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<http://dx.doi.org/10.5117/HCM2014.2.REID>

PUBLISHER

Utrecht University Library, Open Access Journals (Uopen Journals)

VERSION

VoR (Version of Record)

PUBLISHER STATEMENT

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Reid, Susan E.. 2019. "Makeshift Modernity: DIY, Craft and the Virtuous Homemaker in New Soviet Housing of the 1960s". figshare. <https://hdl.handle.net/2134/19268>.



Makeshift Modernity

DIY, Craft and the Virtuous Homemaker in New Soviet Housing of the 1960s

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HCM 2 (2): 87–124

DOI: 10.5117/HCM2014.2.REID

Abstract

In cities across the Soviet Union in the late 1950s and early 1960s, new housing developments of plain five-storey apartment blocks mushroomed thanks to an intensive programme for mass industrialised housing construction launched by the Party-State in 1957. Modern living conditions were to be created for millions, it was promised, through state planning and investment in the modernisation of construction, making maximum use of technology and factory prefabrication in place of bricklaying and other artisanal methods. Drawing on oral history and material culture, this article attends to some contradictory, seemingly unplanned and *un*-modern aspects of popular agency entailed in producing the modern Soviet environment, including the role of local improvisation, DIY and manual craft. These were not necessarily resistant to or subversive of the socialist state's modernisation project but had a more complex and ambivalent relation to it, as complementary or compensatory accommodations that “tuned” universal models to local contingency.

Keywords: Soviet, homemaking, Khrushchev era, DIY, craft

Introduction: Building Sites of Soviet Modernity

In a 1962 painting by Soviet artist Iurii Pimenov, titled *Wedding on Tomorrow Street*, newlyweds advance towards us through a building site, amidst cranes and blocks of housing under construction. Careless of the bride's pristine white dress, the happy couple strides out over the mud to their new home where they will cross the threshold into a new life. The shining path – a stock organising motif of Socialist Realist images – is represented



Figure 1: Iurii Pimenov, *Wedding on Tomorrow Street*, oil on canvas, 1962. State Tretyakov Gallery

here by an improvised affair of rough planks thrown down ad hoc across the mud out of which the neighbourhood-to-be rises.¹ Soviet modernity, as represented in Pimenov's painting, is not something ready-made and finished, but is a work in progress.

Party discourse of the Khrushchev era spoke of the present stage of socialism as that of "full-scale construction of Communism", a staging post en route to Communism.² Construction was not only a metaphor for progress but a material reality, as new housing developments or *novostroiki*



Figure 2: (Anonymous), "Panorama of Construction of the South West Region", *Moscow, Arkhitektura SSSR*, 8 (1957): 4

became a characteristic feature of towns and cities across the Soviet Union in the late 1950s and early 1960s. After decades of underinvestment in housing, consumer goods, living conditions and infrastructure, already before Stalin's death the Party state began to pay greater attention to mass living standards.³ Urban development and extensive housing construction were under way by the middle of the decade, but progress was slow. At the end of 1954, Stalin's successor, Party First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev, called on the architectural profession to reject the ornate historicist architecture and expensive one-off solutions of the late Stalin period in favour of plain building, standardisation and modern industrial construction.⁴ A Party decree of 31 July 1957 launched an intensive programme for mass industrialised housing construction.⁵ As the cranes in Pimenov's painting promised, modern living conditions would be created for millions through state investment in the modernisation of construction, making maximum use of technology and factory prefabrication of precast concrete standard modules in place of bricklaying and other artisanal methods of on-site building.

In lived experience as well as in propaganda, the results of the housing campaign would transform the lives of millions across the USSR over the next decade. Over one third of the population moved into new housing between 1956 and 1965.⁶ The standard, prefabricated apartments – *“khrushchevki”* as they became known – were small and plain, but they were equipped with modern conveniences, and they were designed for occupancy by single families, in place of the prevailing norm of collective living in hostels or communal apartments.⁷ The development of whole new districts (*“novostroiki”*) of low-rise, standard, prefabricated apartment blocks set in train a “new revolution in Soviet daily life”,⁸ and fundamentally altered the urban – and indeed rural – environment, extending the margins of cities and accelerating the process of urbanisation.

Both at home and abroad, in the context of Cold War competition over images of modernity, Soviet publicists pointed to modern, industrialised mass housing construction to flesh out system-specific claims for Soviet modernity, according to which party guidance and socialist central planning placed the benefits of the “Scientific Technological Revolution” directly at the service of the masses.⁹ The media were full of tales of “happy housewarming”, and told how the growth of the contemporary, socialist city brought enlightenment to its formerly benighted margins and civilised the wasteland. Socialist modernity appeared as a clean bright new world rising out of the swamp, in which the benefits of space-age science and technology were extended to the daily life of the masses.¹⁰ A pervasive

modernist rhetoric of rupture and total makeover accompanied this construction campaign. As one architect expressed the aspiration in 1961 (somewhat prematurely as we shall see), “Everything that surrounds us in our everyday lives has been modernised.”¹¹

The state-led modernisation of the living environment was expected, in turn, to modernise and socialise its inhabitants. This revived the utopian modernist project of the 1920s, which had aimed to engineer the formation of new social relations via a rationally organised material environment. At the same time, it reengaged with the international movement of Modernism in architecture and design. Inscribed in the plan, dimensions, prefabricated walls, and brutal plainness of the new flats erected under Khrushchev were the agency and social ideals of a range of specialists who sought to use the built environment to make people live in a modern, rational, socialist and, ultimately, communist way. The “new Soviet person” had a new avatar in the late 1950s: the *novosel* (“new settler”) or citizen-home-maker, moving to *novostroiki* (new development districts) and making home in the new flats.

This utopian ambition of a total makeover of the Soviet home and its occupants is one of the aspects of the Khrushchev era that define it as modern.¹² But modernity, as many have observed, is paradoxical and Janus-faced; the same forces and transformations that liberate are also a source of oppression, and “each new positive invention is accompanied by unforeseen negative consequences.”¹³ Modernist utopian promises of emancipation coexist with the authoritarianism of unwavering faith in the power of science, progress and the built environment to make people live more rationally or beautifully, or in James Donald’s words, the “overweening dream of Enlightenment rationality: to render the city transparent, to get the city right, and so to produce the right citizens.”¹⁴ Modernity, as historian of craft Glenn Adamson puts it, “seems hard to stand up to. It is notionally defined by ‘one size fits all’ structures that are temporally and geographically transcendent: rationality, science, capitalism, mechanization, International Style architecture, autonomous artworks and secularism, to name just a few.”¹⁵ In James Scott’s terms, high-modernist designs for life and production, with their unwavering faith in the power of science and progress to make people live better and society function smoothly, tend to diminish the skills, agility, and initiative of their intended beneficiaries.¹⁶

The provision of separate apartments apparently increased the possibility for Soviet citizens to gain privacy and control over the terms of their everyday lives.¹⁷ However, this promise was contradicted by two sets of

circumstances common to modernity on both sides of the Iron Curtain. First, the modern home, increasingly permeated by technology, was tied into and dependent upon state and municipal networks and infrastructures that supplied water, gas, electricity, and central heating, and which took away the waste.¹⁸ Homemaking, as a form of consumption, required citizens to engage with the state on a daily basis at the micro-level of material production in everyday life.¹⁹ Second, machine production – embraced by modernists as a source of rational beauty and perfection and as a means to democratise consumption and improve mass living standards – is also associated with the totalising and potentially oppressive tendencies of anonymity, standardisation, and alienation. The machinery that brought mass production, higher living standards and democratisation of consumption also threatened to produce the dehumanising and deskilling effects such as Marx described.²⁰ Moreover, the darker side of modernity includes not only the monotony and alienation of the worker in the labour process, but also the alienating and homogenising effects of industrial production on the material environment. Thus modern housing has been widely criticised as a regulating and homogenising force antithetical to individuality and privacy (in the sense of particularity) and as “one of the most invasive agents of hegemony.”²¹

The problems of fashioning personal identity in surroundings that represent the agency of others, amidst commodities produced in circumstances over which the user has little control, have been a central object of enquiry in studies of consumption, popular culture and the home. Lack of the possibility of exercising agency or control over boundaries and of “the freedom to participate in the design of one’s own urban living environment” is seen as a fundamental obstacle to establishing a relation between self-identity and place, where place is defined as a site of meaningful identity and immediate agency: that is, to make oneself “at home” in modernity.²² For geographer Timothy Oakes, modernity is characterised by “crisis-prone interactions between space, human agency, and abstract historical processes” and the “tense relationship between place-based subjectivity and placeless objectification.”²³ Philosopher Martin Heidegger argued that the alienation of contemporary existence resulted in part from the privileging of technology and calculative thinking in the modern world. Writing amidst the ruins of postwar Europe, he despaired of the possibility to “dwell”: to be “at home” and at peace. The problem, for Heidegger, was not simply wartime displacement and lack of houses, despite the acute housing shortage that beset the continent, West and East, but that modern individuals no longer reside in dwellings they or their kin have built



Figure 3: Anna's khrushchevka, Okhta district, St Petersburg (Leningrad).

Photo: Ekaterina Gerasimova, 2004, for Everyday Aesthetics

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through generations, but instead pass through the constructions of others.²⁴ From a different perspective, anthropologist Daniel Miller noted the alienation which state housing tenants on a London council estate experienced as a result of their consciousness of themselves as merely passive recipients of something they might wish control over: a built environment that was “the product of a system which would not be regarded as an investment of their social being”.²⁵

The difficulties of making modern housing into an objectification or extension of self (or “investment of social being” in Miller’s term) – often considered essential to making oneself at home – are not system-specific but generic to modernity. (As Miller proposed, the problem of alienation from dwelling applied both to commodified housing, obtained from the market, and to social housing received from the state.)²⁶ Nevertheless, the darker aspects have been widely regarded, through Cold War lenses, as hypertrophied in Soviet state socialist modernity as a result of central planning and the supposedly omniscient and omnipresent “totalitarian” state; standardisation is often assumed to have presented a more insurmountable problem in the USSR than in the capitalist, consumerist West.

For example, US historian Blair Ruble asserts that the alienation from residence “was magnified in the Soviet Union, where all planning is done for strangers”.²⁷ The assumption that the problems of industrial modernity are exacerbated under state socialism is based on the premise that central planning deprives “ordinary people” of initiative, agency or control to a greater degree than a market economy. In the socialist command economy, according to prevailing wisdom, the possibility for the home to become an objectification of an individual self was inhibited by bureaucracy and specialist intervention, by an ideology that favoured the collective over the individual and discouraged symbolic distinction through consumption, and above all, by shortage.

Shortage has come to serve as a universal explanation for the collapse of the socialist system. Eastern bloc consumer culture – if the existence of such a phenomenon is even acknowledged – is written as a history of dictatorial control based on systematically produced shortages and “dictatorship over needs”.²⁸ It has become orthodoxy to designate state socialist societies as “societies of shortage”, “based on an elementary level of provisioning that departed dramatically from consumption in a modern sense” in that it was driven by necessity rather than choice.²⁹ However, as Ina Merkel has rightly noted, shortage is a relative concept, contingent on historical context. Moreover, the “society of shortage” paradigm wrongly assumes “that shortage necessarily limits possibilities of behaviour and inevitably leads to frustration, envy, stinginess and covetousness. Yet it is precisely in shortage economies or in times of shortage that individual consumer behaviour is often marked by a remarkable ability to improvise and seek outlets for hedonistic pleasures. [...] the cultural practices associated with shortages can be and are – unexpectedly diverse.”³⁰

As Merkel suggests, the ways in which citizens responded to the shortcomings of state provision can provide an angle to open up questions about agency, and to question the assumption that standard production produced standard consumers. The problems of ignoring society and its relations with the state have long been demonstrated, and revisionist histories of the Soviet Union have, since the 1970s, sought to uncover the spaces for agency of “ordinary” people, a project in which the study of popular culture and the everyday has played an important role.³¹ Nevertheless, discussions of socialist modernity have tended to emphasise the agency of the state (via a range of institutions, accredited agents, policies, and systems), and to cast ordinary citizens either as the passive predicate of its actions, or as resistant and opposed to it: thus, in regard to housing, the state puts up housing and the people put up with it.

In this article it is the agency of the user, the inhabitant of the new “standard” apartments, that concerns us: the often unscripted, ad hoc improvised ways of doing and in particular, material making. For Michel de Certeau the culture of everyday life consists of “consumption as production”, adaptations and ways of using imposed systems, which he likens to ruses or trickery. While the powerful are cumbersome, unimaginative and over-organised, the weak are creative and flexible, able to exploit loopholes and occupy the gaps in the fence left by the state.³² For Miller, the alienation that resulted from being merely passive recipients of housing could be overcome through consumption as appropriation, a creative act through which one constitutes oneself and recreates the world.³³ Scott makes the case for “the indispensable role of practical knowledge, informal processes, and improvisation in the face of unpredictability”, and argues that deductive epistemic knowledge and “formal schemes of order are untenable without some element of the practical knowledge that they tend to dismiss.”³⁴

In what follows I shall consider some “poaching raids” on the state’s modernity. However, we should not assume a priori that popular actions and ideals were inevitably in opposition to authoritative meanings and goals, including the project of socialist modernity. De Certeau used metaphors of guerrilla warfare – strategy, tactics, guileful ruses and tricks – to discuss popular culture’s relation to power. A model of resistance and opposition structures the study of popular culture, of which homemaking can be considered a part.³⁵ Scholarship of the Soviet Union, likewise, has tended to see only two alternative models for the relationship of society to the state – either passive brainwashed acquiescence or resistance – and often identifies popular agency with action against the state.³⁶ In spite of the work of the revisionists, the oppression/resistance binary still structures many accounts, along with a denial of popular agency. Oleg Khar-khordin adopted Michel Foucault’s model of modern disciplinary regimes to challenge the received image of the Thaw as a time of liberalisation and increased privacy, arguing that “1957 marked the final achievement of the Stalinist goal: a fine-tuned and balanced system of total surveillance.” In the period of intensive modernisation under Khrushchev, systematic mutual surveillance was established which erased the last spaces of uncompromised human dignity that even the “earlier uneven and frequently chaotic terror” under Stalin had supposedly still left intact. “The disciplinary grid became faultless and ubiquitous.”³⁷

The façade of the *khrushchevka*, patterned by the intersecting seams between precast panels, might indeed resemble a grid – the image of an infinitely extendable, abstract pattern of mechanical regularity that over-

rides local variation, representing the “formal schemes of order” characteristic of industrial modernity. I want, however, to explore a more complex set of relations between Soviet consumer agency and the state’s universalising, modernising project. In the case of homemaking in UK in the 1950s-1960s, Judy Attfield has proposed that even as her subjects’ furnishing choices departed from the prescriptions of design experts, they should not be seen as opposition to modernity or a failure of modernism, but were vernacular “interpretations of modernity”, adapted to their needs and means.³⁸ In regard to the late Soviet Union, Alexei Yurchak notes: “without understanding the ethical and aesthetic paradoxes that ‘really existing socialism’ acquired in the lives of many of its citizens, and without understanding the creative and positive meanings with which they endowed their socialist lives – sometimes in line with the announced goals of the state, sometimes in spite of them, and sometimes relating to them in ways that did not fit either-or dichotomies – we would fail to understand what kind of social system socialism was.”³⁹

As far as making home in the *novostroiki* was concerned, the experience of ordinary *novosely* was more complex than the image of a perfectly ordered grid suggests, as even the Soviet press widely admitted, and as is evidenced by over seventy oral history interviews conducted in the mid-2000s with individuals who moved into new apartments in the early-to-mid-1960s in a range of cities across the former USSR.⁴⁰ Their lives were, on the contrary, shaped by loopholes, leaks, and “gaps in the fence”, such as de Certeau regarded as opportunities for guerrilla tactics. The *khrushchevki* gave ample scope for negotiation, agency, the application of practical knowledge, and “mutuality”, the element which, according to Scott, can redeem the sterile authoritarianism of modernist utopias.⁴¹

The remainder of this essay will attend to material practices such as DIY and craft, broadly defined, focusing on relations between individuals and the state as they were lived, experienced, talked about, and materialised in the everyday environment of home and neighbourhood. It will explore some spaces for popular agency within the structures (both physical and discursive) and infrastructures for which the party-state (via various agencies) was responsible, and in which its ideology, priorities and intentions were invested in concrete material form.⁴² First I shall outline the spaces for agency and participation that were envisaged and indeed promoted by the party-state’s authoritative discourses. I will then turn from the abstractions imagined in authoritative discourse toward actual building sites and local experience, drawing on the interviews. Attending to the ad hoc manual work entailed in making housing liveable, I will propose that the path

to the radiant future was as much a matter of local improvisation as was Pimenov's "radiant path" of rough planks thrown across the building site of modernity. I will also note some contradictory, seemingly *un*-modern and unplanned aspects of popular agency – the recourse to handicraft and DIY – proposing that these were not necessarily resistant to or subversive of the socialist state's modernisation project, but had a more complex and ambivalent relation to it, as complementary or compensatory accommodations that "tuned" universal models to accommodate local contingency. Moreover the "power that comes with making" may have helped to mitigate the alienating and deskilling effects of industrial modernity.⁴³

Khrushchev-Era Authoritative Discourse on Model Citizenship and Participation in the Material Environment



Figure 4: German Ogorodnikov, "Happy Housewarming," Krokodil (1966)

Alongside hyperbolic claims about “total modernisation,” the Soviet media, like Pimenov’s painting, often acknowledged that the machine perfection, abundance, beauty and social harmony that were to characterise Communism were a direction of travel rather than an achieved goal, even as Khrushchev proclaimed that the transition would take place within a generation. The central and local press exposed unfinished business and shortcomings in the quality of construction; the failure of the promised infrastructure to materialise, or of builders to landscape the terrain, sometimes plunged people back into the dark ages, still wading across the muddy wasteland, drawing water in buckets, or cooking outdoors on makeshift fires (see figure 4).⁴⁴ The media also conveyed the message that socialist modernity was not like a commodity, delivered pristine and ready to use from the factory to passive consumers, but demanded reciprocal work. Housing was a gift, and like all gifts, it imposed obligations on the recipient.

Popular agency in the material environment was encouraged as part of an ideal of citizenship that focused on the *novosel* (new settler, plural: *novosely*) as the model new person, Constructor of Communism, embodied at the most local level. The popular and specialist design press emphasised the agency and responsibilities of the *novosel* and encouraged the voluntary participation of ordinary people in manual and aesthetic labour to make socialist modernity a reality within the four walls of their apartment and to realise the ideal of “socialist community” in the new neighbourhoods or *novostroiki*. According to specialists on interior architecture, homemaking was not a matter of passive consumption, but a partnership, entailing collaboration and negotiation: “two authors participate in the creation of [the dwelling’s] interior: the architect-builder who designs and erects the building; and the occupant (*khoziain*) of the apartment who furnishes it in accordance with his own needs and taste.”⁴⁵

Novosely were expected to put in work both on the material environment and on themselves: to become good citizens and fully rounded individuals. Popular publications aligned good tenancy with participatory citizenship: the model *novosel* was a true *khoziain/khoziaika* (steward/housekeeper) who, if something needed doing, did not sit back and wait for the state, but picked up a hammer and did it himself.⁴⁶ While the state remained the landlord, a true *khoziain* took care of the state’s property as if it was their own.⁴⁷ The custodial obligations imposed by the state’s gift included general maintenance and upkeep, good taste, and voluntary adherence to the rules of “socialist community” (*obshchezhitie*). The willingness of each to contribute according to their ability, and to place their skills

at the benefit of the neighbourhood, became an important aspect of the new Soviet person in public discourse.

This emphasis both on material labour and popular participation in producing the modern socialist material and social environment was part of the reinvigoration of the utopian project in the Khrushchev era, including a return to the writings of Marx and efforts to redefine relations between state and society. Party rhetoric, and especially the Third Party Programme which it adopted in October 1961, associated the development of “socialist democracy” with the gradual transformation of the organs of state power into “organs of public self-government,” and invoked notions such as “participatory government” and the “state of all the people”.⁴⁸ Social and voluntary organisations (such as the Komsomol, cooperatives, people’s courts and militias, and housing committees (*domkom*)) were to assume growing importance as the basis for a corresponding withering away of the formal institutions of the state and transition to Communist self-government. Participation included contributions to “socialist community” and the “communist way of life” through voluntary work in the housing committee, running a club or library, or voluntary landscaping and planting of the communal yard.⁴⁹

This reciprocal work was as much about self-making as about home-making; work on the home and neighbourhood were supposed to fulfil not only practical needs but also “spiritual” or cultural ones, such as developing the aesthetic sensibilities of the “fully-rounded” individual.⁵⁰ Khrushchev-era ideologues returned to Marx’s early writings, where he emphasised the role of material making (“the working over of the objective world”) in accordance with the laws of beauty in the affirmation of man’s humanity or “species being.”⁵¹ They argued that there was nothing more beautiful than free, unalienated labour, which was a route to full self-actualisation and a source of beauty and pleasure.⁵²

To develop the skills necessary for making the apartment habitable and to help and encourage homemakers to produce beauty and modernity in their own homes, neighbourhood community activities were organised. These included mass voluntary “greening” campaigns to transform the wasteland into a garden, homecraft and needlework classes for women and girls, and woodcraft clubs for men. The latter aimed in part to keep men away from the bottle, while engaging them in activities associated with the home and fostering a pride in making or mending something for their domestic space.⁵³ DIY advice literature and “handy hints” were published in household encyclopaedias, manuals for the “new settler,” and in popular magazines such as *Rabotnitsa* (Woman Worker), *Nauka i zhizn’*

(Science and Life), *Poleznye sovety* (Helpful Hints), and *Sdelai sam* (Do It Yourself). Even the more specialist design journal *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR* (Decorative Art of the USSR), which focused largely on promoting the new discipline of industrial design, introduced a “Do-It-Yourself” rubric (“*Svoimi rukami*”: lit. “With your own hands”) in 1961, printing articles and diagrams on how to make bookshelves or “how to fit a kitchen”.⁵⁴ One of the informants in the interview project, Galina L. (a native Leningrader, born 1950, higher education) recalls the popularity of the DIY rubric in magazines: “Do it yourself! It was the most popular section. There was this journal *Nauka i zhizn’* and there was a section in [it] ‘Do It Yourself (*Sdelai sam*)’.”⁵⁵

The investment of labour in the apartment, block and neighbourhood was not only important in the behaviour of the ideal *khoziain* and his/her relation to state-provided housing. It was also cast as necessary for establishing a correct, socialist, non-fetishistic relation to commodities. Analysing advice literature on DIY, mending and adapting, Galina Orlova summarises the underpinning ideology:

The shameless plugging of the object’s merits unquestionably aims to produce desire – except that here instead of a covert call to “Buy!” there is an overt impetus to action, “Make!” Only someone who has been involved in the production of an object can rightfully take pleasure from that object – which looks much like another spin on the renowned slogan “He who does not work shall not eat.” [...] [T]he invocation of work effort [...] “relieves the new world of the guilt complex occasioned by the fact that the representatives of the new world will be [...] as much consumers as were their enemies in the old prerevolutionary reality.”⁵⁶

Homemaking and do-it-yourself-activities blur or break down the binary opposition of production and consumption, work and leisure, expert and amateur. It is widely assumed that in late industrial consumer society people are increasingly distanced from making and that craft has been displaced by machine production. But, turning now to oral history accounts of domestic material production in and of the home, we shall see that a vital role was played by craft and ad hoc solutions, by bricolage, making do, and localised agency, and by the manual labour of the “consumer” or homemaker in producing this supposedly state-provided, industrially produced, standard material environment. To complicate the image of a thoroughgoing industrialisation of construction, masterminded and controlled by an all-seeing party state and its white-coated specialists

armed with algorithms and abstractions, we will consider the problematic relation between handmade and machine-made, industry and craft, centrally planned production and spontaneous local responses to contingency, focusing on the role played by a range of “ways of doing”, adjustments, accommodations and tunings.

Making One’s Own Home: The House That Vasilii Built

The stories told by individuals who moved into new flats in the early 1960s reveal that there were many disjunctions between blueprint and reality.⁵⁷ Authoritative discourse, as we saw above, squared the circle by placing value on participation and making and by ascribing to these a role in the fully rounded development of the individual. Whether or not homemakers paid attention to this discourse or consciously identified with the model of the good *novosel-khoziain*, they participated to varying degrees in making their homes with their own hands.⁵⁸



Figure 5: Fatyma’s house, Kazan’. Photo Sofia Chuikina, 2005, for *Everyday Aesthetics* (copyright Susan E. Reid)

The reciprocal input of labour began, in some cases, even before the block went up. Fatyma, a low-paid Tatar construction worker in Kazan’, born in

1930, describes how every family that was to receive an apartment in their block had to contribute to excavating its foundations:

You know, we dug the foundations ourselves. That's why there are cracks now, subsidence, the house is breaking up. We laid out the block with stones [...] We dug the foundations ourselves. They delegated: every family, every person who was to receive an apartment had to dig, to work. And we dug the foundations ourselves. At that time there were no [prefabricated concrete] blocks, those big strong blocks they have now. Our house is of brick – it's heavy. And its subsiding now. Maybe we'll all get buried in bricks. Nobody knows anything, no-one can guarantee that the house will stay standing.⁵⁹

Contrary to the image of prefabricated, wall-size concrete panels being swung majestically through the air by cranes, which the media used to represent the benefits of socialist modernity, traditional materials such as brick were still frequently used, demanding artisanal building methods and manual skills. Although the state had made investment in system building technology and cement industry a priority, Soviet prefabrication industry was only in its infancy. Even the production of buildings that looked similar to the standard type designs of *khrushchevki* was sometimes reliant on manual labour, traditional and locally available materials and vernacular building techniques.⁶⁰ Fatyma dug the foundations with little equipment. Her employer, responsible for building the house for its workers, was a brickworks. And so they built it of brick.

Prefabrication and mechanisation were supposed to solve a chronic problem of lack of skilled construction labour.⁶¹ During the war and immediate postwar period the gap had been plugged, in part, by prisoners-of-war deployed on building sites, and traditional vernacular and artisanal methods were also used to address the housing shortage. In Kuibyshev (Samara), for example to accommodate the swollen workforce evacuated to the hinterland to work on the most advanced science-based technology of rocket production, housing was built in ways that were very far from rocket science, resorting to traditional materials and methods such as cob or lathe and plaster. In the postwar reconstruction period, some encouragement was given to individuals to take things into their own hands and build their own house, and designs for small individual houses were made available at low cost.⁶² To construct a multi-occupancy apartment block was a more complex undertaking and was closely identified with a model of modern living, plugged into urban infrastructure.

Spontaneous popular house-building movements emerged in a number

of cities around the Soviet Union. Although this was a local grassroots initiative, born of the urban population's desperation with housing conditions, it was adopted and rubber-stamped by the state and given public meaning in terms of its chiliastic project. "People's Construction" (*narodnaia stroika*) or the "Gorky Method" as it was labelled after the most publicised example, was most actively promoted between 1955 and 1959, that is, before the effects of the 1957 housing decree were felt.⁶³ Thus it is an example of how grassroots action intersects with and may even shape state practices.⁶⁴

The People's Construction campaign faded from public attention after the 1957 decree.⁶⁵ But although the role of state agencies in housing production increased along with the industrialisation of construction (setting norms, disseminating standard models, etcetera), decentralised, self-help, artisanal methods continued in practice as a way to speed the production of housing. The labour shortage was sometimes filled through "voluntary" participation of prospective residents or mobilisation of unskilled labour, especially young people in brigades sent from the Komsomol. Many of my informants, especially those in provincial cities, recall some degree of participation in making the house, even if the work involved was not always so fundamental as Fatyma described. Marina (a scenographer, born in 1960) and her parents moved into a separate apartment in a newly built *khrushchevka* in 1966 from a two-storey cob barrack in Kuibyshev, which had been built by prisoners-of-war. She describes how the future residents of the new apartment block participated in the "finishing work", then adds: "there was this 'Gorky method'. They were released from work [...]." The popular labour contribution was sometimes more organised than the seemingly spontaneous People's Construction, a case of work secondments rather than unpaid voluntary contributions. In my sample such accounts are often associated with the Soviet Railway, which employed a number of my informants. As elsewhere (e.g. in late nineteenth-century Britain) when railways were built, the railway provided housing for its workers nearby and was a force for modernisation and homogenisation, and it was a major provider of *khrushchevki*-type housing.⁶⁶

Vasilii (born 1924) who lived in the medium sized city of Kaluga 150 kilometres southwest of Moscow had worked for the railway since being demobilised in 1948. The railway began to build housing for its workers there in the late 1950s, and Vasilii was seconded as "senior builder" in charge of construction of a whole new housing region, in which he also received an apartment. He describes the system of labour contributions. Twenty men were chosen and released from their regular work for the

railway to help the housing construction effort. They constructed a four-storey house of 32 two-room apartments in 1959-60, being paid the average wage for their work and, in addition, each received an apartment without paying any financial contribution. Although stonemasons or bricklayers laid the walls, Vasilii's team made the roof. His description of the process indicates that, contrary to the much-publicised image of the housing programme and the prestige of mechanisation, factory prefabrication accounted for little or none of the construction of his building. Instead, the work was conducted on-site, using artisanal, labour-intensive methods.

Thus, relations between tenants and the fabric of their home could sometimes be surprisingly closer to Heidegger's lost ideal of a dwelling built with one's own hands than to the modernist image of an anonymous, machine-made machine for living! Miller, in his study of London social housing tenants, found that those who put work into their apartments were less socially alienated, concluding that there was a correlation between the labour of consumption, whereby they had transformed the built space, received through processes over which they had no control, into inalienable culture.⁶⁷ My informants' accounts also provide some evidence for a similar conclusion concerning a correlation between material investment and social integration.⁶⁸ Vasilii conveys a strong sense of identification with the construction and pride in his role as leader of the team; it is a valued part of his life story, and being a "maker" is an important part of the self-identity he wants to present to the interviewer. He repeats, "I myself, myself was the head, the head builder", and emphasises: "We did everything ourselves. We built it and we ourselves moved in."

Anna A. also contributed to the labour of constructing the block in the Okhta district of Leningrad where she still lived in 2005 when the interview was conducted. She had not known at the time that she would receive an apartment in that very block, and the fact that she turned out retrospectively to have contributed to building her own home appeared to her like some rare privilege in the modern world. Her narrative conveys a sense of agency: that she had herself made this life-changing new housing. Born in Orenburg in 1919, she and her family were displaced in 1937 when her father was repressed. After a lifetime of dependency on others, without so much as a corner of a room to call her own, her fate was, at last, in her own hands when she moved in in 1968.

Interviewer: Space was tight?

Anna: Of course. But in spite of all that you can't imagine what a joy it was. Simply a dream come true. After thirty years, when because of my

character I was terribly dependent on my landlady, on neighbours and so on to the point of humiliation [...] And you know, it was an indescribable joy! I worked here for a whole week, that is, I helped during the construction. Not yet knowing which was my apartment.

Anna's voluntary participation in the labour of building the house entitled her to an apartment there not only legally, but morally. Like Vasili, and tallying with the model of participation and the valorisation of material labour promoted in authoritative discourse, she conveys a sense of the commensurateness of the exchange: it was right, fair, and mutual. They had invested their labour and they had received their due.⁶⁹ Lenin's precept that "he who does not work shall not eat" was an aspect of socialist morality that could draw, for popular acceptance, on its roots in traditional, prerevolutionary morality and Christian teachings, which lent it an appearance of natural justice. Thus (along with attitudes towards thrift and consumption as using up) it represented a continuity and amalgam between traditional, premodern and modern, socialist values.⁷⁰

To Wait for the State, or Do It Yourself?

Even in cases where residents' manual input into making the house was less fundamental than Fatyima's, their "voluntary" labour was often drafted in in the later stages, once the structure was in place, to do finishing work such as plastering or painting. When the house was handed over to them for occupation many found their new apartment required much work before it was habitable, as Anna describes: "I swept out the dirt, threw stuff out. For a week altogether. But that didn't matter, it was a joy." Galina S.'s block in Kaluga⁷¹ was built of brick by untrained teenage volunteers, and the walls were uneven and damp; although they had been papered before they moved in in 1964, the paper soon peeled off. Paint had been poured over the floor, which they had to chip off with an axe. Igor' (a civil engineer with higher education, living in Leningrad), took the builders of his block to task in 1961 for the fact that so much had been left up to him, the user. The head builder's shoulder-shrugging response was that it was not their fault; they were forced to move on to the next project to fulfil the production norm, where it was quantity not quality that counted. This was the stock reason put forward to explain poor quality goods in the planned economy, a problem that was also highlighted in the press and in Khrushchev's speeches.

In principle, there were state and municipal bodies to which new residents could turn for help in making their housing habitable. Responsibility for upkeep and repairs was assigned to the housing management office, the *Zhilishchno-eksploatatsionnaia kontora* or ZhEK. This was a new institution characteristic of the period of industrialisation of housing construction, replacing the smaller *domupravlenie* (house management). It resulted from a restructuring of housing management and maintenance in the 1950s, which accompanied the mass housing campaign, reflecting shifts in scale and urban planning principles, and the increasing need for machinery and more specialised staff.⁷² The reorganisation also reflected the move towards social or voluntary organisations and self-management, which the ZhEK was to coordinate. The ZhEK represented the state at the local, micro-level of the neighbourhood; it was one of the ways in which people encountered it in their daily lives. It was much hated, regarded as a bastion of petty tyrants, a front for surveillance and instrument for intrusion in the micro-matters of everyday life.⁷³

Yet the ZhEK was also reviled for what it failed to do. More broadly, what many experienced in their day-to-day lives was not the overweening omnipresence of the state, but its absence.⁷⁴ True, the state's priorities – as interpreted by specialists – were materialised in the prefabricated concrete walls of the apartment and in its plan and dimensions. However, we have already seen that implementation on the ground did not always match the image of large prefabricated concrete panels being swung into place by cranes to produce regular and predictable results, but used whatever local materials and manual labour were available. The state, which should have been a constant presence in people's everyday lives in the form of services and infrastructure on which modern urban living conditions are dependent, was sometimes elusive. Just where expertise and centrally provided infrastructure were needed, they were often absent. Ironically, the promised “withering away of the state” and relocation of its roles to social organisations and popular participation were already enacted in the production of this modern state housing, translated into self-help and local improvisation. Tat'iana in Apatity in the Far North (65 when interviewed in 2007) dismisses the role of the state: “Well the state didn't do any repairs for us, none whatever. We changed everything ourselves, we replaced the sinks [...] They never replaced anything, never. It was up to us personally. I don't know how it was for others, but for us never. [...] We did everything ourselves.”⁷⁵ Her neighbour affirms: “Yes it was like that for everyone.”

Fatyma, the Kazan' construction worker, also had very low expectations of the state; it was not worth waiting for. Acutely aware of her own poverty,

she was also resigned that, whether under state socialism or in the post-Soviet neoliberal world, “no one helps the poor” and (adapting a folk saying) “a worker will never get rich but only crippled”.⁷⁶ She and her husband did everything themselves, she recalls. Fatyma also reveals the reality, as she experienced it, behind the public proclamations of a brave new world of “modern conveniences”. In her house none of the essentials were provided; there was no bath when they first moved in, nor was there even an indoor toilet or running water: “everyone had to go in the yard”. Nor indeed was the house even connected to mains sewerage. Again, it was the residents who had to deal with the situation: to dig sewage ditches (the swamp was not only a metaphor!), install the plumbing, and link it up to the mains to compensate for the failure by the enterprise or municipality to extend sanitary infrastructure.⁷⁷ It was “all DIY” (*samodelka*), “everything cobbled together” (“Все тЯп-ляп”), down to the plumbing.

Some had baths but no plumbing. Others moved in to find a bathroom, plumbing, but no bathtubs. Here, too, residents suffered from the absence of the “state” and from the porosity of the grid of surveillance, which Kharkhordin claimed had been perfected. Homemaking was a focus of corruption and illegal or semi-legal practices, one of the central ventures (joined later by cars and dachas) that bound the informal economy of goods, services, skills and favours together.⁷⁸

Many encountered the effects of illegal practices such as squatting, the shadow economy, and diversion of materials and equipment to other priorities. Some tenants found that their “new” apartment had already been used by the builders, who had squatted there while working on the site, for construction still employed transient workers without legal residence permits.⁷⁹ This casts a different light on the modern problem of alienation and appropriating space built by strangers; here it was the builders who appropriated the space they had built for strangers: the legal tenants were then left to re-appropriate it from them! In Annetta’s⁸⁰ and Igor’s cases the builders had trashed the apartment and not even flushed the toilet. Others also encountered the problem of squatters. Irina’s family in Kuibyshev were cheated out of a three-room apartment to which, with three children, they were entitled according to minimum per capita space (*zhilploshchad’*) regulations.⁸¹ After five years on a waiting list, in December 1961 (when she was eight) they were overjoyed to receive notification that they had been assigned a new apartment. But when they tried to move in they found another family had already occupied it. “My parents were the type who didn’t attempt to get things sorted out. Well maybe they tried, but they probably encountered such obstacles that they gave up.” Rather than fight

for their due, Irina's parents accepted a smaller apartment instead. And inevitably, it lacked a bathtub.

Far from a seamless grid of planning and surveillance, the situation calls for metaphors of sieves, drains and leakages and broken threads. There were numerous disjunctions between planning and the countless different elements that made up a home, as the situation with baths illustrates. Not enough tubs were manufactured to keep pace with the accelerated rate of construction of single family apartments each with their own bathroom; only two tubs were manufactured for every three apartments built in 1965.⁸² It is also possible that tubs designated for these apartments had either been diverted to another block for people who had more pull than Irina's parents, whom she depicts as disempowered and lacking in agency, or had been sold off on the black market. As a result of these disjunctions of planning or leakage in the supply system, Irina recalls having to wash in public baths or at the homes of friends; as far as maintaining personal hygiene was concerned, her family remained migrants for a further five years.

“Restoring” the New Flat

Even if they were the first occupants, new homemakers invariably found themselves in the paradoxical situation of having to conduct “re-storation” (*remont*). After Galina S. and her husband moved in they began to “restore” their “new” apartment, where the wallpaper was peeling off the wall because of damp. Diana, an uneducated factory worker also in Kaluga, and Diliara, a top scientist and party secretary in Kazan', both found their apartments had already been trashed by others before they moved in. As Diliara said wryly, “restoration’ isn't the word for it!”

Sociologists Ekaterina Gerasimova and Sofia Chuikina have put forward, as a defining characteristic of Soviet modernity, that manufactured goods presupposed the need for work on them by the user to make them usable. Soviet products were not commodities in the ideal sense of the word, implying pristine newness and machine perfection that rendered them interchangeable and alienable; rather, they required “repair”, adjustments, and tuning before they could even be used. Users had to accommodate the object to their needs. In the process, they accommodated themselves to the object's idiosyncrasies and, at the same time, made the object unique and no longer alienable.⁸³ So widespread and intense was the material engagement with commodities and spaces provided through the centralised production systems that Gerasimova and Chuikina designate Soviet society

a “repair culture”. Similarly, investigating the specificity of the socialist car, Kurt Möser has argued that the anticipation of user engagement was scripted into the design; GDR cars had built-in repair friendliness that compensated for limited service facilities and they even came with tool kits.⁸⁴

For Möser, car maintenance and tinkering are part of the “widespread social movement of do-it-yourself, amateur craftsmanship, bricolage, even modelling and home renovation”.⁸⁵ The culture of participatory making, craft and DIY was also an essential component of Soviet modernity in its lived, rather than ideal, form. There was a large reliance on craft skill and creative, ad hoc responses to contingency in making *khrushchevki* into home. Just as manufactured goods required *remont*, so too did housing, even if it was prefabricated and machine-made. In these conditions, the distinction between consumption and production is blurred and consumption becomes a form of production, both of material and of meanings.⁸⁶ Other binary antitheses – between machine processes and the hand made, between industry and craft, abstract systems and contingent adjustments – are also blurred. The need for tuning extended even to the machines and industrial processes that were supposed to produce the goods. Anthropologist Sergei Alashev describes how the conditions of late Soviet industrial production demanded highly individualised, ad hoc responses and a high input of skilled craft. In a Kuibyshev ball bearing factory where Alashev conducted ethnographic research, every worker tuned his machine himself in different ways, customising the technology on the basis of his experience and knowledge of the properties of production, the specific foibles of his own machine, and the peculiarities of working with often substandard raw materials.⁸⁷ The production of perfect, identical ball bearings – essential precision parts for machinery – relied on a high degree of individual *craft* skill to accommodate the shortcomings of the raw materials and of the machine tools. The worker compensated for the shortcomings of industrialisation through craftsmanship, responding to contingency with a series of adjustments by eye and fine-tuning by hand. As Glenn Adamson summarises, they “coax and cajole their antiquated and recalcitrant equipment, somehow making perfectly round little spheres out of substandard raw materials. Clearly they are enormously skilled craftsmen, despite working in a thoroughly industrial (indeed, almost uninhabitable) workplace.”⁸⁸

The abstract knowledge and universal systems characteristic of modernity and supposedly hypertrophied in the authoritarian socialist state, with its centrally planned economy, are contradicted by the reliance on craft and ad hoc, where the latter is defined by Charles Jenks as: “everyday improvisations” and “solutions found not through genius moments or uni-

versal systems but by trial and error, adjustment and readjustment".⁸⁹ Did this DIY modernity contradict the Khrushchev regime's claims for "scientific-technological revolution" and for the advantages of central planning in putting that revolution to serve the needs of the masses? What is the relationship between local agency and meanings, on one hand, and the state project of modernity, on the other?

Both DIY and craft occupy a position in modernity that renders them potentially critical or even oppositional. In relation to the dominant consumer culture of late capitalist modernity, DIY may constitute a refusal to consume in the normative ways the producers and admen want you to, and a preference for alternative ways of acquiring goods such as recycling, mending, or makeover.⁹⁰ Craft, as "the application of skill and material-based knowledge to relatively small-scale production", is also often cast as antithetical to industrial modernity, diametrically opposing its temporally and geographically transcendent, one-size-fits-all structures, and contradicting the modernised practices promoted by specialists on the basis of science and other abstract systems. One of the paradoxical aspects of modernity is the extent to which elements of tradition survive the forces of modernisation and continue to play a role in modern life.⁹¹ Craft tactics may also be associated with gendered, ethnic or local identities, which can be seen as "inherently resistant to (or potentially critical of) modernity's homogeneous transcendentalism". Reliant on handed-down ways of doing and the "messy contingency of experience", craft "entails irregularity, tacit knowledge, inefficiency, handwork, vernacular building",⁹² as opposed to the international style of modernism towards which Khrushchev had reoriented Soviet architecture. Moreover, craft is assumed to be an atavistic relic of a superseded historical phase, the preindustrial or premodern past.

However, as Adamson argues and Alashev's study exemplifies, industrial modernity is more complex than this binary antithesis implies. Craft is not simply anti-modern. Craft responses have been an intrinsic part of industrialisation, adaptive rather than oppositional: "a strain of activity that responds to and conditions the putatively normative experience of modernity, in many and unpredictable ways."⁹³ Craft represented the other side of the same coin of industrialised modernity; a constant and necessary partner.⁹⁴

In regard to homemaking in the new flats, the lapses of state provision and monitoring represented a major nuisance in people's lives. But they were also the mother of invention and an inducement to creative agency, which could sometimes engender a sense of belonging and engagement with place and community.⁹⁵ *Novosely* had to use whatever means and



Figure 6: Hand stencilled “wallpaper”, Tartu, 2006. Photo: Kristi Tinkus for Everyday Aesthetics

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equipment they had to hand to set things right, and this often required significant ingenuity and ad hoc improvisation. A diverse mix of bricolage practices, makeshift materials and traditional craft solutions compensated for the failures of manufacture, planning and distribution by making do with the materials and methods available. While Galina S.’s husband used an axe to remove paint, spilt by the builders, from the floor, Irina’s father used an iron.⁹⁶ In the interviews, informants spontaneously offered numerous instances of ingenuity in finding ways to cover and decorate the walls and ceilings, including improvised cottage production of materials one might expect to be produced industrially. A number talk about hand-stencilling patterns onto distempred walls in place of wallpaper, which was often of poor quality or only available in colours and patterns they found ugly or old-fashioned. One elderly couple relate how they compensated for the unavailability of paint by using toothpowder as a source of chalk, from which they made homemade whitewash when forced to repaint the ceiling after their neighbours had flooded them. The results, they laugh, were “terrible”! Despite the amateur results, the production demonstrated their control and knowledge. Understanding the composition of whitewash, they were able to find alternative ways of producing it, rather than rely-

ing on distanced, mystified and uncontrollable processes and supplies.

Others also turned to handmade substitutes for modern industrially produced materials. Floors invariably demanded tenants' labour, and the media recommended linoleum for its modernity, hygienic properties and labour-saving convenience and as part of a wider emphasis on renewable, man-made materials. Khrushchev called for the expansion of linoleum production because: "floors covered in linoleum are as good as parquet floors; they're more hygienic and smarter. Looking after them is simpler than parquet [...] It is necessary to value the labour of women and alleviate it wherever possible."⁹⁷ Lino may also have been appreciated by homemakers for its modernity and "labour-saving" connotations. Galina L. in Leningrad recalls her surprise in the 2000s, while redecorating the flat where she had lived with her parents as a child, when she peeled away the old lino and found that it obscured a fine parquet floor; her parents had evidently preferred lino to the traditional natural material, which had once again become valued by the time of the interview. Here, too, we run into contradictions. Linoleum, a material associated with a modern leisured lifestyle, was not necessarily produced through modern, industrial means and acquired via state distribution mechanisms, but through laborious individual effort. Older informants reveal the lengths to which they would go to get hold of lino for their floors. Nina S. (Kazan', born c. 1939) had got linoleum under the counter (*po blatu*) and paid a premium. "Now you can choose whatever you like. But then it only just began to appear. We had to pay over the odds. But we got it." In a more extreme case of the paradox of achieving modernity through preindustrial means independent of the modernising state, Ekaterina (Kaluga, born c. 1930) describes the arduous process of making linoleum by hand:

Ekaterina: I got some sawdust, boiled up wood glue in a can, poured in the sawdust [...] I filled the cracks between the planks overnight. I could only do a square metre [at a time]. But after all I had aspirations. Then later nitro-mastic [*nitroshklëvka*] appeared. I travelled to Moscow and bought sackcloth at twelve kopeks a metre. I spread the board with this nitro-mastic, spread the cloth over it by hand. There wasn't any linoleum available but I wanted a beautiful floor [...].

Interviewer: It was a kind of homemade linoleum?

Ekaterina: Of course. I had aspirations. All my life I had stood in queues [...] In the evening you'd get in and get going on that floor.

Interviewer: It was a lot of work?

Ekaterina: Well I wanted it.



Figure 7: A model interior in the “Contemporary Style”. *Ol’ga Baiar and Raisa Blashkevich, Kvartira i ee ubranstvo (Moscow: Stroizdat, 1962)*

Here we have a contradiction typical of the paradoxes of Soviet modernity examined in this essay. This floorcovering that signified a modern, convenient, ease-full lifestyle (by contrast with the work entailed in maintaining natural wood parquet), had to be laboriously made by hand.

Specialists on the new interior advised that *novosely* should not schlep their old goods and chattels along with them into the new life but should make a complete fresh start, furnishing their modern flats with new types and styles of mass-produced furniture. Design bureaux were set to work on designing a style of furniture appropriate for serial production, making maximum use of machine processes and man-made materials. Widely promoted as the “contemporary style”, it was closely based on international modernist designs.⁹⁸ In practice, however, *novosely* more often furnished their new modern flats through eclectic combinations, gifts and recycling. Seemingly contradicting the injunction to make a total fresh start, the widespread genre of “handy hints” reflected such vernacular practices of bricolage and making-do, placing a strong emphasis on repurposing, improvisation and prolonging life of things, adapting, mending, recycling parts of things that could no longer be salvaged.⁹⁹ More pragmatic advice to the *novosel* also showed how to adapt old furniture to fit the new flats both physically – given the low ceilings and small scale – and stylistically.¹⁰⁰



Figure 8: Evgeniia's handmade kitchen cabinet, St Petersburg, 2004. Photo: Ekaterina Gerasimova for Everyday Aesthetics

(copyright Susan E. Reid)



Figure 9: Larisa's table and stool: "Dad made everything himself." St Petersburg, 2005. Photo Ekaterina Gerasimova, for Everyday Aesthetics

(copyright Susan E. Reid)

The industrial revolution in consumer durables and their stylistic modernisation had little impact on the furniture that Evgeniia acquired when she moved to a new flat in 1959.¹⁰¹ Much of this Leningrad schoolteacher's furniture was either acquired through charitable gifts or was picked up off dumps, refurbished and recycled.¹⁰² She also had a handmade kitchen cabinet and a bedside cabinet made bespoke by a cabinetmaker (*krasno-derevshchik*) in the 1960s. "Everyone was buying them and we ordered one too." The time-lag between mass provision of new flats and propagation of the new style, on the one hand, and adequate increases in furniture production and supply, on the other, led to a paradoxical situation whereby the would-be consumer might take a sketch of the desired item from a magazine to a workshop to have it made up bespoke, by hand.¹⁰³ In addition to getting furniture handmade by a workshop, many of my informants made furniture themselves or had items made by moonlighting "uncles". Larisa in Leningrad proudly draws the interviewer's attention to furniture made by her father – a skilled craftsman and model maker for the Leningrad Metro construction trust – when they first moved in, which she still used (figure 8). Vasilii had little to bring with him from their cramped communal apartment when they moved into the new flat in 1960. Having built the house himself, he also made furniture for it rather than buying. He explained this as a natural solution: "Well look, I'm a carpenter [*stoliar*], [...] Well there was nothing to buy. I did it all myself." Thus, the modern contemporary style, expressly designed for and determined by the requirements of mass industrial production, was to be achieved in people's homes not through industrial production but improvised through local, individual handcraft methods and individual commissions.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

Limitations of space have only allowed me to examine a few examples, but there were numerous ways in which homemakers accommodated the new flats to their needs and tastes or resorted to seemingly un-modern ad hoc and craft methods to make them liveable. We should not automatically construe this as a matter of resistance to the state's ideal of modernity. Handmaking was not simply a rejection of the modern machine aesthetic but could serve as a way to achieve a similarly modern look through the means available. As Ekaterina's "linoleum" exemplifies, it was a way to achieve a modern lifestyle within the bounds of what was possible in their personal and local circumstances. Sometimes the design of their

handmade items even approximated the modernist contemporary style promoted by design experts in the name of good, modern taste, even though paradoxically that was a style specifically developed for industrial production. My informants' apartments may not have looked identical to the ideal images represented in advice manuals and exhibitions, yet some residents nevertheless found imaginative, improvised ways to achieve a modern interior or lifestyle on their own terms.¹⁰⁵ While aiming at similar goals and values, they nevertheless changed or diverted them to various degrees, and cumulatively, ultimately perhaps undermined the state project. As Fiske argues: "in dwelling in the landlord's place, we make it into our space; the practices of dwelling are ours, not his."¹⁰⁶

New homemakers could not resolve the paradoxes and contradictions inherent in the state's modernisation project and in the nature of modernity itself, but they found ways to live with them and make the apartment their own. Moreover, there is evidence in the interviews that – as Miller found in his study of the London council estate and Alasheev in regard to his ball bearing workers – the necessary element of craft and manual labour they put into the material environment was associated with a strong investment in the place. Anna speaks of her joy, and Ekaterina firmly associates her work on the apartment with her desire for a better life. Asked how she felt when she received her new apartment she exclaims: "Lord! I still think, to this day, that I live like a queen." Many who put work into the house and communal yard also aspired to social ideals of good citizenship and socialist community similar to those promoted in authoritative discourse, with its emphasis on participation and being a good *khoziain*.

Thus, to set the popular culture of homemaking in the conventional binary opposition between state and people, modernity and tradition, acquiescence and resistance, would foreclose many productive ways of thinking about it. By exploring the tensions between apparently contradictory processes we can begin to nuance relations between central and local, industry and craft, planning and improvisation, and replace these dialectical antitheses by more complex ambivalent models that acknowledge the role of mutuality, appropriation, accommodation or tuning in producing a modern everyday environment.

Notes

1. Susan E. Reid, "Happy Housewarming," in *Petrified Utopia: Happiness, Soviet Style*, ed. Marina Balina and Evgeny Dobrenko (London: Anthem Press, 2009), 133-60; see also Steven Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street: Mass Housing and Everyday Life after Stalin* (Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and the Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).
2. "Programme of the CPSU," in *Resolutions and Decisions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, vol. 4: The Khrushchev Years 1953-1964*, ed. Grey Hodnett (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 238-9.
3. For living conditions in postwar Soviet cities and for Stalin-era efforts to address the housing crisis see Donald Filtzer, *The Hazards of Urban Life in late Stalinist Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Mark B. Smith, *Property of Communists: The Urban Housing Program from Stalin to Khrushchev* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010).
4. N. S. Khrushchev, *O širokom vnedrenii industrial'nykh metodov, uluchshenii kachestva i snizhenii stoimosti stroitel'stva: rech' na Vsesoiuznom soveshchanii stroitelei, arkhitektorov i rabotnikov promyshlennosti stroitel'nykh materialov, stroitel'nogo i dorozhnogo mashinostroeniia, proektnykh i nauchno-issledovatel'skikh organizatsii, 7 dekabria 1954 g.* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1955); N. Khrushchev, "Remove Shortcomings in Design, Improve the Work of Architects," *Pravda and Izvestia*, 28 December 1954, transl. in *Architecture Culture 1943-1968*, ed. Joan Ockman (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), 184-8; R. W. Davies and Melanie Ilič, "From Khrushchev (1935-6) to Khrushchev (1956-64): Construction Policy Compared," University of Warwick: PERSA Working Paper no. 61, 21 April 2010 <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/persa> (last consulted 29/5/14).
5. "O razvitii zhilishchnogo stroitel'stva v SSSR," Sobranie postanovlenii Pravitel'stva Rossiiskoi Sovetskoi Federatsii Sotsialisticheskikh Respublikov, Moscow, 31 July 1957 (*Moscow: Gosizurizdat*, 1960), article 102, 332-48. See Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street*; Alfred DiMaio, Jr., *Soviet Urban Housing: Problems and Policies* (New York: Praeger, 1974), 17-19; Smith, *Property of Communists*; T. Sosnovy, "The Soviet Housing Situation Today," *Soviet Studies* 11, no. 1 (July 1959): 1-21.
6. K. Zhukov, "Tekhnicheskaia estetika i oborudovanie kvartir," *Tekhnicheskaia estetika*, no. 2 (1964), 1; Gregory D. Andrusz, *Housing and Urban Development in the USSR* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 178, table 7.5.
7. N. S. Khrushchev, *O kontrol'nykh tsifrakh razvitiia narodnogo khoziaistva SSSR na 1959-1965 gody* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1959), 59-63; L. Abramenko, L. Tormozova, eds, *Besedy o domashnem khoziaistve* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1959), 3.
8. Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 125.
9. This was a central theme of the Soviet Pavilion at the Brussels World Fair of 1958, which included a monumental painting of urban construction by Aleksandr Deineka, *For Peace*, 1958.
10. Irina Golovan, "V novom dome," *Rabotnitsa*, no. 5 (1953), 8. For more detail see Reid, "Happy Housewarming," 133-60. For sanitary conditions in postwar Soviet cities see Filtzer, *Hazards of Urban Life*.
11. I. Odintsova, "Veshchi v nashem bytu," *Sovetskaia trgovlia*, no. 7 (1961): 51.
12. Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, "Introduction," in *Socialist Modern: East German*

- Everyday Culture and Politics*, ed. Pence and Betts (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 8.
13. Charles Jenks and Nathan Silver, *Adhocism: The Case for Improvisation* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1973), 53.
 14. James Donald, "This, Here, Now: Imaging the Modern City," in *Imaging Cities: Scripts, Signs, Memory*, ed. Sallie Westwood and John Williams (London: Routledge, 1996), 180.
 15. Glenn Adamson, *The Craft Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2010), 5.
 16. James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, Ct: Yale University Press, 1998).
 17. See chapters by Susan E. Reid and by Steven Harris in *Borders of Socialism: Private Spheres of Soviet Russia*, ed. Lewis Siegelbaum (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), 145-170; 171-90; Deborah Field, *Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchev's Russia* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007); Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar, eds, *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Public and Private Life of the Soviet People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).
 18. Terence Riley, *The Unprivate House* (New York: MOMA, 1999).
 19. Compare (regarding consumption in the GDR), Judd Stitzel, "Shopping, Sewing, Networking, Complaining: Consumer Culture and the Relationship between State and Society in the GDR," in Pence and Betts, *Socialist Modern*, 253; and in Bulgaria, Dobrinka Parusheva, Ilyana Marcheva, Meglena Zlatkova, "Tinkering with Daily Life: People, State and Social(ist) Housing in Bulgaria," *Etudes balkaniques* 3 (2010): 69-91 esp. 79 ff; and on UK, Nicky Gregson, Alan Metcalfe, and Louise Crewe, "Practices of Object Maintenance and Repair: how consumers attend to consumer objects within the home," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 9, no. 2 (2009): 249-73.
 20. Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 227; Karl Marx, *Capital*, III (London, 1987 [first published 1867]), vol. 1 ch. 15. See also Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982); Pence and Betts, "Introduction," *Socialist Modern*, 11.
 21. Donna Birdwell-Pheasant and Denise Lawrence-Zuniga, "Introduction," in *House Life*, ed. Idem, (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 28; Jenks and Silver, *Adhocism*, 56. Compare Le Corbusier's proposal that the modern house should be a "machine for living in." Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (London: Architectural Press, 1927).
 22. Wolfgang Braunfels, *Urban Design in Western Europe: Regime and Architecture, 900-1900*, trans. Kenneth Northcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 38; Blair Ruble, "From Khrushcheby to Korobki," in *Russian Housing in the Modern Age: Design and Social History*, ed. William Brumfield and Blair Ruble (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 244; Timothy Oakes, "Place and the Paradox of Modernity," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87, no. 3 (1997): 510.
 23. Oakes, "Place and the Paradox of Modernity," 510.
 24. Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," [1954] in D. Farrell Krell ed., *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger* (London: Routledge, 1978), 348.
 25. Daniel Miller, "Appropriating the State on the Council Estate," *Man* 23 (1988), 354 of 353-72.
 26. *Ibid*; Daniel Miller, "Accommodating," in *Contemporary Art and the Home*, Colin Painter ed., (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 116. Miller acknowledged, however, that prevailing relations of production and distribution and the particular structure of social inequalities

- affects the meaning of rented or owner-occupied housing and the possibilities of consumption as appropriation are coloured by the consumption status of individual households. Idem, "Appropriating the State."
27. Ruble, "From Khrushchev to Korobki," 244.
 28. E.g. Ferenc Fehér, Ágnes Heller, György Márkus, *Dictatorship Over Needs: An Analysis of Soviet Societies* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984); János Kornai, *Economics of Shortage*, 2 vols (Amsterdam: North Holland Press, 1980); Julie Hessler, "Culture of Shortages: A Social History of Soviet Trade, 1917-1953" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1996); Mark Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand: The Politics of Consumerism in East Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).
 29. Ina Merkel, "Alternative Rationalities, Strange Dreams, Absurd Utopias: On Socialist Advertising and Market Research," in Pence, *Socialist Modern*, 325; Ina Merkel, *Utopie und Bedürfnis: Die Geschichte der Konsumkultur in der DDR* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1999).
 30. Merkel, "Alternative Rationalities," 326-7. For critique of the shortage paradigm see also David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, "Pleasures in Socialism? Leisure and Luxury in the Bloc," in *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc*, ed. Crowley and Reid (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 3-51; and Susan E. Reid, *Khrushchev Modern: Making Oneself at Home in the Soviet 1960s* (forthcoming).
 31. Exemplified by the work of Sheila Fitzpatrick.
 32. Michel de Certeau, *Practices of Everyday Life*; John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1989), 32.
 33. Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987); Miller, "Appropriating the State", 353-72. For a recent discussion in relation to GDR consumer culture see Milena Veenis, *Material Fantasies: Expectations of the Western Consumer World among East Germans* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012).
 34. Scott, *Seeing Like A State*, 6-7.
 35. Marianne Gullestad, "Home decoration as popular culture: Constructing homes, genders and classes in Norway," in Daniel Miller ed., *Consumption: Objects, Subjects and Mediations in Consumption* (London: Routledge, 2001), 86-115. For John Fiske, "popular culture is formed always in reaction to, and never as part of, the forces of domination," and entails forming allegiances removed from those that give social power. Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, 43.
 36. As Anna Krylova has analysed, the Cold War set the agenda for scholarship to seek out remnants of liberal subjectivity and signs of resistance against anti-liberal communist Russia. Anna Krylova, "The Tenacious Liberal Subject in Soviet Studies," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1 (2000): 120 of 119-46. On popular forms of everyday resistance or "sedition" see Vladimir Kozlov, Sheila Fitzpatrick, and Sergei Mironenko, (eds), *Sedition: Everyday Resistance in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev and Brezhnev* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011) 1-24; James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).
 37. Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 300, 303.
 38. Judy Attfield, "Bringing Modernity Home," in *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space*, ed. Irene Cieraad (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 79; Attfield, "Design as a practice of Modernity: a case for the study of the coffee table in the mid-century domestic interior," in Attfield, *Bringing Modernity Home: Writings on Popular Design and Material Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 186-207.
 39. Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Genera-*

- tion (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 9. As Judd Stitzel has argued (in regard to GDR citizens' everyday techniques for fulfilling sartorial needs and desires): "state domination and popular agency overlapped, intersected, and shaped each other." Stitzel, "Shopping, Sewing," 253-86; Pence and Betts, "Introduction," 9. See also Lewis Siegelbaum, "Cars, Cars, and More Cars: The Faustian Bargain of the Brezhnev Era," in Siegelbaum, *Borders of Socialism*, 83-103; Stephen Lovell, *Summerfolk: A History of the Dacha 1710-2000* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 163-208.
40. Interviews were conducted between 2004 and 2007 in a range of ancient and new, metropolitan and provincial cities: St Petersburg (referred to, for historical specificity, by its Soviet-era name, Leningrad); Kaluga, South-West of Moscow; the Volga cities of Kazan' and Kuibyshev (Samara); Kovdor and Apatity in the Far North; and Tartu in Estonia, as part of my research project "Everyday Aesthetics in the Modern Soviet Flat," supported by the Leverhulme Trust and AHRC. Unless otherwise stated quotations are taken from these interviews.
 41. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 5, 7, 349 and chapter 9. See also Aleksandr Vysokovskii, "Will Domesticity Return?" in Brumfield and Ruble, *Russian Housing*, 283.
 42. The "state" is used here as shorthand for a complex administrative structures and specialist agencies at different levels.
 43. Recent research has "explored the impact that deskilling and the deterioration of making-knowledge may have on cultural production and society", and conversely, the "power that comes with making". Daniel Charny, "Power of Making: The Case for Making and Skills," V&A and the Crafts Council, (4 March 2013) <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/p/powerofmaking/>; and Daniel Charny, ed., *Power of Making: The Importance of Being Skilled* (London: V&A Publishing and the Crafts Council, 2011).
 44. For detail see Reid, "Happy Housewarming." Compare filmmaker Věra Chytilová's later representation of the estates of *paneláky* in Czechoslovakia, *Panel Story* (1979) emphasising the contradiction of utopian aspirations and degradation and the symbiosis of creation and destruction. Andrew James Horton, "Against Destruction Věra Chytilová's *Panelstory* (*Prefab Story*, 1979)," *Kinoeye: New Perspectives on European Film*, 2 (2002) <http://www.kinoeye.org/02/08/horton08.php> (last consulted 30/5/2014).
 45. O. Baiar, "Dekorativnoe ubranstvo kvartiry," *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR* (henceforth *DI*), jubilee edition (1957): 17-20; RGALI (Russian State Archive of Literature and Art), f. 2329, op. 4, ed. khr. 1388, ll. 51-2 (Stenog. sobraniia [...] po obsuzhdeniu vystavki 'Iskusstvo – v byt!' 6 June 1961).
 46. M. Voskresenskaia, "Dom, v kotorom ty zhivesh'," *Rabotnitsa*, no. 8 (1962), 25.
 47. For further detail see Susan E. Reid, "The Meaning of Home," in Siegelbaum, *Borders of Socialism*, 145-70; Reid, "Building Utopia in the Back Yard: Housing Administration, Participatory Government, and the Cultivation of Socialist Community," in *Mastering Russian Spaces*, Schriften des Historischen Kollegs Kolloquien 74, ed. Karl Schlögel (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2011), 149-86. On housing as property see Smith, *Property of Communists*.
 48. "Programme of the CPSU," in Hodnett, *Resolutions*, 234-5; 238-41.
 49. Voskresenskaia, "Dom," 25; Theodore Friedgut, *Political Participation in the USSR* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); for more detail see Reid, "Building Utopia in the Back Yard," 149-86. Evidence for voluntary participation in "greening" campaigns is also found by Aleksandra Kasatkina, "K poetike i praktike modernogo urbanizma: "gorod-sad" kak tekhnologiia sotsial'noi integratsii v Obninske 1960-kh godov," (forth-

- coming 2014). Kate Brown also discusses examples of voluntary participation, especially in the maintenance of social order, and contests reductive readings of this to further evidence of the intrusiveness of the totalitarian Soviet state: *Plutopia* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 217-8.
50. The "Moral Code of the Constructor of Communism" in "Programme of the CPSU," Hodnett, *Resolutions and Decisions*, 247-8.
 51. Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844), in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan, (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 82.
 52. D.F. Kozlov, lecture, "Kommunizm i iskusstvo," GARF (State Archive of the Russian Federation), f. 9547 (Znanie), op. 1, d. 1185, ll. 11-23 (Stenog. seminara-soveshchaniia po voprosam propagandy literaturny i iskusstva, 17.10.1960).
 53. TsGA Moskvyy (Central State Archive of the City of Moscow, formerly TsAOPIM [Moscow Central Archive of Social and Political Movements]) f. 4, op. 139, d. 35: ll. 12-16. For detail see Reid, "Building Utopia in the Back Yard," 168; 173-79; and Reid, *Khrushchev Modern* forthcoming.
 54. Galina Orlova, "Apologiia strannoï veshchi: 'Malenkie khitrosti' sovet'skogo cheloveka," *Neprikosnovennyi zapas*, no. 34 (2004); E. Ustinov, "Svoimi rukami," *DI*, no. 9 (1960), supplement; O. Tanus, "Iskusstvo riadom s toboi: Abazhury," *DI*, no. 9 (1961), 43-45; "Svoimi rukami: kak oborudovat' kukhniu," *DI*, no. 3 (1961), 48-9; M. Shevtsova, "Sdelajte sami," *Rabotnitsa*, no. 11 (1960), 30; Unsigned, "Poleznye sovery," *Rabotnitsa*, no. 11 (1956), 31; O. Baiar and R. Blashkevich, *Kvartira i ee ubranstvo* (Moscow: Stroiizdat, 1962), 15; and regular features in *Kunst ja kodu*. See also Christine Varga-Harris, "Home-making and the Aesthetic and Moral Perimeters of the Soviet Home during the Khrushchev Era," *Journal of Social History* 41, no. 3 (2008). At the 1961 exhibition of model furniture, *Iskusstvo – v byt* (Art into Life), viewers expressed the wish that DIY materials and prefabricated components, such as construction panels of various dimensions and plastic seats, could be available for purchase for home construction and assembly. RGALI, f. 2329, op. 4, ed. khr. 1391, l. 29; l. 47 (visitors' book for exhibition *Iskusstvo – v byt*, 1961); Vysokovskii, "Will Domesticity Return?" in Brumfield and Ruble, *Russian Housing*, 284.
 55. Galina L lived in a 7-storey building (unusually built to a one-off design) in the southwest of Leningrad. Interview conducted by Ekaterina Gerasimova 2005 for my research project "Everyday Aesthetics in the Modern Soviet Flat," supported by the Leverhulme Trust and AHRC.
 56. Galina Orlova, "Apologiia strannoï veshchi," translated by Liv Bliss, as "Apologia for a Strange Thing: The Soviet Person's 'Little Tricks'," *Russian Studies in History* 48 (2009), 84.
 57. Compare the important study of the construction of the "socialist city" Magnitogorsk during the First Five Year Plan, Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
 58. Some of my informants present themselves in the image of this good citizen-*khoziain*. Reid, *Khrushchev Modern*, forthcoming; Cf. Vysokovskii, "Will Domesticity Return?" 284.
 59. Unless otherwise stated, unattributed quotations are taken from the interviews conducted for my research project "Everyday Aesthetics in the Modern Soviet Flat," supported by the Leverhulme Trust and AHRC.
 60. The problem, especially acute in the provinces, was thematised in public culture, e.g. in Mikhail Kalatozov's 1954 film *Vernye druz'ia* (*Faithful Friends*).

61. The problem of construction labour was widely recognised and discussed in the 1950s, including by Khrushchev, "O shirokom vnedrenii." See Davies and Ilić, "From Khrushchev."
62. Sosnovy, "Soviet Housing Situation," 13; Smith, *Property of Communists*, 35-6. Alec Nove, *Stalinism and After* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1975) 124-8; Julie Hessler, "A Post-war Perestroika? Towards a History of Private Enterprise in the USSR," *Slavic Review* 57 (1998); 516-42. On self-build see also Mark Pittaway, "Stalinism, Working-Class Housing and Individual Autonomy: The Encouragement of Private House Building in Hungary's Mining Areas, 1950-4," in *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe*, ed. Susan E. Reid and David Crowley (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 49-64.
63. Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street*, 154-6.
64. For a different example of the two-way street between social practices and authoritative public discourses, in regard to conceptions of property and inheritance, see Charles Hachten, "Separate Yet Governed: The Representation of Soviet Property Relations in Civil Law and Public Discourse," in Siegelbaum, *Borders of Socialism*, 65-82.
65. Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street*, 155.
66. Both the railway and army were major state agents of centrally directed modernisation. Retired army officers in my sample identified with this role.
67. Miller, "Appropriating the State," 353-72.
68. Reid, *Khrushchev Modern* (forthcoming); Reid, "Building Utopia." Similarly, regarding garden and dacha settlements in the Khrushchev era, Lovell finds that: "Communal self-help practices, along with the shared difficulties they were designed to overcome, bound together garden settlements more effectively than any collectivist ideology and turned them into a new form of community with its own set of values and established models of behavior." Lovell, *Summerfolk*, 197.
69. The Soviet social contract and its breach with the collapse of the Soviet Union was eloquently discussed by David L. Ransel, "Everyday Life History, Some Examples," Paper for workshop, "Everyday Life in Russia: Strategies, Subjectivities and Perspectives," Indiana University, Bloomington, 14-16 May, 2010.
70. Cf. Merkel, "Alternative Rationalities," 332; Alf Lüdtke, "The World of Men's Work, East and West," in Pence and Betts, *Socialist Modern*, 234-49.
71. Galina S., around 60 at the time of the interview in 2005, had higher education and worked as a sports trainer. She received her separate apartment at a relatively young age.
72. On ZhEK see Oleg Nazarov, *Nash zhiloi dom* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1962); Irina H. Corten, *Vocabulary of Soviet Society and Culture 1953-1991* (London: Adamantine Press, 1992), 161; Reid, "Building Utopia." On earlier forms of housing management see Yasuhiro Matsui, "Housing Partnerships, ZHAKTy, or Housing Trust? A Study of Moscow's Housing Management System, 1917-1937," *Acta Slavica Japonica* 26 (2009): 109-39.
73. This discussion of the role of the ZhEK and *domkom* is drawn from a fuller exposition in Reid, "Building Utopia"; and Reid, "The Meaning of Home".
74. Compare, on the respective roles of the party-state and of the people's own resourcefulness in the management of the war effort and evacuation, Rebecca Manley, *To the Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 3. Kate Brown makes a similar point regarding community policing in the nuclear city Ozersk. Brown, *Plutopia*, 217-18.
75. Tat'iana and her husband moved from the Ukraine to the new industrial city of Apatity in the Far North in 1961 or 1962 and both worked for the Apatity Construction Trust.

76. From the saying “от земли не будешь богатым, а будешь горбатым” (“the soil won’t make you rich but hunchbacked”).
77. On the failure to provide sewerage systems see Filtzer, *Hazards of Urban Life*.
78. Stephen Lovell, Alena Ledeneva, Andrei Rogachevskii, eds, *Bribery and Blat in Russia: Negotiating Reciprocity from the Middle Ages to the 1990s* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); Siegelbaum, *Cars for Comrades*.
79. On squatters see also Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street*, 2-4; 208-15.
80. Anneta, aged 66 when interviewed in 2006, was born and lived in Kaluga and moved to a brick-built *khreshchanka* in 1969.
81. Irina, aged 52 at the time of the interview, was an engineer who worked in a design organisation.
82. Even this was a considerable improvement over the time when Irina’s apartment was built. In 1960, the ratio was one to four, and even in Moscow, which was better provided than other parts of the country, less than half of all apartments had bathtubs or showers, although most new apartments were plumbed for it. Marshall Goldman, *The Soviet Economy: Myth and Reality* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 53; Filtzer, *Hazards of Urban Life*.
83. Ekaterina Gerasimova and Sofia Chuikina, “Obshchestvo remonta,” *Neprikosnovennyi zapas*, no. 34 (2004): <http://www.nz-online.ru>; Miller, “Accommodating.”
84. Kurt Möser, “Autobasteln: Modifying, Maintaining, and Repairing Private Cars in the GDR, 1970-1990,” in *The Socialist Car: Automobility in the Eastern Bloc*, ed. Lewis H. Siegelbaum (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 162.
85. Möser, “Autobasteln,” 158. See also Siegelbaum, “Cars, Cars, and More Cars,” 83-103; and Stitzel, “Shopping.”
86. Stitzel makes a similar point about home dressmaking in the GDR. Stitzel, “Shopping,” 260.
87. Sergei Alashev, “On a Particular Kind of Love and the Specificity of Soviet Production,” in Adamson, *The Craft Reader*, 292-4 of 287-296.
88. Adamson, editorial introduction to Alashev, “On a Particular Kind of Love,” *The Craft Reader*, 287. Similarly, Alf Lüdtke analyses the makeshift solutions and strategies used by GDR workers to meet production requirements in spite of shortages or systemic failures, and sees this as a way of breaking down the binary of “traditional” versus “modern”, since these entailed reconfiguring older practices and ideals into “amalgams” with the contingencies of their present-day circumstances. Lüdtke, “The World of Men’s Work,” 234-49.
89. Jenks and Silver, *Adhocism*, 16. Jenks sees ad hoc as equivalent to the French “bricolage”, as defined by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966) 16-19.
90. For Jenks and Silver, the ideal of “adhocism” had a radical, even anarchic agenda opposed to the effects of large corporations that standardise and limit our choice, and to the conventions of good taste embodied in modern architecture, which “deny the plurality of actual needs”. They proposed adhocism as “a new mode of direct action” emerging in the late 60s, for example in Hippie counterculture: “the rebirth of a democratic mode and style, where everyone can create his personal environment out of impersonal subsystems.” Jenks and Silver, *Adhocism*, 15.
91. Lüdtke, “The World of Men’s Work”.
92. Adamson, *The Craft Reader*, 2-3.
93. *Ibid*, 5.

94. As Raphael Samuel showed, craft played a vital role in the industrial revolution, which remained dependent on hand technology. Raphael Samuel, "The Workshop of the World," in *The Craft Reader*, ed. Adamson, 87.
95. See Reid, "Building Utopia in the Backyard"; and *Khrushchev Modern*, forthcoming; Gerasimova and Sof'ia Chuikina, "Obshchestvo remonta." Cf. Miller, "Appropriating the State," 368.
96. Advice recommended using a warm iron to remove greasy marks from wooden floors (having first wiped with benzine, sprinkled with potato starch or talcum, and covered with thin paper). "Esli ty novosel," 32.
97. Khrushchev, *O shirokom vnedrenii*, 32. In a survey in the late 1940s residents expressed a wish for linoleum floor covering in the kitchen: N. Andreev, "Gigienicheskaia otsenka novogo zhilishchnogo stroitel'sta v Moskve (period 1947-1951 gg)," *Gigiiena i sanitaria*, no. 6 (1956): 18-24.
98. For detail see Susan E. Reid, "Communist Comfort: Socialist Modernism and the Making of Cosy Homes in the Khrushchev Era," in *Homes and Homecomings: Gendered Histories of Domesticity and Return*, ed. K. H. Adler and Carrie Hamilton (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 11-44 (originally published as *Gender & History* 21, no. 3 (2009): 465-98).
99. Orlova, "Apologia for a Strange Thing," 76; Varga-Harris, "Homemaking and the aesthetic and moral perimeters".
100. Victor Buchli, "Khrushchev, Modernism, and the Fight against Petit-Bourgeois Consciousness in the Soviet Home," *Journal of Design History* 10 (1997): 170-72.
101. Born in Leningrad region in the 1920s, Evgeniia was the daughter of an artisan glass blower. She moved to Leningrad for higher education in 1945. She moved into a five-storey brick block in South West Leningrad in 1960.
102. The fact that large numbers of people had to discard their old furniture because it would not fit in to the new flats deprived it of value on the second hand market, as one speaker noted at a discussion of model interiors for small-scale flats in the Leningrad Section of the Union of Architects. TsGALI SPb (Central State Archive of Literature and Art, St Petersburg) f. 341, op.1, 526, ll. 37-38.
103. T. Fetisov, "Po vashim chertezham," *Izvestiia*, 16 August 1959; S. Gutnin, "Servant-kholodil'nik," *Mestnaia promyshlennost'* no. 3 (1963): 3.
104. The situation was similar in regard to clothes, where home dressmaking remained an important way to produce women's and children's clothes.
105. Cf. Vysokovskii, "Will Domesticity Return?," 283 of 271-308. While modernist design theory in the postwar years did not acknowledge cultural diversity, "this, however, did not inhibit residents from making themselves 'at home' in a variety of ways that subverted the homogeneous unity of modern design." Attfeld, "Bringing Modernity Home," 77.
106. Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, 33, with reference to De Certeau.

About the Author

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