

Title: The moral economy of comfortable living: Negotiating individualism and collectivism through housing in Belgrade

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Abstract: Comfort in the home depends on material and social connections. From pipes and wires to legal and financial contracts, these connections shape expectations of what comfortable living is and how it can be achieved. These connections create a moral economy that is based on the materiality of housing, and that is revealed as individual households pursue comfortable conditions in reference to external criteria and constraints. This paper explores the moral economy of comfort through an ethnography of one apartment block in Belgrade. The building, built in the 1970s, is an archetype of the modern, consumer lifestyle that Yugoslav market socialism promised to deliver to its citizens. Today the memories of a socialist moral economy are still present in the fabric of the building and the values of the residents who struggle to maintain their homes as individual spaces of comfort within a capitalist economy. This case shows the changing legitimacy of the pursuit of comfort and the ongoing tension to manage individual and collective gain.

Key words: Material Culture, Post-socialism, Serbia, materiality, urban anthropology, infrastructure, comfort

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The moral economy of comfortable living: Negotiating individualism and collectivism through housing in Belgrade

This article is about the difficulties of creating the right kind of home in contemporary Belgrade—understood through the term '*komfor*'. Directly translated as comfort, the term indicates domestic ease enabled by technology as Shove (2003) describes, but also signifies modernity, urbanity and a proper way to live. In socialist Yugoslavia *komfor* was typified by a flat in a modern apartment block with conveniences like central heating, aesthetic embellishments like parquet flooring, and secure tenure as achieved through the socialist housing system. Comfortable living in such flats was used by the state as evidence that its form of market socialism was delivering a modern standard of living to its citizens (Kulić et al., 2012), despite the shortages in supply which meant only some, typically the urban professional class, achieved this.¹ Viewed retrospectively, the socialist-era moral economy of housing seems straightforward: socialist citizens fulfilled their part of the social contract through labour, and expected the socialist economy to deliver modern housing as a reward. This simplification overlooks the shortages and different forms of housing that Belgraders lived in. Nonetheless recollections of this former social contract still occur in conversations about housing today and notions of *komfor* continue to colour expectations of what kind of home a Belgrader should be able to have and what sort of contribution to society should secure it.

Interpretations of what constitutes comfortable living vary. For my informants, who had seen the end of socialism and the trauma of war, discussions about homes referenced housing shortages, overcrowding, sharing assets amongst kin, the split between those

who had and had not benefitted from socialist housing policy, the struggle to find a decent home within an unregulated construction sector, or to access it using new uncertain financial products. From these conversations *komfor* seemed to mean more than a sense of modern and urban housing, but also stability and legitimacy. A home was comfortable when you knew the power would come on and that it could be kept warm and clean; that running costs were manageable and delivered a tangible service rather than disappearing into an unaccountable state or commercial organisation; when your right to occupy it or benefit from its economic value was recognised by neighbours, by extended family, or the state. These conversations suggest that when people articulate and act on their individual right to be comfortable in the home they create collectives that legitimise this expectation and can grant this right. Pursuing *komfor* through socialist and post-socialist eras reveals changes in what individuals expect of the collectives that can help them achieve adequate living conditions and shows shifting ideas of moral economies of housing.

Thompson (1970: 50) explains that the contours of a moral economy can be seen when two sentiments are widely held: a need to protect traditional rights that are being transgressed, and a sense that achieving this objective is in line with popular attitudes and has the consensus of a wider community. In this paper I consider the right to a certain type of comfortable living as a moral economy that developed under Yugoslav self-management and which is evolving today as Serbia's capitalist economy takes shape. I focus on socialist-era apartment blocks in Belgrade and ask two questions. First, given that only a proportion of the city's inhabitants could access this style of living, how was the right to *komfor* established during the late socialist period in Belgrade, and, second,

how is this moral economy of housing changing as capitalism takes shape? I base my study on a Yugoslav apartment block 'Number 19', one of five studied during my 12-month period of fieldwork in Belgrade. I draw on interviews with 17 residents of the building, as well as archive research on the building's construction. My ethnography highlights the role played by the materiality of this tower block in both individual and collective meaning making. I show how the building itself has contributed to residents' understandings initially of Yugoslav market socialism and currently of Serbian capitalism and how it has enabled or undermined individual households to see themselves as part of collectives, revealing a tension between individual projects and collective ones. Studying this ethnographically allows me to extend Thompson's argument by looking at the multiple moral economies that co-existed within a common moral frame of Yugoslav socialism and contemporary Serbian capitalism moving towards a common good life for consumer citizens.

Understanding comfort

Comfort in the home depends on connections to society. These connections are social; they are the expectations we hold about standards of living as well the economic and legal contracts, and family and civic relations through which we keep our homes provisioned with the resources that support our expectations of comfortable living. These connections are also material; they are the pipes and wires and that make a home warm, lit and healthy. Comfort has been used as an analytical concept by Shove (2003) to link evolutions in science, technology and corporate influence with practices of keeping warm and clean at home. I use comfort similarly to link individual domestic practices to broader societal trends, however I do so to understand the moral economies

created through the pursuit of comfort. In Belgrade the material and social infrastructures providing comfort in the home have been subject to disruption. War and systemic change means comfort in the home is not a given, but is something to be pursued and maintained.

The form of comfort I am interested in understanding in Belgrade is based on an archetype of a socialist apartment which featured in my informants' conversations. This archetypical flat is from the 1960s or 70s, when most apartment blocks were constructed, well-built, with a modern kitchen and bathroom. This archetype is partly created in opposition to another archetype, the self-built house. Private property was not banned in socialist Yugoslav, and, with socialist apartments in short supply, Yugoslavs moving to the city often resorted to building their own homes in agricultural land skirting Belgrade (Saveljić, 1988). The self-built house relied on the homeowner's ability to provision it with water, energy and canalisation, but the socialist apartment was supplied with these conveniences through city utilities. The self-built house existed despite official housing policy, whereas the socialist apartment was celebrated as the outcome of socialist policy and a just reward for citizens contributing to socialist progress towards modernity. The archetypical apartment signified a particular form of the good life created through Yugoslavia's market socialism which was lived and experienced by a section of the population and continues to affect perceptions of housing today.

Comfort sits at the nexus between individual effort and external support or constraint. This is a common theme in material culture studies of the home starting with Bourdieu's (1977) concept of *habitus* and his argument that the material record shows how

individual values within homes are shaped by collective values but also forms these collective values. Within this work there is a split between focusing on the production of the built environment to understand how ideology takes material form, and focusing on consumption to understand how the use of the home responds to social relationships and change not prescribed in its design. Miller (1988) has argued that in complex industrial societies, residents are so removed from housing production that how they consume reveals more about contemporary social relations. However, ethnographies of post-socialism have argued that the design and production of housing is important to study because state socialism was a project of materiality and explicit in its ambition to use 'the materiality of dwelling to produce new social forms and moral values' (Humphrey, 2005: 39–40). This design did shape social life, Humphrey argues, and continues to shape shared values today. Ethnographies of 'byt' or everyday life in Socialist states have shown that although the home was targeted for ideological indoctrination, it was also a space of resistance (cf (Buchli, 1999) and that while socialist states had similar designs for housing to play an ideological role, there was no simple relationship between the home and socialism either in terms of indoctrination or resistance. Instead homes, even mass housing produced through identical Eastern bloc production processes, were spaces in which local forms of socialism were shaped by both state and citizen in reference to longer historical trends and cultural specificities (Crowley and Reid, 2002).

The lens of comfort helps investigate the specific associations between material form and living conditions created in socialist contexts. It shows how these associations are evolving today as political and economic liberalisation targets the materiality of

socialism. One informant discussing the liberalisation of municipal utilities explained to me that 'central heating was the measure of higher *komfor*. But now if you have central heating, with the possibility of controlling [how much you use and spend] then you will have *komfor*'. For her, *komfor* should now reflect free market individualism. Changing from a rated public supply of heat to a metered commercial supply would disentangle her flat's warmth from socialist property relations and put her more in control. This sentiment resonates with other ethnographic studies on post-socialist liberalisation which have shown that changes in state utilities have profound effects on residents' understanding of the social contract and their roles in the new economy (cf Alexander, 2008 on water; Collier, 2012 on district heating; and Humphrey, 2003 on electricity). Socialist-era housing has become the material through which people negotiate new civic responsibilities and struggle with questions of 'legitimacy' and the correct social order (Alexander and Buchli, 2007). Residents' expected living standards are intrinsically bound up with understandings of which groups and collectives can provide these (Alexander 2007). *Komfor* can therefore be used as a lens to understand the shifting moral economies that are deeply embedded in the materiality of Yugoslav housing.

Establishing moral economies of *komfor*

Housing design, construction and distribution in Yugoslavia shared some aspects with housing in other socialist states in the eastern bloc. Housing design was used by the state to target everyday life and to inculcate citizens in collectivism and classlessness on the path to the socialist future. Housing construction and allocation was carried out through the state or workplace and despite ambitions for universal provision, the shortage of housing meant the allocation system rewarded certain groups of society (see Alexander

this vol). However, housing in Yugoslavia was also unique because of the self-management governance structures used by the Communist Party. From 1953 residents living in existing apartment buildings had the right to manage their own buildings (Peselj, 1959: 249), and the Communist Party created a new form of 'socially-owned' property, which was neither state nor privately owned (Mikelić and Schoen, 2005: 18). Furthermore, individual houses remained in private ownership and the Yugoslav government used market mechanisms to deliver new housing; socially-owned construction firms acted as developers pre-selling flats to firms or individuals to finance new developments and individuals could access credit lines to buy new or existing flats, or build their own homes. Therefore Yugoslavia's housing system was broadly embedded in socialist social relations, but also incorporated a private market.

The market in the Yugoslav socialist economy played a role in creating socialist consumerism, a key aspect in the moral economy of *komfor*. By the 1960s, consumer culture had become politically important for the Yugoslav Communist Party to demonstrate the success of its economic model and secure legitimacy from its population (Hyder Patterson, 2011). The Yugoslav system was successful in perpetuating the idea that a comfortable, consumerist life-style was a realistic goal for all citizens, even if the consumer goods available remained unaffordable for many, as Hyder Patterson (2011) has argued. Movement and consumerism were key aspects of Yugoslavia's culture which, Bracewell (2006: 250) argues, simultaneously created 'a desire for western products with a lasting suspicion of market forces, risk and social differentiation'. Citizens took a certain pride in the Yugoslav brand of market socialism and tolerated the attempt to build it, as long as the state tolerated their trips into

Western Europe to get the items not yet available at home. Bracewell argues that this translated into 'active support for the political and ideological compromises entailed by "market socialism"'. This meant consumer comforts in the home could be considered to be socially acceptable, even within a society that looked down on private wealth creation and personal enrichment (see Zukin, 1975: 234 on scepticism towards enrichment).

There was a tension during this period between the official narrative articulating Yugoslavia's drive towards a socialist egalitarian society, and realising this vision through consumerism. Zukin (1975) refers to concerns held by Yugoslav sociologists that self-management structures were deflecting citizens' participation away from political engagement with task of building socialism, and onto the narrow concerns of domesticity and consumerism. Housing in particular was critiqued as establishing a domain for self-interest at the expense of the Yugoslav social project, as demonstrated by a sociological study of the period, which described a contemporary social type who

'does not attend Party meetings any more, but she is active in the wider management of the household [...] [S]he is much more interested in locking the doors than in changes in the federation..., she also does not know who the commune president is, but she is greatly disturbed about the question of construction near her home.' (Zukin, 1975: 121)

Concern was also raised by social scientists working in Belgrade's Office of Urban Planning who felt that the attempt to achieve social transformation through architectural form was failing. Planners and policymakers promoted the socialising potential of living in modern tower blocks, while sociological surveys provided evidence that architecture failed to create the correct collectivist ethos. A 1969 report criticised

tower blocks as being only good for getting 'people together under one roof, and hindering them from ever getting to know each other'(Le Normand, 2008: 149). There was also a worrying concentration of middle classes in these new buildings, while workers were burdened with more expensive self-build housing. Sociologists were concerned about how to widen the circle of those who could participate in this collective consumption of *komfor*, as Yugoslavia's socialism was using this type of housing to drive growth and reward social and political contribution.

This was a period when the state used a new finance model to boost housing production and encouraged citizens to buy privately rather than through their firm (Mandič, 1990). New housing policies brought housing producers, local industries and residents together to set local housing funds and housing supply. These reforms led to 'a general improvement in the quality of residential environments, with the addition of service infrastructure, often neglected in previous periods because of the emphasis on quantitative rather than qualitative production' (Bassin, 1984: 163). In addition, the state tolerated informal financial practices and allowed goods, people and money to flow through borders and increase the flow of household savings and private money into the housing sector (Mikelić and Schoen, 2005). Consequently, in addition to the rhetoric of housing as a signifier of the socialist state's progress, institutions were in place for residents to affect the quality of the housing produced and act to gain access to it.

Apartment block Number 19 was built in 1976 using the new finance model and had a mix of tenancies; socially-owned flats owned by socialist enterprises and leased by employees, privately owned flats bought by individuals with funds or access to credit,

and solidarity flats given to citizens unable to receive flats through their employers. I asked a civil engineer who had led the building's construction if the difference in tenure translated to the interior of flats during the construction phase, but she explained that modifications were limited. Companies would buy a number of flats, but tenants might not know which would be theirs until they moved in. Consequently, the flats were fairly standard, however sometimes private buyers could negotiate over their fixtures and fittings. Some people would have bought Italian tiles 'and we could put those in for them' she explained, indicating the consumer culture of the time and the willingness of the firm to accommodate it.

Number 19's mix of tenancies reflected the governing ideology that all citizens should have access to the modern living made possible through Yugoslavia's socialism. This was also manifest in the building's design and layout. It had shared spaces and services that were meant to encourage integration across classes and embed the social values of Yugoslav self-management into the everyday life of the building's inhabitants. Most explicitly ideological was the *mesna zajednica* (local community room) on the ground floor where local voting took place, but the heating infrastructure, lifts, and storage areas also played an implicit role in shaping the idea that the building's residents were collectively a social unit within the broader political system. Josip, one of the original residents of the building, remembers how the building supported the idea of a collective. For him the *mesna zajednica* had more than a political function; it was used for social events like birthday parties as well as overtly political activities such as voting. Whereas other residents told me all activities in these spaces had shades of the Communist Party about them, this does not form part of his recollections. For Josip, this room helped

mobilise residents to maintain the building's material structure and to keep it a space of comfort. He explained that housing council meetings took place in the room 'when something needed to be fixed... [or] when some investment needed to be determined'. All occupants were members of the housing council, irrespective of tenancy and at first the labour involved with running the buildings was easy to mobilise.

'[W]hen we moved in, for the first ten years, there was some enthusiasm... We organised.. shall we do it today, go all around the building to clean? ... Someone brought a shovel, someone a broom, someone brought *rakija* (brandy), someone bought coffee, and then we cleaned.'

Labouring in these spaces, or simply participating in a privately-financed birthday party could be interpreted as generating value for 'Yugoslav Society'. This activity generated economic value as residents materially maintained a property asset that was owned by society, but also social value by contributing to the ideal of classless consumerism. Through this work the residents were keeping their own homes as spaces of *komfor*, but also contributing to the wider project of building a Yugoslav consumer culture.

Josip and his wife had bought their flat privately, using savings earned on the black market as musicians. His recollections align with Yugoslav ideology and indicate how individual consumption could be interpreted as contributing to the broader vision of a socialist society. This interpretation was in part because of the state's tacit acceptance that consumer culture owed its development not only to state-enabled means of production but also by allowing citizens to work and holiday abroad, supplementing the economy with smuggled goods and remittances earned abroad. The merging of

individual consumerism with socialist development was also enabled in part because ownership was not a critical issue, *use* was key as other anthropological studies on socialist property relationships have argued (cf Hann, 1993; Humphrey and Verdery, 2004; Verdery, 2004). Both factors enabled Josip to see the money and labour deployed by Number 19's residents to make the building a space of *komfor* as contributing to the broader vision of Yugoslav socialism, rather than personal enrichment.

While the state supported the incorporation of privately earned money into socialist consumerism, socio-economic differences could be incorporated into the building's moral economy. People from different social and economic backgrounds could make different forms of contribution to the production of the building. Labourers working abroad, or on the black market, could pour their earnings into the foundations as they put deposits down on flats under development, while middle-class holidaymakers could smuggle consumer goods from abroad to be cemented onto walls, or plumbed into bathrooms. Internal modifications such as putting in parquet as well as labour in the building to keep the place clean could create a sense of Yugoslav *komfor* that could be consumed collectively by the buildings' residents. Personal consumption in the home could be interpreted as supporting the state's ability to deliver socially-just economic development. A home could therefore be both an individual asset and a shared one and the tension between self-interest and collective interest could be managed. Although for commentators at the time creating shared comfort tipped over into the domain of self-interest, for residents this could be experienced as contributing to the Yugoslav vision of market socialism and they could justify their own personal gain even though others remained on the waiting list for this lifestyle. For Josip, he had earned the right to this

form of home by creating the financial means to access an individual flat within the building, and by participating actively in the maintenance and upkeep of this collective. By extending Thompson's framework, it is possible to see the moral economy of *komfor* as one which enabled individual pursuits to co-exist and be legitimate within the broader collective project of self-management.

Transgressing moral economies of *komfor*

Today the shared spaces and infrastructure of Number 19 continue to provoke questions about the individual's right to *komfor*, and whether this right can be legitimised and made socially acceptable by a wider collective. The end of Socialist Yugoslavia brought a change in the tenancy and ownership of homes. The 1990s saw the rapid privatisation of socially-owned flats at a time of high inflation, enabling residents to buy up their homes cheaply (Petrović, 2001). Nonetheless, a succession of laws in the early 1990s kept residents in charge of the shared spaces and structures of the building. The walls, roofs, communal rooms and other 'socially owned' elements now became the residents' joint property. These changes placed residents in different legal and economic relationships with each other, as well as with the institutions of the state and market, which caused the moral economy of *komfor* to be challenged on two fronts. First within the building there is a sense that residents no longer act to create a comfortable environment that can be enjoyed by all of the building's occupants. Second there is acknowledgement that those who accessed this type of housing under the socialist system gained in a way that others in the city no longer can. Although housing in Belgrade has always differentiated between social groups (see Simić, 1973), today the political rhetoric that consumer benefits will extend to all has gone. The government is taking steps to create a capitalist

economy and residents recognise the potential for housing to increase social divisions rather than reduce them. This means that the pursuit of comfort in the home has become less defensible and more problematically aligned to self-interest, rather than social interest. Those who benefitted through the socialist housing system are less able to interpret their personal gain as co-existing with and contributing to a shared economy.

A sense of transgression appears as residents discuss the material changes that have occurred in the building. Žakelina, a pensioner in her 80s described substantial renovations that some residents have carried out since becoming homeowners. People have pulled down internal walls and manipulated their domestic space in a way that threatens the building. She worried that '[i]f there was an earthquake tomorrow everything would be destroyed, like a house of cards' and went on to explain:

'They pull down those walls, for example there's lots of that. [...] It's really a shame that that is being done. But the majority have bought the flats [...] and then you do what you want. But this isn't a house where you can do whatever you want. It's a flat and it shouldn't be like that.'

Her comment refers to the private and unregulated individual houses, which are not bound up in the same social and material ties. From Žakelina's perspective, if people live in an apartment block as though it were a private house they threaten both the social cohesion of the block as community and the material structure of the apartment block. This then undermines the security provided by her home and disenfranchises her from the right to be comfortable.

Awareness of how internal modifications may have negative impacts on other residents in the building appears in conversations with households who have carried out such alterations. These material interventions are often the result of the home having to accommodate growing families, as was the case for Jana and her husband Novak. They had had to expand their one-room flat to create enough space for their three children and had extended onto their balcony to create more habitable space. Part of the works had involved moving radiators and turning this area from unheated to heated space. This process was complicated by the building's connection to the city's heating network. Number 19's communal pipework was designed and built to deliver heat for the specified domestic space of the building. If people add bigger radiators, or put more radiators into their flat than they take more heat than was planned and can disrupt the flow to other flats in the building. In this way, modifying heating is seen as transgressing the moral economy of *komfor*. Such households could be taking more than their socially agreed amount of thermal energy and preventing others connected to the same pipe from receiving their share of comfort. Jana and her husband Novak were aware of this and keen to stress that their renovations should not be interpreted this way. They had not received official permission from the utility company when they had moved walls and put in new radiators, however, Novak stressed, 'We didn't cheat [...]. We didn't add more radiators than had been there.' 'We improved our own conditions, at our own expense' added his wife in a comment, which betrayed a concern that their personal comfort could be at the cost of others'.

For Žakelina and the couple, the right to enjoy their home is tied up with an understanding that it should be a space of comfort that can be enjoyed without

jeopardising others' comfort or being threatened by others. Former signifiers of Yugoslav *komfor*, such as the neighbourhood supply of central heating, are now material reminders that comfort in the home depends on relationships and infrastructure outside it. Social relationships keep the material structures physically sound and keep their occupants enfranchised through legitimate use of the space. This legitimacy requires a broader collective and the sense that the individual's actions would be sanctioned by the other residents and by society more generally. Today in Belgrade this legitimacy has become harder to establish following the slow and partial process of economic reform. The waves of new legislation have left residents unsure of their obligations towards the building or each other. They spoke of difficulties in incorporating new residents such as refugees, who had moved into vacant spaces during the recent wars, or absentee landlords who rent out apartments. Private tenants are uncertain if they could or should be part of the housing council and its work. Residents interpret individual households' motivations as self-interested and as undermining the collective, rather than contributing to it. Inside residential buildings, collective action has become hard to mobilise and funds hard to find; consequently the management of apartment blocks is failing in the majority of buildings (Mojović, 2006). Lift shafts become rubbish chutes, plasterwork crumbles from external walls onto streets, or is covered by advertising billboards. The material forms that were designed to encourage participation in the socialist political system, are now being reappraised under the capitalist economic system. Rooftops are rented out to house mobile phone masts, while at ground level kiosks and workshops appear in community rooms. As the materiality of the new capitalist consumerism establishes its space in the city it provides opportunities for residents to earn income needed to maintain the material structures of the previous

regime. However, it also opens up uncertainties over the legitimacy of these new uses and whether they support or undermine the civic values of the previous regime like the moral economy of *komfor*.

The fate of Number 19's *mesna zajednica* illustrates this sense of illegitimate use of shared space. During the early 1990s the large community space was turned into a plumber's workshop. The president of the housing council had signed a low-value tenancy contract with the plumber, his son-in-law, giving him a legally-valid right to use the communal space indefinitely for minimum rent. Residents interpreted the use of this former shared space to generate an income for one family in the building as a corruption of its purpose and they took action to reclaim this space to support the collective. They effected a coup, established a new executive body for the building and managed to evict the plumber, moving him to a smaller space in the building. The executive then rented out the large room to a private kindergarten in order to generate an income for the building. Josip, who is a retired lawyer, had been called in by the new housing council president to help with the legal work. He explained the new rationale driving the use of this space.

'[T]he income which we get from the nursery, we count it as the building's income and we don't present it like: "I have 100 dinars [£1] from that every month". The building has it in order to be able to do something useful with that money'.

Josip explained that income generated from the nursery is used to fix services that break, keep areas clean and painted, and that through this 'we make our lives nicer and we feel more secure. More secure from the point of view of hygiene, fire, theft.' Taking care of

the fabric of the building enables the home to once again offer a degree of security that was lost through the turbulence of the 1990s and the end of Yugoslav socialism. However Josip did not interpret this shift towards generating income for collective spending as a continuation of the socialist model of producing collective gain. He stated 'the collective doesn't exist like when you say collective and think of solidarity'. He was concerned that the work of the building council could be seen as illegitimate. He explained

'We emerged informally. Formally we really are a housing council, but if asked 'who elected you?' there would always exist the problem of proving that the assembly did it because we can't gather together the assembly.'

It is no longer possible to gather together residents to agree work and therefore the executives of the housing council go from door to door collecting signatures from residents to agree with a suggested programme of improvements. This follows the letter of the law by getting over 50% of residents to agree works, however for Josip this approach seems less in keeping with the spirit of the spaces, which had been designed, financed and built with a more egalitarian and participatory economy in mind for its occupants.

Svetlana also perceived an end to solidarity. She explained that it was difficult to raise funds and agree on works today because of the socio-economic mix of the residents.

Svetlana described the building:

'[T]his building is very big. You have about 144 apartments. Half of them are these bigger ones and half are these smaller ones... And there's a lot of pensioners,[...] and then you have a lot of immigrants, a lot of

displaced persons and refugees who have social problems, who are excluded and they really don't have money. And it's really hard to manage that community, consisting of 500 people, like a small village.

... So the [residents'] exit strategy was to rent the places.'

At the time of its design, the building was in a political system that stressed the socialising potential of mixing classes and sharing spaces. Today the rhetoric of creating an egalitarian society has gone, but that vision still seems present in the building's structure. Svetlana's depiction could be interpreted as evidence of an inclusive strategy that is able to incorporate different socio-economic groups, including newcomers to Belgrade who in other accounts were positioned as illegitimate outsiders. However neither she, nor Josip recognise this action as producing solidarity. Svetlana uses the term 'exit strategy' to label the new rent-producing role these spaces have, which suggests she sees this as a way of letting neighbours withdraw from the building's social group and their collective pursuit of domestic comfort. Previously there was an obligation to participate in meetings or activities, but today these obligations are less clear to residents as governance laws change and new property relations are established. The formal terms of contribution are not well understood, new tenant-landlord relations are harder to incorporate, housing councils have lapsed or become associated with corruption or personal gain. Consequently, generating financial value from a building's shared spaces is now interpreted as replacing solidarity with individualism and contributing to the broader state project of building capitalism, including its social divisions.

This attitude stems from a nostalgic interpretation of Yugoslav self-management and the ability of the building's spaces to produce cohesion, which was doubted at the time. In

addition the housing production process depended on various forms of financial contribution and on different ways of accessing the housing system, which created divisions between those who had access to this type of housing and those who remained on the waiting list or built their own homes. Nonetheless, the residents' recollections of the activities and shared use of space created a sense of contributing to the moral economy of the building, and through this to the broader national project of building socialist Yugoslavia. The recollections suggest that it was possible to create a sense of individual comfort within the building, which in turn contributed to the production of social value. Today this ability for the home to act as both individual and collective asset seems less possible.

Conclusion

In common with Miller (2005, 2008) I suggest that the home is a key locus for understanding how people make sense of themselves as individuals within a collective. When reflecting on the pursuit of comfort in the home, residents refer to a number of different collectives that can legitimise this pursuit. I have focused on the co-residents within a building and the maintenance of individual comfort through this collective. The changing legitimacy of this individual striving for *komfor* illustrates Thompson's point that a social group's moral economy can at times align with the state and at other times drift from it. It also shows how individual projects can be fitted into a shared moral economy, a point overlooked by Thompson, but critical in this case to understand how individual gain could be interpreted as contributing to collective gain. During the era of Yugoslav consumerism, the state vision of a socialist consumer economy could be used to support the right to individual domestic comforts and legitimise the activity of the

building's occupants to pursue these comforts for themselves within and through their building. Today this legitimacy is more difficult to achieve. In the past it was possible to view the resulting domestic comfort as a reward for the socialist citizen and obscure the private, individual contributions made, or reinterpret these as collective. In contrast today the pursuit of comfort is interpreted as countering collective consumption and as undermining the production of shared assets. The recent history of war, systemic change, legal reform and privatisation has contributed to a pervasive sense that individuals are profiteering from former state and socially-owned assets. Even in the case of Number 19 where some residents had taken action to remove an illegitimate occupant of former socially-owned space and generate income for the collective good of the building, they no longer confidently view their actions as ones of solidarity. Instead they feel they are withdrawing from collective action and are complicit with the political project of building capitalism and its individualism and inequalities.

Focusing on comfort also shows how the production and the consumption of housing are intertwined in this context. Yugoslavia's socialist ideology drove housing production and shaped the form of the built environment in an explicit attempt to create social change, but included formal and informal mechanisms for citizens to consider themselves producers. In addition, consumption, the way people used their homes and invested their own private resources such as time and money, was also politically important and key in turning the built environment into an asset that could be celebrated as the product of a successful socialist economy. Furthermore the materiality of the building played a role in making self-management a meaningful category and a lived experience for residents. First, it provided a way for citizens to convert privately earned

money into a material demonstration of *komfor* and make the rhetoric of state progress towards an egalitarian consumer culture a lived experience. Second, the shared spaces and systems of the building provided a source of labour through which people could demonstrate commitment to self-management. This was important in enabling layered and multiple moral economies to co-exist. Residents created their own personal domestic spheres of comfortable living through a range of means, but the materiality of the building kept these individual spheres and their occupants in relationships with their neighbours and the state. The materiality of the building continues to play a role in reminding residents of this moral economy and their own roles in it. Apartments and communal spaces have become privately owned assets, but the material interventions made to these assets are seen by occupants as working for common and individual good or against it. The residents' experiences and recollections of life in Number 19 show that there is no simple binary between the collectivism of state-led socialism and the individualism of freemarket capitalism, what has been lost however is a sense of the broader structuring principles which are able to manage the tension between individualism and collectivism.

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Notes

- ¹ On the association between Socialist housing allocation and class see Szelényi (1983), or Alexander (2008) for an ethnographic account of this in Soviet Kazakhstan.