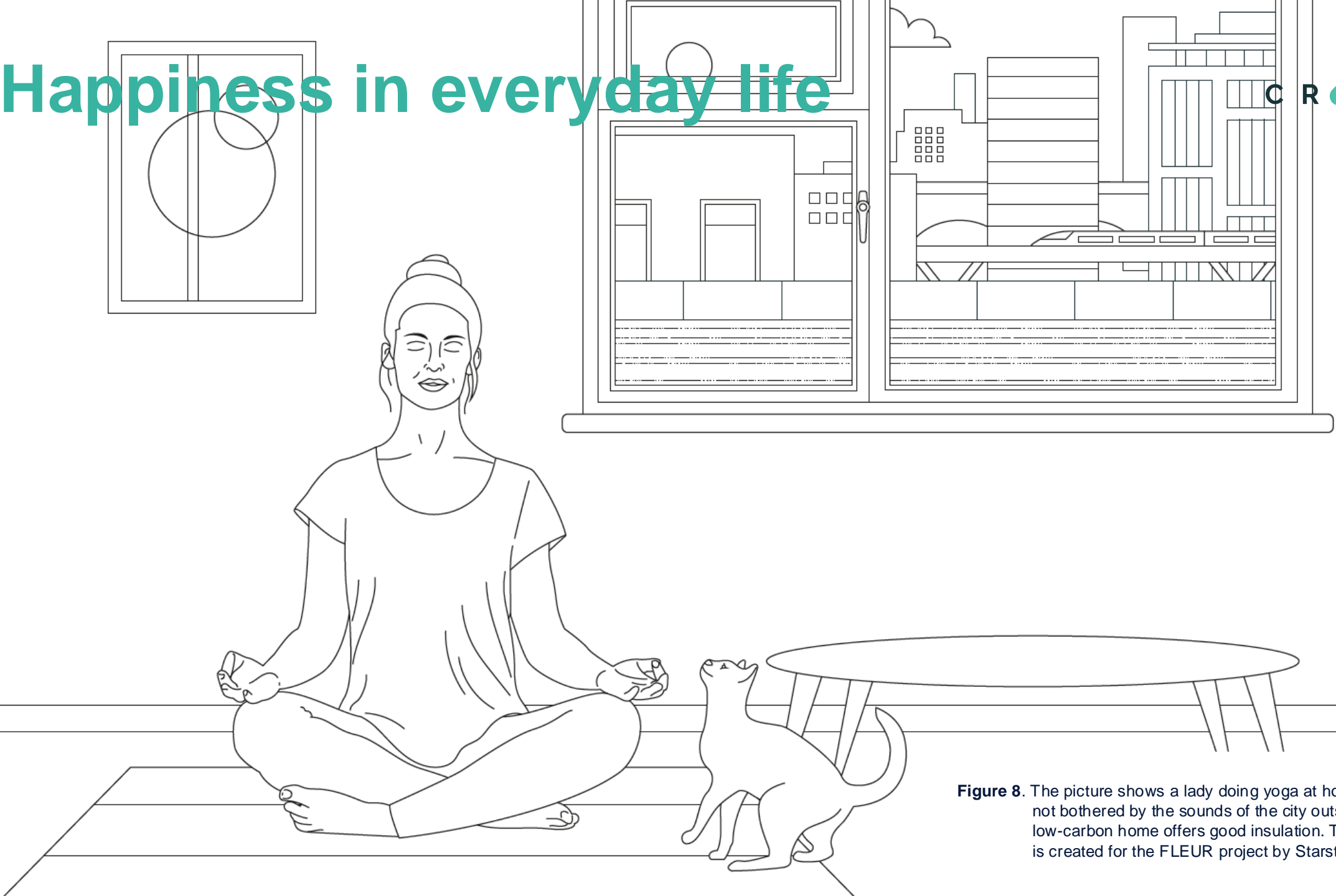
# Happiness in everyday life



**Figure 7.** A visual to convey a message that a well—insulated and air-tight house with no draughts is a better platform to enjoy one’s everyday life, even if there is storm outside. The weather does not distract the ladies from their activities, as there is no sense of cold air flow in the proximity of the window. The visual is created for the FLEUR project by Starstuck.

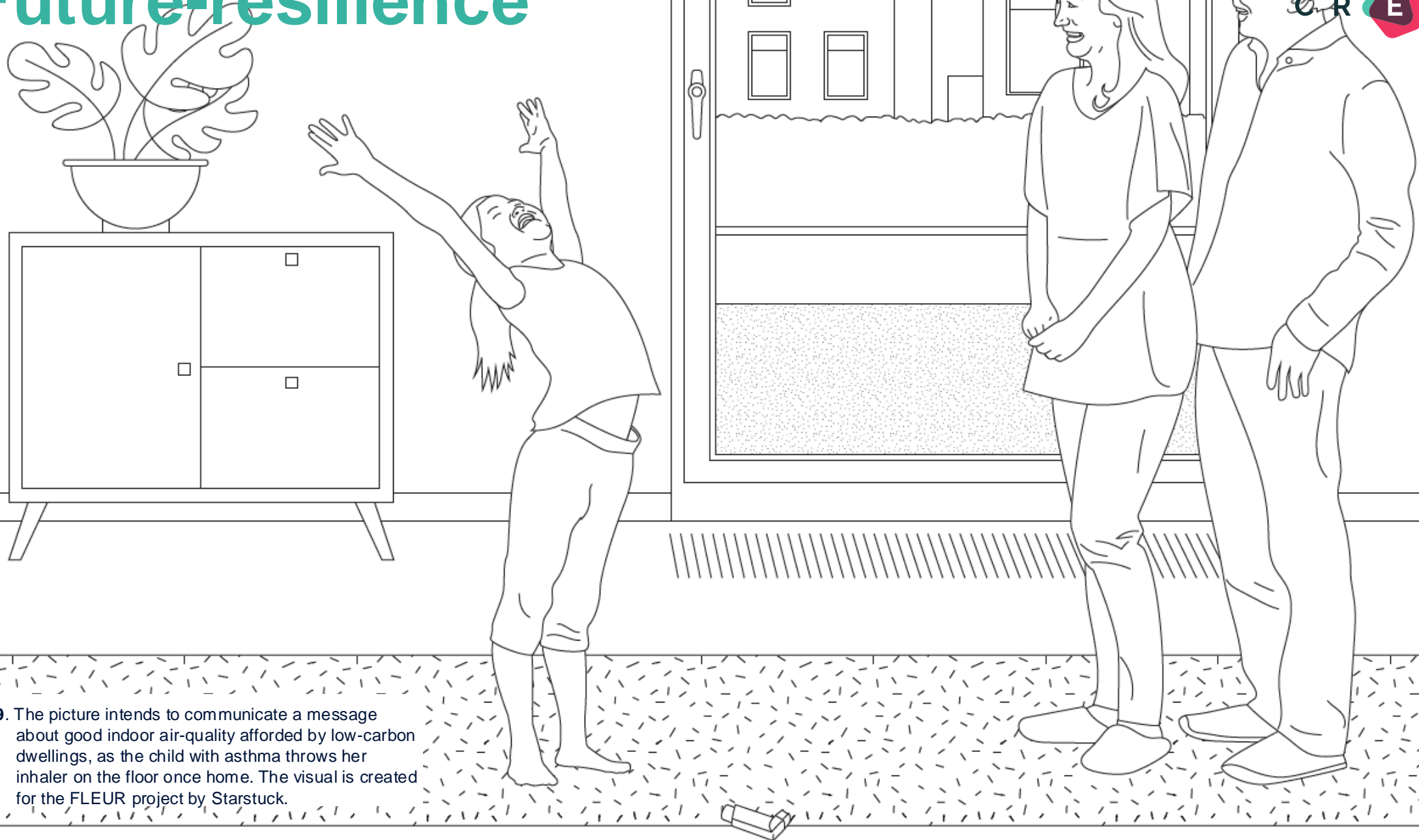


# Happiness in everyday life



**Figure 8.** The picture shows a lady doing yoga at home. She is not bothered by the sounds of the city outside, as her low-carbon home offers good insulation. The visual is created for the FLEUR project by Starstuck.

# Future-resilience



**Figure 9.** The picture intends to communicate a message about good indoor air-quality afforded by low-carbon dwellings, as the child with asthma throws her inhaler on the floor once home. The visual is created for the FLEUR project by Starstuck.

# Caring identity



**Figure 11.** The picture shows homeowners with their guests in front of a photovoltaic monitor. The owners are proudly explaining their experience with the PV. The visual is created for the FLEUR project by Starstuck.



# Retiree pension pot lump sum

WP22\_ind: I like the retiree, retiree pension pot lump sum, worried about getting colder in their own home. I'm going to get weaker and more sedentary, so, I **am planning for the future**.

...

WP21\_dem: Yes, and that sort of connects to... You're changing your identity, going from a "worker" to a "retiree". And, so, capturing the ideas and changes that experience will bring to you and *what positive things you'll get as a result of that change*. That seems like a useful thing.

...

WP20\_aca: Yes, I think, having lower running costs is a value for them. They are probably **scared of having a lower budget...**

...

WP20\_aca: Yeah, so you're not making it more complicated, you're... you feel greener, **you feel more related to the future**, because you have something that **is not going to be obsolete**, but you don't have difficult new practices to learn.

# Summary

## General

- Use **common frame of reference** to understand the diversity of benefits of low-carbon dwellings
- Use both **cognitive** reasoning and **emotional** reasoning
- **Home-meanings** to understand retrofit motivations

## Specific

- **Home for the Common Future (HCF)**
- Cognitive experience: **H**Health and wellbeing, **C**limate concerns, **F**inancial considerations
- Emotional experience: **H**appiness in everyday life, **C**aring identity, **F**uture-resilience

# Open access journal publication

**Bobrova, Y., Papachristos, G., Chiu, L.F., Tikhomirova, S., & Coon, T.M. 2024. Home for the Common Future (HCF): The use of home-meanings to promote domestic energy retrofit. *Energy Research & Social Science*: 107, 103358. doi: [10.1016/j.erss.2023.103358](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2023.103358)**

## Blog

<https://www.creds.ac.uk/the-place-of-emotions-in-motivating-domestic-energy-retrofit/>

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Original research article

Home for the Common Future (HCF): The use of home-meanings to promote domestic energy retrofit

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ABSTRACT

The promotion of energy retrofit to homeowners is an important policy strategy to reduce operational energy consumption in dwellings and mitigate climate change. Energy research and policy typically focus on the cognitive aspects to motivate retrofit decisions, such as savings on energy bills and health considerations. However, the focus appears to have neglected the emotional aspects of how homeowners themselves make sense of the benefits of low-carbon dwellings.

To encompass both the emotional and cognitive aspects of energy retrofit decisions, the authors develop a *home-meanings framework* around the concept of *perezhivanie* (emotional and cognitive experience). This framework is grounded in our theoretical construction by drawing upon current literature of home-meanings and energy retrofit decisions. The framework is applied to the case of energy retrofit decisions in the UK, where the authors explore the emotional and cognitive aspects of energy retrofit decisions in the UK, where the authors explore the emotional and cognitive aspects of energy retrofit decisions in the UK.



# Future steps

## Communication strategies

- Stories, eg sand talk, modern family
- visuals, eg Danish concept of hygge

## More diverse set of group and contexts

- currently, UK-based, home-meanings from white males in Western world

## Market segmentation

- household lifecycle stages\*: (i) a young

household, (ii) a household with young children, (iii) a household with teenage children and (iv) an empty-nester household.

## Formation of negative experiences

- *Some associations from case studies:* “small windows, lack of beauty, of all of the quirkiness ironed out of a house, devoid of personality, devoid of beauty”

\*Categorisation of household lifecycle stages is taken from: Munro, M. and Leather, P. (2000) Nest-building or investing in the future? Owner-occupiers' home improvement behaviour. *Policy & Politics* 28(4): pp. 511–526.

# Impact already!

## Tam Landells of Ratliff/Landells

- £25k Creative Catalyst Challenge Fund from Creative England – 2024 – March 2025
- Home the Common Future consultancy

## Ellora Coupe of HerRetrofitSpace

- [www.herretrofitspace.com](http://www.herretrofitspace.com) – Empowering women to create healthy homes.
- Interested in creating a marketing campaign



**Her**  
**Retrofit**  
**Space**

# Thank you for listening

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