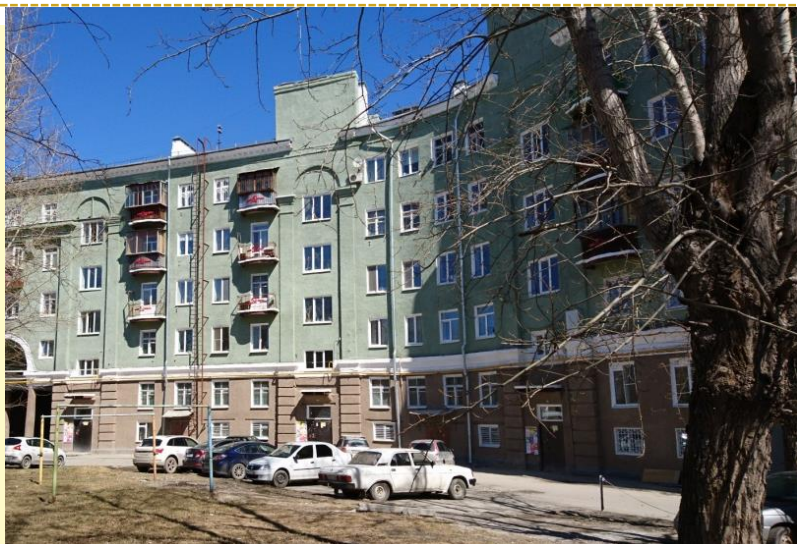


The symbolic meanings of housing in post-industrial Russian neighbourhoods: 'Stalin-era' versus 'Khrushchev-era' flats



Elite Stalin-era housing 'Nobel Nest', Yekaterinburg , 2018



Khrushchev-era housing, Yekaterinburg, 2017

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Conference 'Post-Socialist (dis)Orders' 2021, Tartu, Estonia

Type of housing and identities?



- The socio-economic characteristics of people who lived in apartments **in the 1980s are identical to those of the 1990s** (Krotov, Buravoy & Lytkina, 2003)
- But how **has it changed in the 21st century of post-industrial transformation?**
- Framework: **the identity and material culture as intertwined** (McCarthy, 2020)

An Ethnographic Case-Study of the post-Industrial Neighbourhoods



- Sample: **two post-industrial neighbourhoods** of Yekaterinburg and Moscow
 - **Dramatic cases of changes in materialities** and social relations because of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the resultant deindustrialization
- The empirical base consists of more than **35 interviews and more than 40 sessions of observations** fixed in research diaries and numerous photos and videos
 - Biographical interviews were conducted with residents of the areas, who are **workers or former factory workers and new residents** of the neighbourhoods (middle classes - creative workers, office workers etc)

Type of housing as theme for analysis



- I applied the **thematic analysis**
 - the database was split into the 2 main types of Soviet housing – Stalin-era (1 theme) and Khrushchev-era (2 theme)
 - split the groups of informants based on the type of housing



Elite Stalin-era housing 'Nobel Nest', Yekaterinburg ,2017



Khrushchev-era housing, Yekaterinburg ,2018

'State-led Gentrification' versus 'Culture-led Gentrification'



- The **gentrification** includes
 - **replacing** the industrial working classes **in the case of Moscow state-led gentrification**
 - the **co-existence of the industrial working class** and middle classes in the **cultural-led gentrification in Yekaterinburg** (Vanke, Polukhina, 2018)
- The **policy makers** by demolishing, constructing and maintaining certain housing stock, **attracted the middle classes**

'State-led Gentrification' in Moscow case



'Culture-led Gentrification' in Yekaterinburg



'Stalin-era' versus 'Khrushchev-era' flats



- *Stalin-era buildings*, constructed from the early 1920s to the late 1950s
 - more **comfortable** and were designed for individual families
 - framed the main streets, demonstrating the grandeur of the **Soviet system with their luxurious facades** (The architecture of the Stalin-era, 2010)
 - the inhabitants of these elite houses were **mostly high-ranking officials**
- *Khrushchevki* constructed in the middle of the 20th century
 - provided a common standard of living, giving people the **opportunity to establish their own personal life**
 - a project of global **typification**
 - liberal changes were called the period of **the 'Thaw' and De-Stalinization** (Varga-Harris, 2006)

Stalin-era housing as symbol



- Our informant discovers the conflict of classes:
 - *‘And the Nobel Nest [...] when you look from the barracks of the workers’ settlement [...] it looks very tall, very powerful, very beautiful. [...] The inhabitants of the Nobel Nest came out against their neighbours, ‘what is this nonsense going on under our windows?!’ And there was another group, who came out and said: ‘In general, all of you in the Noble Nest are freaks! We are totally tired of you! Everything in your life is based on favours’ [M, 35 year old, Museum Worker, Yekaterinburg]*
- Workers still **perceive elite Stalin-era housing as unachievable for them due to the social distance as well as the cost and inherited principles for moving**

Stalin housing as art & functional object



- Perceived by **the middle classes as art objects, prestigious housing for living in contemporary times**
- For workers is perceived as a socially different type of housing. But ordinary Stalin housing **is habituated mainly functionally, without the values of the neoclassical style**
 - *‘I love high ceilings. When I visit someone who lives in a modern apartment, I do not have enough air. I love my apartment. It is warm in winter, cool in summer. I have a large bath, I can lie full length. Everyone is amazed by the stucco. I also love this stucco. But it’s difficult to clean’ [F, 59 year old, Plant Worker, Yekaterinburg].*

Khrushchevka as art object



- *'It is super interesting to me that such artifacts remain. [...] And from 1958 to 1991 Soviet modernism, as it is now called, appeared. I heard this term last year, 'sovmod' [Soviet modernism]. This is all such a continuation, in fact, of constructivism, only in more rigid forms, it is purely functional - to live and that is all. And they do not change. [...] 'Khrushchevkas' are Soviet modernism, that is, no decorations, absolutely no decorations at all' [M, 35 year old, Museum Worker, Yekaterinburg].*

Khrushchevka as ordinary housing



- *'Well, it's a typical Khrushchev-era building. If you arrange everything wisely, there is enough space'* [M, 29 year old, Plant Worker, Yekaterinburg]
- *'How can I describe it? 'Khrushchevka'. What else can I say? I've done some renovations'* [M, 42 year old, Plant Worker, Yekaterinburg]

Similarities between interiors



Elite Stalin-era flat, informant - psychologist, female



Khrushchev-era flat, informant - worker, male

Housing and Identities



- Both types of Soviet housing attractive for living
 - workers perceive as **part of everyday life**
 - creative groups as part of the **historical heritage**
- Housing
 - as a symbol of a certain class is produced by policy makers
 - habituated by residents and re-signified during habituation
- Residents of **the same type of housing are diverse**
 - but symbolically they reproduce certain class markers, symbolic meanings, cultural practices, and lifestyles
- Material culture and housing, therefore, can be understood as the **relationship between the housing as object and actors** as residents and policy makers who **create identities based on practices and class symbols**

Sites of the projects



- field-notes.tilda.ws
- present-past.ru
- <https://foi.hse.ru/openrussia/sverdlovskaya-workers>

Thank you for attention

