The meaning of housing from the social mobility perspective: reflection on research methods

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Approach to the housing from the sociobiographical perspective

• Current housing studies traces the interactions between house and other aspects of society, providing context to debate housing through issues of space, social, welfare and the environment (Clapham, Clark, Gibb, 2012)

• Housing pathways approach – framework between action (subjective meanings, housing practices) and structure (public policy, institutions, opportunities of households) (Clapham 2002; Clapham 2005)

• The dwelling as phenomena interinfluenced the social position of individuals. The house/dwelling based on Bourdieu theory is an indicator structuring the social space (Bourdieu, 1984)
Data set of biographical interviews (2015-2016, Russia)

44 in-depth biographical interviews focused on the life course with residents of Moscow, Yekaterinburg and Nizhny Tagil. ½ blue-collar workers and ½ white-collar workers. Below are info about 6 interviews conducted in Yekaterinburg:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Professional status</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Chief of department in insurance company</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Chief of department in governmental organization</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>General manager in chain of restaurants</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Factory worker</td>
<td>Low income</td>
<td>General secondary education (school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Owner of small business</td>
<td>Middle+</td>
<td>Higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Deputy head in industrial organization</td>
<td>Middle+</td>
<td>Higher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research questions

What is the meaning of dwelling from a social mobility perspective?

How to developed our instrument in order to be more precisely in the housing paths investigations?
1 stage of analysis
(based on 6 interviews)

3 groups of life-styles

- **Young White-collar workers**
  - Dwelling provided (bought) by “parents” is consistent to their life style and give them opportunity for further mobility
  - The “inheritance” of familial capital (mobility)

- **Blue-collar workers, women**
  - Dwellings are received by “parents” from manufacturing. It is very limited in space and have interior of “elderly”. The women have no familial or own capitals (economical, cultural, social) for further mobility
  - The “inheritance” of familial capital (immobility)

- **White collar workers, mature men**
  - Dwellings are chosen (bought and “new”) based on family needs and lifestyle. It objectify the social position and give the opportunity for family members and children development
  - The capital created by dynamic and adaptive person (dwelling objectified the mobility)
Young white collar workers, men: life-style and social position

- **Cultural capital** development: specialized school and educational programs
- Young **parents and friendly relationship**, parents as life providers
- Upgrading professional **mobility and stable income**
- Live in “own” **dwelling in city center and use it’s advantages**
- Have **hobby** as yoga, travel, car

Dwelling provided by “parents” is consistent to their life-style and give them opportunity for further mobility
Chief of department in insurance company, higher education, 25 y. o., has a girlfriend

It is very comfortable that I live here, so I have a lot of friends, everything is on the way and all meet here. Well, I’m the “darling” of the center and “darling” of the fortune. Grateful to my parents this apartment is in the center.

The parents bought dwelling in center. 2 rooms, lives alone
Chief of department in governmental organization, higher education, 28 y. o., has a girlfriend

In our country, to buy an apartment on their own financial … is unreal. It is necessary to kill someone or something to steal.

In my case, 2/3 of money grandmother gave me and 1/3 I saved myself. Grandmother presented me an apartment, which she inherited from her parents. I sold it and it helps me to buy this dwelling.
Blue-collar workers, women: life-style and social position

- Involved in **manual labour** and **feel income limited**
- Parents/grandmother from manual labour and **dwellings are provided by manufactory in Soviet time**
- Live in **limited dwelling space**: together with the elderly (couple), feel at home like a “guest”, have negative experience of living with boyfriend (back home)
- **Don’t have a plan of life** and live “passively” (don’t involved in city-center practices, but live in center, not traveling)
- **Close to criminal groups** (parents, boyfriend)

Dwellings are received by “parents” from the manufacturing. It is very limited in space and have interior of “elderly”. The women have no familial or own capitals (economical, cultural, social) for further mobility
Manager/ “unskilled labors” in chain of restaurants, 26 y. o., higher education, single

I lived in the one grandparents, then the other, then I lived with my dad, when mom left for another town...

The grandfather “received” dwelling from the manufactory. 2 rooms, lives with the elderly in the city center
Factory worker, 45 y. o. “school’s” education (don’t have higher education), single

I don’t have a plan of my life.... I became a victim of the numerous economical crisis: in 1998, 2008 and 2012.

How I can plan if I have nothing for planning?

The parents “received” dwelling from the manufactory. 2 rooms, lives with the elderly parents in the city center.
Mature white-collar workers men: life-style and social position

• **Moving** to Yekaterinburg from small city (Berezovskiy, Orsk) for the education
• Upgrading **professional mobility**, stable high income
• The time of career development is the nineties, successful adaptation to new market economy
• **Classical own family** (wife and children)
• Rich housing experience and **new “purchased” dwelling** which is **suits for family**
• Regular **travel for work and vacations**

Dwellings are chosen (bought and “new”) based on family needs and life-style. It give the opportunity for family members and children development
Owner of small business, higher education, 45 y. o., wife and child

Well, of course we want also another house – suburban home, because my wife wants to go outside the city and to be able to breathe fresh air, have own walls etc

He bought this dwelling for money from own salary. 2 rooms, lives in the city center
Deputy head in industrial organization, 45 y.o., higher education, wife and 2 children

We live in a new dwelling complex "Sunny Island" new residential quarter, not far from the city center. Close to our home is the new school with French specialization, where is going my youngest daughter.

He bought this dwelling for money from own salary + money from wife’s inheritance. 3 rooms, lives in the city center.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The parental capital</th>
<th>Multigenerational housing</th>
<th>Involvement in the housing market</th>
<th>Drivers of housing mobility</th>
<th>Gender patterns</th>
<th>Level requirements for housing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blue-collar workers</strong></td>
<td>Parental housing</td>
<td>Popular, no way to move</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Geographical mobility (from village to city)</td>
<td>Women moved to husband in the early age</td>
<td>Low: “happily have it?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>White collar workers</strong></td>
<td>Financial support, buying an apartment</td>
<td>Not popular, orientation for separate living</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Significant step in life course</td>
<td>Women are more supported by buying an apartment</td>
<td>Rather high and want to have spacious, comfortable, and even luxury housing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Analysis was extended till 44 interviews and all data was loaded in INVIVO 10. The analysis was made with the help of Nina Chukina*
Pre-conclusion

• This empirical data confirms P. Bourdieu theory (Bourdieu, 1984) about interactions between social and physical spaces: physical space is projection of social space

• Habitat (place of living) and habitus (social experience) are interfering and influenced to each other

• Dwelling is an indicator of social space, it objectified the social position

• Individuals with capitals / have effort for it creation positively shift positions (mobility inside class) and who are originally limited in capitals reproduced life-style and practices of low class (immobility inside class)

Interviews experiences: methodological considerations

Requirements for further research

- More **housing oriented design**:
  - Housing theme require great rapport relationship with informants (closer, more time, several contacts)
  - **As local as possible** (one or several local objects, ethnographic case-studies)
  - The interviews should be enriched with field diaries from researcher

Limitations

- **Secondary data** (transcripts, photos) has problems with interpretation: selection of the facts, trajectories and meanings (repeated in several interviews)
- **Context** is data about distinction (housing status, visualization of the housing scale etc)