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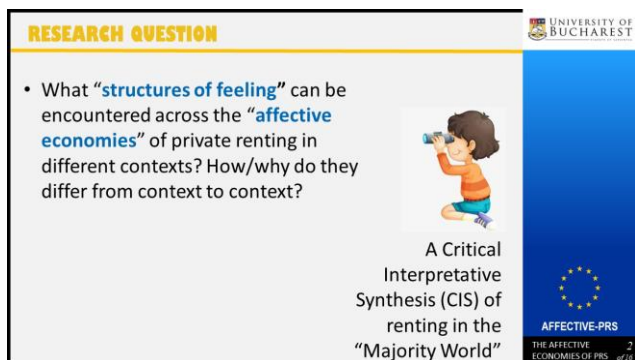
Structures of feeling: the affective economies of private renting in the Majority World

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Thank you for this kind introduction. I am delighted to visit the University of York, where I used to come when the annual Housing Studies Conference was held. Hello everyone, thank you for attending my presentation, in-person or online. I look forward to your comments, please do not refrain from speaking your mind, this will help me improve my paper, which is now in full draft and quite ready for submission. My name is Adriana Soaita and I am a MASCA Fellow at the University of Bucharest and a Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the University of Glasgow.



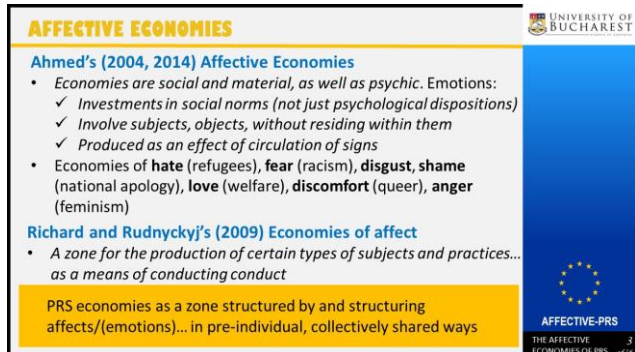
RESEARCH QUESTION

- What “structures of feeling” can be encountered across the “affective economies” of private renting in different contexts? How/why do they differ from context to context?

A Critical Interpretative Synthesis (CIS) of renting in the “Majority World”

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In this paper I ask: What ‘structures of feeling’ can be encountered across the ‘affective economies’ of private renting in different contexts, and how/why do they differ from context to context? I will try to answer these questions by drawing on a Critical Interpretative Synthesis of the qualitative literature on renting in the so-called Majority World. Before I present the methodology and my findings, let me explain what I mean by the two concepts highlighted in blue. I will start with the latter.



AFFECTIVE ECONOMIES

Ahmed's (2004, 2014) Affective Economies

- Economies are social and material, as well as psychic. Emotions:
 - Investments in social norms (not just psychological dispositions)
 - Involve subjects, objects, without residing within them
 - Produced as an effect of circulation of signs
- Economies of **hate** (refugees), **fear** (racism), **disgust**, **shame** (national apology), **love** (welfare), **discomfort** (queer), **anger** (feminism)

Richard and Rudnyckj's (2009) Economies of affect

- A zone for the production of certain types of subjects and practices... as a means of conducting conduct

PRS economies as a zone structured by and structuring affects/(emotions)... in pre-individual, collectively shared ways

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We own the expression of ‘affective economies’ to Sara Ahmed. In her ‘Affective economies’ book, she starts from the widely agreed statement that “economies are social and material, as well as psychic” but she developed her analysis with a very specific take on emotions, akin to some taken in theories of affect. Sarah Ahemd sees emotions as affective investments in social norms, involving subjects and objects, but without residing within them. Emotions, she argues, are produced as an effect of the social circulation of signs.

In her book she dedicates one chapter to each of the economies of hate, fear, disgust, shame, love and so on. **Her method is interpretation** of texts, for instance statements of right-wing organizations, political speeches but not in the usual manner of discourse analysis but rather mapping the flows of emotions between subjects and objects. E.g. in her chapter on fear, she analyses the description of an encounter in a train between a white mother with her white child, and a black man. Ahmed shows that ‘fear’ does not resides in the child who fears the man, nor in the man who fears his effect on the child but in the social reading of the encounter. The black man feels excited (we do not know why), but his excitement is misinterpreted as aggression, producing fear in the child, who turns closer to his mom for protection. Recognizing the fear in the child, the man becomes anxious but his anxiety appears even more fearsome to the mother and child, who thus decide to move away, whereby affectively re-enacting histories of racialisation.

Another perspective is that of Richard and Rudnyckj’s (2009). They define economies of affect *as a zone for the production of certain types of subjects and practices... as a means of conducting conduct*. And you will recognize in this quote the stamp of Foucault who inspired their perspective as opposed to Freud’s in Ahmed.

Combining these views, I propose to see the PRS economies as a medium structured by and structuring affects/(emotions)... in pre-individual, collectively shared ways.

STRUCTURES OF FEELING

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Williams' (1977a,b) structures of feeling (SoF):

- It is as firm and definite as 'structure' suggests, yet it operates in the most delicate and least tangible part of our activity...
- In one sense, this structure of feeling is the culture of a period/[group]
- Social experiences in solution, distinct from other social semantic formations which have been precipitated and are more evidently and more immediately available [world-view, ideology]
- Not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought ["practical consciousness"]
- Meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, at once interlocking and in tension [analysis of literary work]
 - (Pre)emergent, dominant, residual as co-existing

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The key concept I use to understand the affective economies of renting is Raymond Williams' "Structures of feeling", to which he dedicated his entire career. He did not offer a definition, remaining purposefully vague. Hence, scholars tend to pick quotes from across his work. He stated that a structure of feeling "is as firm and definite as 'structure' suggests, yet it operates in the most delicate and least tangible part of our activity. In one sense, this structure of feeling is the culture of a

period/[or of a group]". According to another largely quoted 'definition', SoF are "Social experiences in solution, distinct from other social semantic formations which have been precipitated and are more evidently and more immediately available [such as, he says, world-view or ideology]"

With this concept, Raymond Williams aimed to counteract the too abstract Marxist theory and to transgress dominant dichotomies, such as structure and agency; emotion and reason. Accordingly, the concept of SoF does not aim to position "feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought". Such social experiences in solution only manifest at that space between unconsciousness and consciousness – which Williams calls the **practical consciousness**. Finally, to observe "meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, at once interlocking and in tension", Williams argued that the best if not the only method is social analysis of literary work because creative writers often show that special sensitivity of naming that which is still to a large extent hidden, has not yet reached the domain of the spoken. His work was much criticized at his time, including by his Marxist fellows, but he never stopped developing it, for instance with the notions of (pre)emergent, dominant, residual structures of feeling as co-existing.

STRUCTURES OF FEELING

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Reenergized within the "affective turn" (Clough and Halley 2007)

- The 'affective present' consists of multiple, co-existing, structures of feeling that enter into loose relation, rather than tight homology... there is not and cannot be a single typically 'neoliberal' structure of feeling (Anderson 2014, 2016)
- A collective experience that mostly goes without saying... A sense of a shared affective quality through which the present is rendered sensible and apprehended... (Berlant 2015)
- Inscribed through materiality (atmospheres, scenes, bodies, things) and soft power (moods, discourse, morality, common sense)
- A sense of inevitability, permacrisis, entitlement, waithood, distrust

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He might have been very pleased to see that his ideas were reenergized within the 'affective turn' but they were interpreted in more plural terms. For instance, there is not just one epochal structure but many "that enter into loose relation, rather than tight homology". Like Williams, Lauren Berlant sees structures of feeling as manifesting in that space of practical consciousness – "that which goes without saying – A sense of a shared affective quality through which the present is rendered sensible and

apprehended." Affects theorists see SoF as inscribed within life through materiality (atmospheres, scenes, bodies, things) and soft power (moods, discourse, morality, common sense). Examples of SoF include a sense of inevitability, permacrisis, entitlement, waithood, distrust. You may be familiar with some of these concepts but perhaps not seen as SoF.

STRUCTURES OF FEELING IN THE PRS

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- **Greed/exploitation** (Marxist thought, Engels 1872): antagonistic interests of haves/have-nots (emotions: excess, selfishness; but also exhaustion, distrust, anger, hopelessness, revolutionary hope)
- **Ethics of care** (Gibson-Graham 2008): diverse economies of mutual interests, e.g. welfare states, commons (emotions: love, altruism, generosity, sentimentality, kindness; but also implicitly othering, suspicion)
- **Cruel optimism** (Berlant 2011:1): "when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing", holding fantasies which no longer can be achieved, attachments that hurt (emotions: hopeless hope, disappointment, frustration, boredom, waithood, distrust)

• A loose bundle of affective experiences, at once interlocking and in tension...

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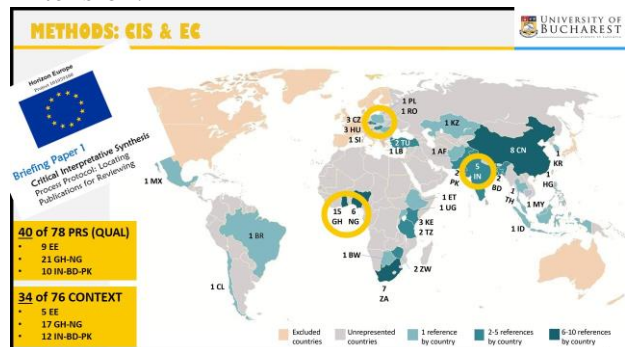
For the purpose of this paper, I thought of bringing together three lines of thought that help us see three SoF likely to permeate, frame, and otherwise shape both landlords' and tenants' practices and experiences. I will be brief here.

Greed/exploitation is a structure of feeling developed directly from Marxist thought and it is centered on the antagonistic interests of the haves and the have-nots. In brackets I noted a range of linked emotions, such as excess, anger or revolutionary hope.

Ethics of care is a structure of feeling mostly discussed in diverse economies of mutual interests, including the welfare state, the commons, and even in relation to markets perhaps not as they are but as they could be

Cruel optimism is a structure of feeling exposed by Laurent Berlant, perhaps the least known and most complex of the three. Berlant defines a relation of cruel optimism “*when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing*”, for instance holding fantasies which no longer can be achieved, attachments that hurt.

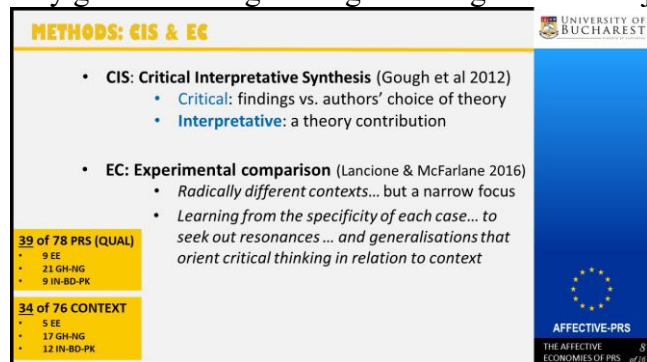
To conclude, I see SoF as loose bundles of related affective experiences, which are at once interlocking and in tension.



I will only briefly detail my methodology. Many of the authors I mentioned, e.g. Sara Ahmed, Raymond Williams and Laurent Berlant performed analysis of texts. I also advance a reading of text that is of qualitative academic scholarship which focuses on tenants and landlords in the Majority World, and I look at both the words of the authors and the words of participants as reported by the authors. Suffice saying that: (1) I performed systematic searches in bibliographical databases and manually searched on key journals (2)

Later, I checked the references of the finally selected papers, and included the relevant ones for reviewing. (3) By reading titles and abstracts, I selected 78 references for reviewing and 76 for context.

As this literature is not only small but also spread out by countries, I had to focus the geography of my analysis. I decided to include: **Eastern Europe** as this relates to my other work packages in this project; **West Africa** and the **Indian subcontinent** because they were well represented in the sample and together they gave me a large enough coverage of the ‘Majority World’.



Just a final word on methods. My aim is to develop a Critical Interpretative Synthesis of this literature, particularly in the sense of making a theoretical contribution to housing studies – rather than aggregating findings, which will be impossible given the fragmented nature of the sampled literature. I got inspiration from Lancione & McFarlane method of ‘**experimental comparison**’ that is comparing “*radically different contexts*” but within a narrow focus.

They compared sanitation use by homeless people in Turin, Italy with sanitation use by slum dwellers’ in Mumbai, India. As I travel across much more topics and countries than they did, I retain their aim of ‘*learning from the specificity of each case... to seek out resonances ... and generalisations that orient critical thinking in relation to context*’. I would characterise my approach as dialogic rather than comparative that is creating a dialogue by assembling different cases to create a story, not unlike assembling the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

FINDINGS		
EXPLOITATION	ETHICS OF CARE	CRUEL OPTIMISM
By the state <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property restitution Slum clearance 	By the market <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caring markets LL/TE symbiosis Prejudiced markets 	Big dreams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ‘good’ city life Struggle to own
By the market <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advance Rent Poverty Business 	By communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caring migrant communities Free/kin renting 	Hopeless desires <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic housing quality Social housing

I will now move to present my findings. To clarify, for each of the three SoF proposed, I will dedicate two slides, discussing one topic mainly, which is shown in bold letters. But I want to show you that in my paper I give more examples, which I indicated in grey writing on the slide.

First I must say that I do not necessarily understand exploitation in the economic terms of monopolistic power but rather as a loose bundle of affects privileging a certain view of what fair might be said to be, whether

EXPLOITATION: STATE VIOLENCE

A bundle of affects privileging a certain view of what 'fair' might be said to be

Property restitution ("legal robbery")

- **Context:** nationalized buildings restituted to prior-owners then sold to investors... who decided to evict (Lancione 2019)
- State-turned-private tenants:
 - **POL:** "It hurts me very much up to today. I cannot deal with it ... We became someone's purchase" (Łuczak and Ławrynowicz 2021)
- **SoF:** historic justice, anticommunist and pro-market moods

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we refer to fair rents, fair policies or a fair regimes of accumulation. As such and with others, I read property restitution in Eastern Europe as state violence, which opened the door to exploitation. To give you a brief context: nationalized properties during communism were restituted to prior owners or their heirs, then sold on to private investors... who then decided to evict (Lancione 2019). The quote gives an indication of how exploitation feels for these state-turned-private tenants: *It hurts me*

very much up to today. I cannot deal with it ... We became someone's purchase (Łuczak and Ławrynowicz 2021) The affective structures that made restitution possible were a drive for historic justice, which can in fact never be achieved in in-kind terms proposed in EE, as well as popular anti-communist and pro-market moods.

EXPLOITATION: THE MARKET

The illegal 2-to-5-years Advance Rent in GHA

- **Context:** Rent Control and huge housing shortages
 - "Unlawful, greedy, abusive, unjust, fraudulent, unfair, stressful, soul destroying, makes me really sick, home is like a living in hell" (Luginaah et al. 2010).
- **Landlords' justification:** **economics** (low-rents in high-inflation), **tenant care** (security, paying pause), **family care** (make a living, school fees), **collective care** (contribute new supply when expanding one's portfolio)

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Forms of exploitation by the market are more explicit, and one of most striking one is the 2-to-5 years Rent-Advance in Ghana. In both, West Africa and the Indian subcontinent, there are many Rent Control Acts, but while they are mostly avoided elsewhere, they seem to stand firm in Ghana. Consequently, landlords demand the rent to be paid in advance for a long period of time. Tenants see this illegal practice as 'unlawful', 'greedy', 'abusive', 'injustice', 'fraudulent', 'unfair' 'soul destroying', 'stressful', 'makes me really sick'. But

landlords justify it with economic reasons but most interestingly with ethics of tenant care (security, paying pause), family care (make a living, school fees) and collective care (contribute new supply/expand portfolio). Ghana's context of huge housing shortages clearly creates landlord monopoly and I find it particularly striking the way in which exploitation is justified by ethics of care just as Sara Ahmed showed that hate for some people, i.e. the refugees, is justified with love for other people, i.e. the nation's hard working households.

ETHICS OF CARE: THE MARKET

The exceptional caring markets of SLV (Sendi, Mali 2015)

- **Context:** balanced supply/demand, relative affluence, small social distance between landlords/tenants → "satisfaction on both sides"
- **SoF** of historic equality

Landlord/tenant 'symbiosis' (NGA & IND, PAK, BGD)

- **Context:** poor landlords/tenants in compound houses
 - **NGA:** "I have to improve the house because I live here. I want it to look nice because I am living in it" (Ulamae 2021).
- **SoF** of shared fate, mutual dependency (but also tension was reported; especially in GHA)

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I will now move to ethics of care, and I wish to flag **the exception of the caring markets** of Slovenia, specifically rooted in balanced supply/demand, relative affluence, small social distance between landlords/tenants that is an affective context of historic equality and mutual interest. Indeed, by some measures, Slovenia shows more equality than Sweden. Sendi and Mali were surprised to find out that in a neo-liberal, non-regulated PRS, both tenants and landlords were satisfied despite prevailing discourses of landlord greed. But

these fundamentals are hard to achieve and require long-term progressive policies.

Another market relationship of cre was the case of LL/TT symbiosis. Much of the renting arrangements in the developing world take the form of resident-LL renting out rooms in compound houses where LL and TE are not only physically but also socially close to each other. Some scholars see this arrangement positively and there are empirical insights to support this view. For instance, resident landlords appear to better maintain their property and to be more understanding if tenants must delay paying their rent for some good reasons. There is a sense of shared fate, of mutual dependency. But, as observed in the Global North, living as a lodger increases LL/TE power asymmetries, and may impose additional social control and increase tension. The SoF of mutual dependency is clearly aligned with structural forces but not in rigid ways. For instance, a sense of symbiosis is less likely in Ghana where the Advance Rent is particularly resented.

ETHICS OF CARE: COMMUNITIES

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Caring slum communities

- **Context:** filtering of new rural-migrant tenants by communities of origin, ethnicity, religion (issue: group homophily)
 - **BGD:** *"Kin groups and fellow villagers show hospitality in terms of food, rented accommodation, even some monetary loans as well as finding a job and providing knowledge about the city in the initial stage"* (Huq-Hussain 1996)
- **SoF** of collective belonging

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Now I move to Ethics of Care in communities. In the sampled literature I found evidence on both, the romanticizing and criminalizing of slums communities, including by authors themselves. Huq-Hussain, see the quote in blue, leans perhaps to the former when they observe the filtering of new rural-migrant tenants by communities of origin, ethnicity, religion, and the support they receive based on affective structures of collective belonging. When I say this perspective is

perhaps romanticizing I do not mean to deny the existence and the importance of such support, particularly at arrival, but to observe that group homophily may rise issues of social mobility. Even though slum dwellers migrated from great distance, once arrived in the city they seem reluctant - for very good reasons - to change neighbourhoods and prefer to work close to their residence which may reduce their opportunities for social mobility.

CRUEL OPTIMISM: BIG DREAMS

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"...in most Indian cities, there was no such edenic past to lose; there is only a more egalitarian world to gain" (Chattaraj et al 2017)

The promise of the 'good life' in cities

- **PAK:** *"migration to big cities is accompanied with hope to get better livelihood. The idea... is complemented with provision of all basic infrastructure with permanent source of earning in a healthy environment. However, it is very disappointing that most end up in informal settlements for the rest of their lives"* (Malik et al 2020)

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Now I move to relations of cruel optimism. Lauren Berlant developed her concept in the space of the Global North where 'the good life' promises of full employment, welfare state and social mobility were strong in the past but weathered in the present. They called for scholars to explore the concept in other worlds, which I also try to do in this paper. And I will start with this optimistic quote: *"...in most Indian cities, there was no such edenic past to lose; there is only a more egalitarian world to gain"*. While I have my

doubts about 'more equality', there was not 'edenic past to lose' in Eastern Europe liberated from communism and in the developing world liberated from past empires, particularly in countries with stronger democracies, such as the new EU member states, India and Ghana.

But this is not to say that people in these countries do not attach themselves to big fantasies for which they are ready to suffer whatever it takes, as stated in one of the papers I reviewed, for the promise of a better future.

Such a big dream is the promise of the 'good life' in cities, mostly a cruel fantasy as observed by Malik and others: *"migration to big cities is accompanied with hope to get better livelihood. The idea... is complemented with provision of all basic infrastructure with permanent source of earning in a healthy environment. However, it is very disappointing that most end up in informal settlements for the rest of their lives"* (Malik et al 2020)

Of course many have achieved this dream as shown by increasing rates of urbanization, which raises a question that cut across the Cruel Optimism scholarship: how do we differentiate between situations of cruel optimism and optimism? Based on achieving the desired outcome, based on the cost of achieving that outcome or based on one's contentment or otherwise of having achieved or not the desire outcome?

CRUEL OPTIMISM: HOPELESS DESIRES

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Basic housing quality: cruel pessimism(BGD, NGA, PAK)

BGD: *"Municipalities are responsible for providing basic services, but lack the funds and capability... The costs are enormous... The situation will grow even more critical in the near future"* (UN report in Huq-Hussain 1996)



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If the dreams of urbanization is a phenomena of scale and keeps room for optimism, I also want to give one examples that border the fine line between cruel optimism and cruel pessimism.

This is the hopeless desire for very basic housing quality, particularly in Nigeria, Bangladesh and Pakistan where the state is unwilling to engage in slum upgrading. I quote: *"Municipalities are responsible for providing basic services, but lack the funds and capability... The costs are enormous... The situation will*

grow even more critical in the near future". As housing shortages are huge, rural migrants and the poor must find ways to provide for themselves, hence, very poor housing quality is only likely to be reproduced.

However, the situation on the ground is by no means static. With increase affluence, LL start to address the needs of the better off, merging rooms in compound houses to provide for apartments, incrementally building apartments, or developers entering the market. But this transformation of the housing stock also implies that the poor and rural migrants who, continue to come to the cities, will find fewer affordable places.


CONCLUSIONS: SO WHAT?

Theoretical insights:


- Shows the lived experience is not only shaped by economic and political structures but also by structures of feeling through which those other structures are both reproduced/questioned
- Brings to the fore silenced fantasies (social housing; city life; housing quality) and illuminates the cruel choices required to maybe achieve them and attain social mobility
- Reminds that markets are embedded in social bonds, hence 'tenure' are fluid arrangements

Policy details matter but so do the 'fundamentals':

- Huge housing shortages require state action
- Rent control is not a substitute for social housing



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Now I will conclude by asking, so what? **In terms of a theoretical contribution, I hope that reading the PRS experiences in terms of the three SoF proposed:** (1) Shows that the lived experience of private renting is not only shaped by economic and political structures but also by structures of feeling through which those other structures are both reproduced and questioned; (2) Also, my reading brings to the fore silenced fantasies while illuminates the cruel choices required to maybe attain social mobility; (3) My analysis reminds us that markets are embedded in weak and strong social bonds, hence 'tenure' are fluid, affective arrangements between many

actors

In terms of policy, my analysis shows that **policy details matter** but so do the politically-constructed structure of 'fundamentals': (i) Huge housing shortages and widespread poor housing quality require state action; (ii) Rent control is not a substitute for social housing but it also does not seem to halt the provision of renting housing

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