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**Mental Stereotypes of "*Homo Sovieticus*" as  
Reflected in Architectural and Industrial Design  
by J. Rozin, E. Pavlovskaja, I. Zarinskaia**

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# **MENTAL STEREOTYPES OF 'HOMO SOVETICUS' AS REFLECTED IN ARCHITECTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL DESIGN**

This paper is an analysis of materials used in special design games that we devised to teach students the ABCs of design thinking.

The idea of teaching through games (or role-playing) is not new in Russia; it has been implemented actively for the last ten to twelve years, although, admittedly, mainly in on-the-job-training ("the training of the trained"). Design games and a variety of role-playing are popular methods among designers and architects. These games were widely implemented by the VNIITE system (the All-Union Research Institute of Industrial Esthetics) in the 1980s.

We tried to use design games in a special course called "Theory of Design" to teach junior students at a higher school of architecture and industrial design. Traditionally it was only a lecture course, a body of information given to students the object of which was to teach them to correctly and consciously use the terms and categories that describe the design process. Practice showed that this objective was never achieved. As a rule, students were completely helpless in describing their designs, in substantiating their decisions, etc. Their practical and technical skills existed apart from their knowledge, which was revealed only in the form of slogans and formal declarations, i.e., the organic interconnection between students' thought and action was broken.

The situation called for remedial action, so we decided to take advantage of the method of role-playing and organize an integrated teaching process in which action would be conscious and thought, active. We called our integrated version "design-culture training games." The principle of "responsibility" was put forward as the basis for design culture—responsibility before the natural evolutionary course of history, culture, and the individual and his needs. Thus, the banner

handed over to the students symbolically bore the inscription : DO NOT HARM!

The requirement "to think up something new" (in this case, to design anything at all) came up against the necessity of taking care of the old so as not—God forbid!—to cause any harm. This produced a problematic situation demonstrating the daily practice of design. A complex problematic situation (problematization) was the basic "play" element. The object of the game was to provide students with a better grasp of a problem and prompt them to find an untraditional method for its solution. If students get involved in such a game, they not only assimilate the traditional lecture course, which is structured and explained in doses in a special way but immediately translate it into action. The very conditions of the game, based on brainstorming under the strong pressures of time and criticism, force the players "to grasp" at the information with which they are prompted.

The game was organized as follows. (It was first applied during the 1989-1990 academic year and was resumed with new participants this year). At the first orientation lectures we suggested that the students develop a novel, nontraditional idea of "the dwelling of the future." To set their fantasies free, they were told to forget "home truths," i.e., the backward technology of the Soviet Union, and to imagine themselves as "Japanese designers." The only limitation (which we described above) was that the design should be "responsible." The classes included lectures on the specific features of futuristic design; students were divided into groups of 5, 7, and 9 which organized themselves and developed a design theme on their own. During subsequent classes, the groups worked independently (holding occasional consultations with the instructors) and were both excited and energetic. These classes were followed by a general colloquium during which each group submitted its sketch (and accompanying comments) for discussion and criticism by classmates and instructors. These sketches were the preliminary results of the teamwork and illustrated their general design construction.

A total of 175 students took part in the game, of which 75 were students of industrial design (all first-year students) and 75 students of

architecture (divided equally into two groups of first-year students and one group of second-year students). Analysis of the materials submitted by the students at the colloquium suddenly revealed to us a completely new realm in the theory of design. It subsequently revolutionized not only our teaching techniques, but the very essence of the subject and the way in which we arranged the following stages of the design game.

The first thing to do was compile a catalog of stereotypes. We discerned the following picture:

1) Mother's Womb or Motherland: These are infantile designs of a dwelling which performs motherly care functions. A room or an apartment controls the temperature, lighting, and air. It produces a chair that takes on the shape of the consumer's buttocks at the very moment he wants to sit down, or bristles with pins when he begins to nod off over his work. The matrimonial bed is a pious observer of God's commandment: "Do not commit adultery." When an offense is committed, it releases an electric current through the body of the offender. Sensitive monitors respond to the physical, psycho-physiological, and spiritual demands of the inhabitant. The home becomes a part of his organism: the floor, the walls, and the ceiling pulsate, contract or expand, to produce various functional forms such as lighting fixtures, chairs and videoscreens that switch on unexpectedly. The furniture constantly changes shape and function; objects appear and disappear, the walls change color—"tuning in" to the nuances of the psychological state of mind of the inhabitant. The inhabitant is placed under conditions of almost complete and total care similar to that of a fetus in its mother's womb, the only difference being that his living conditions do not depend on the state of the mother's organism. This likeness to a womb is reinforced by a tendency to place the inhabitant in an aquatic environment, which was observed in many designs. Designs of underwater houses used the principle of the submarine; the rigorous conditions of an underwater environment permitted the "womb" concept to be combined with yet another syndrome, that of "minimization", described below.

The applicability of the "mother" analogy was confirmed in discussions with the authors of the designs. Conversations with the authors of the most servile designs made clear that the designs meant "house/mother" rather than "house/servant," a dwelling which was to take special care of its inhabitants. We were insistent in clarifying whether such a super-caring house would encourage subconscious leanings and/or bad habits in the inhabitants. How would it react to clashes between their interests? How would the house/womb behave if you had to go to bed in order to get up early for work the next day, yet wanted to watch a thriller? Would it reproduce your bad taste in adjusting the interior? Would it slam the soundproof door to your daughter's room in your face if she were tired and wanted to be alone, when you, on the contrary, were excited and felt like talking? Whose side would the house take if someone had the idea of peeping into the household?

To our amazement, the authors of servile designs were resolute in preferring tyrannical motherly care. If, for instance, the house felt that you should have a nap and noticed that you were yawning, it would stop showing the thriller, dim the lights, and turn on soft music by Pergolezi or Edison Denisov, of course. You would not hear Michael Jackson no matter how much you insisted. And you would get an old print over your bed to look at instead of a naked girl the size of the wall. The house/womb would not let you secretly check if your daughter was reading a book by Zola, hidden in the half-opened drawer, instead of doing mathematics. It would know by itself what to do with your daughter so that you would not have to worry about her reading a book not suited for her age. Thus, if this theme is developed consistently, comfort turns into discomfort and freedom disappears.

2) Horn of Plenty: This design is a modification of the "womb," although devoid of the latter's totalitarianism and containing some elements of an environmental approach. In its most innocent form, this stereotype presents consumer ideas about the achievements of "Western" civilization: moving and heated sidewalks, walls that radiate or absorb heat, self-growing dwellings and "self-disposable" garbage. In the worst case, all these wonders are concentrated in one place and

exhibit furious activity. The crazy environment is constantly cooking, painting, illuminating, moving, buzzing, producing, destroying, and transforming. An essential difference from the "womb" designs is that here the emphasis is on action rather than the meaning of action (care for man). These principles of action can be divided into three categories: the "black box", self-reproduction, and transmutation. The black box variant is characteristic of electronic designs, with the very word "electronics" being both the principle of action and the illustration of its limitless possibilities. An example is a self-propelling house: electronic monitors and a computer of God knows what generation analyze the direction of the wind, the incidence of the sun rays, the temperature, humidity, radiation, and the master's need to be here or there. In accordance with the results of the analysis, the house exhibits tropism.

Self-reproduction in this design is usually associated with biomass, less frequently with plastics, genetic engineering, or organic chemistry. The designer sets a bio-chemical self-programming algorithm and the environment starts to grow its own elements. Biomass becomes a kind of meta-, or environmental, substance. Especially popular in this series are vegetational designs, which were given the name of "baobab," borrowed from one of the designs where the dwelling/tree was as big as a baobab tree and was able to grow as fast as bamboo. In these designs, the integrity of the living environment is that of a tree which provides the inhabitants with all their needs, like a tree provides for a wood-borer.

Transmutation in these designs is usually based on the "black box" concept. The environment easily transforms its elements using mechanisms of transmutation inherent within it: a car in the garage is easily transformed into a motor-boat, the house into a car, a handkerchief into a tablecloth, the tablecloth into boots, etc.

3) Paradise (The Garden of Eden): This stereotype is based on the insatiable yearning of a young urbanoid to escape into natural harmony and is implemented under the slogan "Forward to Nature!" ("*Vperëd, k prirode!*") The design is characterized by a desire to fill the living environment with as many elements of flora and fauna as



possible. Whereas the biological transmutation designs suggested above mainly imitate natural processes (the morphology of environmental units being artificial and corresponding to the accepted analogies of "paradise"), here the "naturalness" of the environment becomes self-sufficient. The dwelling is located in a wood or is a plant like the "baobab." The walls grow branches which become hangars, curtain rails, or bookshelves. The ceiling (or floor) is an aquarium with fish. Cages with decorative animals and birds are found in the most unexpected places. The utilitarian meaning and the functionality of this plant and animal environment are poorly understood and developed. The authors commonly maintain that plants and animals have an aesthetic, educational, and psycho-therapeutic value.

In all these "paradise" designs, the element which most annoyed and surprised us was the primitive individualism of their authors, who identified themselves with the consumers. The entire bulky fairy-tale design was in fact intended for one person: the author's dear self. Mechanisms for taking into account the needs of different people, or combinations of these needs, as well as the conditions of peaceful coexistence of predators and prey, were completely ignored. If we succeeded in conveying this fact to the authors, they introduced limitations which moved their designs closer to the type we conventionally called "Tea For Two."

4) Tea For Two: Essentially, this design is the same growing, transforming environment which produces infinite comfort and abundance in and of itself. There is, however, one difference: "Tea For Two" involves the principle of selection. This paradise is not for everyone, only the well-behaved, classical music fans, and brunettes taller than 175 cm. In short, it exists for me and my gal. The environment strictly follows this principle of exclusivity, and does not allow for strangers. How does it do so? The number of those willing to design selection mechanisms in paradise proved to be disappointingly great. Perhaps we were a bit too hard in designating this type of design a "Concentration Camp," by analogy with a phenomenon of design thinking in the games which we identified and similarly named.

5) Concentration Camp: The story behind the discovery of the "Concentration Camp" mechanism is as follows. The students were given a game task: a city park, which is a favorite place of rest for citizens. Along its paths people obsessed with keeping fit are galloping, ambling, trotting, jogging, and walking; mothers, nurses, and grannies are strolling with babies just learning to walk; girls are playing with a ball; a tired, nearly dizzy man on a business trip is trudging by himself, enjoying the fragrance of the lime trees; a group of asocial teenagers are hurrying past on some bad business. The benches are occupied by pensioners who are enjoying nature, servicemen who are enjoying ice cream, lovers, and women in provocative poses made up like Indian warriors. Behind the bushes slovenly men share a bottle of port. A group of proletarians are hammering away at a game of dominos. A group of pre-conscription youths are hanging out on two benches which have been moved together to the sound of a roaring stereo system. The task was to re-design the park so as to ensure that all these groups did not interfere with one another.

The decision of all the young designers was unanimous, quick and unique: zoning. Each group was allocated a zone in the form of a specially equipped area. Ideally, the joggers would go to the stadium, the servicemen to their barracks, the girls with a ball to a children's playground, the youths to front-page construction sites of the Five-Year Plan, the men with port to an alcoholic rehabilitation center, the proletarians home (where their wives would find them work, such as beating the carpet if they like hammering so much), the asocial teenagers to a reformatory, and the pensioners (who love a quiet rest) to specialized cozy park zones near hospitals, cemeteries, and columbaria. Thus, the park would remain a place only for pleasant-to-look-at nurses with babies and attractive lovers. Since the latter tend to get carried away, the bench would be made of 6x6 cm bars with one edge turned up.

As it was impossible to drive out unwelcome visitors, however, what remained was to divide the park into zones with fixed boundaries. Our counter-question was: Since the park is small, what should be done to ensure that the kissing lovers would not offend the

moral sensibilities of the grannies, and the men with port would not tempt the health fans with the sight of easily available pleasure? Again, the answer was quick and unanimous. The zones should be enclosed with high fences, or even better, hedges. We asked another embarrassing question: What if the pre-conscription youths, contrary to the students' predictions, occupied the children's playground for their gatherings, while the men with port, having fouled the bushes, occupied the lovers' benches? The solution was to provide special attendants to keep order and correct the distribution of the visitors. Our young colleagues were not joking—they were sure that this was the only possible solution.

We later received many designs based on the principle of strict zoning and strengthening the interconnections between man, his social role, and his dwelling. These designs are of multiple-story cities or underground settlements in which transport facilities and means of communication quickly distribute people into different levels. Each level is intended for an individual social stratum distinguished by socio-professional, economic, ethnic, demographic, psychological, or cultural features. There is a shopping center in which, after showing documents confirming that they belong to this or that category, people are provided for according to their respective consumer group. Such a system of guarding and inspection mechanisms rules out the possibility of anyone entering the wrong zone.

The mechanisms which ensure segregation in the designs are both material and institutional. The material group includes fences, turnstiles, doors, and transport facilities which respond selectively to each consumer. For instance, an elevator automatically lets a passenger out on his prescribed floor according to a table of ranks. In general, our students liked designing consumer selection and control devices such as special doors, locks which administer an electric shock to intruders; cabs designed for a definite weight or height; security monitors; sound alarms; tokens; and means of personal, civil, or social identification. As for the institutions which perform the selecting, spying, and punishing, no special fantasy was needed here. These are well-known and dear to our hearts: guards, doorkeepers, militia and

citizen patrols, as well as the laws of territoriality impelling legal owners of a territory to enthusiastically drive out any stranger.

6) Minimization: In principle, if it were possible to design a "Tea for Two" which operated like a "Horn of Plenty" for all pairs, there would be no need for segregation mechanisms. However, we actually received a large number of designs of quite another sort. These designs aimed at minimizing or reducing man's needs and organized an environment that would facilitate this minimization and set a fixed minimum level of need. The designs in this series fall into the following stereotypes.

a) Barracks: These designs reflect the values and activities of a temporary resident—a marginal citizen or a migrant. They are based on the assumption that the social sub-system of the consumer (who is both customer and author of the design) cannot maintain the ecological equilibrium. The consumer's activities are harmful to the environment and for purposes of self-preservation, one must change the environment regularly, leaving behind a dumping place or desert.

The first common underlying principle of these designs was the transposition of the project in time. The submission of a design was usually preceded by an elegiac oral presentation which stated that the design was intended for realization in the year 2000 and something. By that time, mankind will have learned to handle the problems of congested cities, transport, famine, supply of raw materials, environmental pollution, etc. Thus, there will be a green lawn on which semi-spherical houses of light, brightly painted materials are located. The author lets mankind solve its problems without him. He will come as big as life to that problem-free future and will place his spherical structures on specially prepared lawns. This touching care for future, well-provided descendants exhibited by our young compatriot living neck-deep in social waste means nothing more than a desire to give up everything and flee.

The second underlying principle was the sorting of the consumer into different layers in space by 1) designing high-rise residential buildings the lower stories of which would be occupied either by industry or completely neglected, leading to a kind of chaos or hell; or 2) developing regions such as the ocean depths (because land is no longer suitable for living), the Tibetan mountains, the Antarctic, the Sahara deserts, or the Centaurus constellation. Our designer (and consumer at the same time) is prepared to endure any hardship, spend whatever money is required to develop unexplored places, simply in order to eliminate the necessity of solving his own problems in the places where he lives.

b) Street Sweeper: At first glance, another minimalist design stereotype appears directly opposed to the intentions of the design itself. The authors of these designs submit their sketches with restrained and somewhat defiant dignity. They are serious people, they are not going to be carried away by preposterous schemes, they are interested in life as it is. They are determined to share the common man's problems. Under the conditions of the game, the students were given limitless design opportunities. The way in which they took advantage of these opportunities reminded us of the joke about the fisherman who caught the golden fish. The fish promises to fulfill any of his wishes, so the fisherman orders a beer. We called this family of projects "Street Sweepers."

This stereotype includes designs of environmental character which assume that, in principle, nothing should be changed in this life and one should not create anything radical. The designs propose to cover heat-supply lines with concrete slabs which would serve as pedestrian walkways; to connect refuse chutes to underground dumpsters where centrifuges would sort out waste and garbage, press the refuse into briquettes, and then supply them to corresponding processing plants; to tint, paint over, arrange, re-arrange, cover and re-decorate garbage pails. And in order to protect the renewed environment against vandalism, the students proposed using police patrols or extending a wire carrying an electric current (see "Concentration Camp").

c) Monk's Cell: We gave this name to a stereotype which included ascetic designs directly aimed at both reducing the personal material environment of man and man's corresponding needs. These designs made use of the following common design decisions and attitudes:

1) Spatial minimization of the environment and its simplification—a hostel as a set of individual sleeping-compartments with common rooms. In many designs, personalization of the environment is achieved through spatial and functional minimization: a sofa is turned into an arm chair, an arm chair into a chair, a chair into a bench—and the inhabitants use them in turn or all together. Economy is achieved through intensive usage regardless of the moral or physical inconvenience or the physical load placed on the environment. This results in premature wear.

2) An imaginary multi-functionality of objects (this is especially prominent in programs involving the quest for an assortment of objects). For example, each object should perform as many functions as possible—a moccasin can be a spooning soup, catch butterflies, or sift flour. This principle of variety frequently runs into bulky and awkward combinations (the reader is invited here to think of his own example).

3) Imitation of an exotic physical and material environment with the goal of either reducing the consumer's comfort (under the pretext of caring for his health and morality) or meeting the extravagant whimsies of a rich man fed up with abundance and luxury. A masterpiece of this kind is represented by the "baobab" design mentioned earlier: a rapidly growing tree in whose hollows rich tourists reside. The invulnerability of this design lies in the fact that there is nothing in these hollows; they are intended for rich tourists who have seen everything but have never lived in a tree-hollow.

The feature which unites all these designs is a rejection of the material and functional abundance characteristic of Western

civilization; a rejection of convenience, wealth, freedom of consumer decision and choice of lifestyle; and a tendency to economize effort, means, and materiel at the expense of basic human needs. Generally speaking, this is a psychology of poverty. Some authors, as indifferent to convenience as they were to physical and moral freedom, also chose to economize thought, effort, and means in the design process. Nevertheless, these authors attempted to conceal the misery of the design environment and their own capabilities with a false profundity. This resulted in a queer, but all too familiar world.

d) Coded World: These designs present the world as a temple of ancient religions which are completely symbolic. Symbolic meanings are prescribed to the material world and the functions and morphology of objects are forced to fit into these meanings at any price. In cases where this is impossible, objects are symbolized in a verbal, ideological manner. For example, in recent Soviet cultural studies of the Orient and the Middle Ages, man becomes an intellectual decoder. Consumption, thanks to the spritual and moral values it embodies, here appears to be the mechanism for decoding the environment. Everything round means wisdom and perfection; everything straight, truth; everything rectangular, order and harmony; everything vertical, lofty; everything white, purity.

Objects are not needed in and of themselves, but as something else. For example, a house was designed as a Rubik's Cube in which neighbors continually change and buildings in the administration area are painted with the colors of the national flag. Why? To unite people and strengthen their communal instincts. "What if people did not want to consume all this in this form?" we asked. See "Concentration Camp" for the answer.

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In light of the tasks which we had set for ourselves, we obtained a general picture of non-design, or pre-design, thinking. We had

wanted to show our students that the design process and corresponding "design thinking" are complex phenomena that they needed to learn, as they did not yet grasp them. The diagnosis—absence of design culture—was pre-determined, otherwise there would be no need for our course. It was clear that if young people had come to the Institute to learn design, then they did not yet know how to do so. However, the catalogue of design stereotypes provided by the game demonstrated that, in principle, a student could master professional design skills, find a job, and work as a designer without ever becoming one, that is, remaining a virgin as far as design culture is concerned.

The students' design stereotypes revealed that, on the whole, our students not only demonstrated a lack of design culture, but successfully imitated national design practice. They were completely determined to continue producing and reproducing the same material world (as well as the methods of its production and reproduction) which had already been successfully developed by their older colleagues: a dreary, anti-humanist, inconvenient, and as a rule, senseless environment which turns the daily life of a contemporary Soviet citizen into a continuous convulsion. What did we see? A desire to design, nothing more—evidence of a lack of desire to reproduce the design process as an integral whole. In short, absence of goal-setting.

Being a "Japanese" designer meant that our young colleagues had at their disposal all the technical means of the contemporary designer, not the right to tell tales. Neither authors of the "Paradise" designs nor the "Minimizers" were willing to understand this. Instead of setting themselves realistic and interesting goals, both groups became involved in uninteresting and professionally unrewarding tasks. The former set out to compile a list of mythological consumer lusts (which in itself could be an interesting and useful task if chosen consciously), the latter tried to reconstruct the social demands of the disintegrating political regime (which theoretically could be a productive task, but again only if explicitly identified as the task at hand).



The idea of being a "Japanese" designer was too playful, too childish for our students; the idea presupposed an infantile process of thinking and design, and the majority of our students (except for the authors of the "Street Sweeper" projects, who defiantly rejected the idea and demonstrated a feeble-minded maturity) did not mind following the infantile design pattern. But our students took the route of secondary infantilism, whereas we had expected primary infantilism from them. Primary infantilism is a condition of design; secondary infantilism is fatal to it. Primary infantilism is the ability to ask questions, however childish; secondary infantilism, the inability to ask questions. By this we mean questions like: Why and for whom am I doing this? How should I achieve the goal I set for myself? We demanded immediate answers from our young colleagues, but the answers were implicitly contained in and derived from the questions.

Secondary infantilism means avoiding questions and answers. In this case it was not clear what was designed, for whom, why, and even worse, how. The design thinking of the authors who suffered from the syndrome of secondary infantilism was either taken out of general context (i.e. the thinking itself was discrete), or was discontinuous, blurred, indefinite, unclear, or absent altogether.

What do we mean by this? First, there was no clear-cut, well-formulated goal in the designs. What was our author designing? This question puzzled the designer. He was well aware that he was designing a house, a park, an apartment, furniture, a settlement, etc. But this question was followed by more difficult ones: For whom? For what reason? Why? For whom are the hemispherical dwellings of the future intended? Clearly, people who will have already solved the most crucial socio-political, economic, and ecological problems of contemporary times will be able to cope with the morphology of their dwellings better than our author. His design is for no one—the author was reflecting himself. His dwelling was a creative act, but it was not design.

Whose interests do the authors of the sleeping compartments represent? Anyone but the consumer's. Let's make it a question of consumer protection, or no—a question of conscience, or an aesthetic

problem. In this case do the designers know who their misanthropic fantasies satisfy and why? Again, no! The authors of the "Paradise" designs seem to be concerned with the consumer's moral comfort, but elementary questions reveal that, in fact, discomfort and lack of freedom are being designed. Why did the authors not think about this? Because they did not want to think about it—goals were replaced by wishes.

Secondly, the students lacked any idea of the means of implementing their designs, not to mention various biomasses, plastics, electronic devices, and "black boxes" which perform functional miracles in contemporary science-fiction and technology-oriented thinking. Consider, for example, one of the "Street Sweeper" designs in which heat-supply lines are covered with easily removable concrete slabs. The author was unaware that he had set himself an engineering rather than a design task. In contrast to engineers who design heat-supply lines, he had no idea of the scope of tasks involved in resolving this kind of problem. He intruded into foreign territory. Why? By substituting a "black box" for design implementation, he replaced his function as designer with that of a magician working miracles.

Third, discontinuity in time exists in the designs. The absence of situational analysis, problem-creation and problem-solving techniques gave rise to non-mastery of the category of time. Design involves the transposition of an object from the present to the future, actualization of that future, and the establishment of its links with the present. The present, in turn, proceeds from the past and tends to develop into a future. On a theoretical level, this is so trivial that it is embarrassing to write. On the level of design, however, this is very difficult to take into account. The present in this case appears as a tendency of (future) development which one needs to prognosticate. This is analytical work. Do the minimalist designs respond to tendencies of development in the environment? Apparently not. The tendency towards asceticism in daily life, both romantic and functional-manipulatory, completely exhausted itself in the late 1960s. It has been replaced by a tendency towards individualization of the environment and its material enrichment. Strange as it may seem, the absence of a flair for the direction of (future) development is also

characteristic of the "Paradise" designs; these designs reproduce the illusions of a technologically backward nation, illusions which the advanced nations rid themselves of a few decades ago.

The "Street Sweeper" and "Zoo" designs suffer overall from a lack of diachronic perspective. In the endless corrections, improvements, and redecoration one can perceive the doom of an archaic wizard who knows beforehand that all is vanity, all will be reduced to ash and dust—and it will be up to him to collect the ash and dust. The designs involving transposition in time are not worth discussing. The time perspective in them is so conventional, so devoid of serious motivation for the transposition, that what remains is solely the author's desire to eliminate the requirements imposed on a serious design project.

Fourth, spatial isolation is common to the designs. Having recovered from a shipwreck, Robinson Crusoe immediately asks himself where he is: on an island or a continent? Discovering that he is on a desert island, Robinson begins to build his world, but never loses his ties with the greater world. He burns fires, watches the sea, builds a boat. Our authors readily became Robinsons, as if the ties which bound them to civilization and the social world for 18-23 years had become unbearable. In the past, authors of isolationist projects, like Henry Thoreau in "Walden," attempted to reduce their interaction with the external world to a minimum; this minimum, however, was carefully calculated. Yet the students' designs were like "black holes"—they used matter and energy from without, but did not give anything to the outside world in return. The students did not try to relate the material environment of their designs to any kind of reality, not even an imagined reality if they did not like the existing one. Where will the baobab trees with hollows for rich tourists grow? Do heat-supply lines follow pedestrian walkways? In the "Zoo" designs, how can the miracles of botany be combined with transport routes and communication, heat, and water supply lines? Will society as a whole be divided into zones such as those in the "Concentration Camp" designs, or are these zones simply supposed to be oases of "real order?"

Questions of this kind have no end, but regrettably none of our young colleagues even tried to ask such questions of themselves. One consequence of the Robinson Crusoe designs was the anti-sociological and anti-economic character of the design decisions. None of the students tried to determine the social end-use of their designs. Moreover, this would be impossible to determine in the majority of cases, considering the character of the designs: they are socially anonymous, they have been designed for all and for no one. Even the consumer-oriented segregational designs of the "Concentration Camp" type do not require actual knowledge of the social status of those strata which they intend to serve.

The anti-economic character of the "Paradise" designs is obvious. Again, the condition of being a "Japanese" designer was understood as permission to disregard labor and material expenses connected with the development and implementation of the designs. Surprisingly, the "Cell" minimalist designs chosen for economic reasons (according to the principle, "The economy should be economic") did not presuppose even an approximate economic analysis. The strong economic intention to rob the consumer as much as possible discernible in these designs presupposes the question, in whose favor? Our designers did not know. The question of economic expediency should have arisen in the remaining design stereotypes, but did not.

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We understand, as we have already said, that if people decide to study, they don't know how to do something. But we are interested here in yet another point. The design omnipotence given to students under the rubric of being a "Japanese designer" turned into total design helplessness. Why? Because our students interpreted this condition as permission to free themselves from the conditions of real design practice. They could not answer the childish questions presupposed by primary infantilism, but then again, neither did they want to ask the questions. And with what enthusiasm did they invent and present their rubbish! They were very willing to design! But they

openly, although unconsciously, evaded designing: they had no desire to *design*. In philosophical terms, this is known as antimony. The junior students of the Sverdlovsk Architectural Institute wanted to design. They also did not want to design. To solve this antinomy, we attempted to approach the problem from another angle, namely, by undertaking a content analysis of the designs we received. We had first-class empirical material which provided a more comprehensive psychological picture of our fellow countrymen than bulky sociological studies or public speculations. Our conclusion was as follows.

To avoid any misunderstanding, the authors do not deny that they share the socio-psychological traits described below. Moreover, the conclusions we offer here are to a great extent tribute to that itch of self-accusation and self-abasement which has seized our people. When solving the problems which we had set ourselves in conducting these classes, however, we had to assume a reflective position, and this position allowed us to make some observations, or, if you like, self-observations.

The first feature of our students' psychology was an overall feeling of poverty. It was not destitution determined by the conditions of our existence, rather it was a deep conviction that these conditions cannot be changed, together with a readiness to accept and reproduce them. The most striking illustration of this feature was represented by the "Cell" designs. Who ordered the authors to perform this kind of maximum simplification, functional reduction, and spatial compression of the living environment to the minimum limit possible? No one. They demonstrated their own internal readiness to create such a miserable environment for their own use, not even bothering to justify it ideologically, a readiness which cannot even be justified ideologically. We suspect, however, that any ideological justification of poverty is nothing more than an admission of society's inability to overcome it. The majority of "Street Sweeper" designs reproduce the dismal policy of repairing potholes dictated by miserable municipal budgets and practiced for decades in Russia. No one limited budget allocations for developing and implementing our authors' designs. They simply reproduced the existing standard as a given, not even

contemplating the fact that this policy is precisely most wasteful in budget terms.

The authors of the "Gypsy Camp" designs did not stop to think that one should not design comfort and abundance in a physical environment alien to the consumer. They did not think, they guessed. In many designs, we saw all the severe charms of temporary migrant life: spaceships and orbital stations à la Tarkovskii's "Solaris," tents, wagons, bathyspheres, and mountain-based observatories with their primitive, state-room comfort. Transposition in time represents the same picture of material poverty, but for different reasons. The designers of these stereotypes were forced to resort to science, pseudo-science, and science-fiction. In this case, one rule always held: the further forward in time the designed environment, the sparser its details. It's difficult to depict details without imagining the possibilities of a future civilization, whereas predicting such possibilities becomes increasingly probable. Thus, in futurist designs, inter-object relationships are replaced by functional relationships (a device designed to do this or that) and the latter are generalized, resulting in the same poverty of output.

The "Paradise" designs which seem to involve abundance are, in fact, only modifications of the poverty psychology mentioned above. Essentially, these are not designs, but a poor man's dreams of fabulous wealth. They are not founded on the principle of active realization of a desired result; it is unclear where everything comes from if wealth is based on labor and inactivity is the substance of poverty. The "Womb" and "Horn of Plenty" designs are inactive not only in form, but in content as well. These designs are an idler's paradise. The forced super-industrialization imposed by the Bolsheviks in the thirties brought with it alienation of labor (in principle, alienation of labor is inherent in any industrial society) and carried it to the extreme. Labor and consumption were driven so far apart and the ineffective economic system made them so qualitatively incompatible that the idea that productive activity is the necessary cause of wealth was driven out of the minds of our countrymen.

We directed our students towards the design of everyday material life, but it came as a complete surprise to us that we were presented with models of pure and senseless consumption. Perhaps it seems difficult to suggest such a design orientation (designing everyday material life) to residents of a country virtually covered with useless scrap iron, concrete, and stinking factory chimneys which, by means of industrial production of the means of production, are destroying what remains of the inhabitable physical and cultural environment. A country in which the level of consumption of elementary conveniences has been reduced to a minimum below which the very possibility of physical and social survival becomes problematic, and for all that continues to decrease. Upon further consideration, however, we concluded that these conditions are the most favorable for producing beggars' fairytale designs of consumption.

The majority of residents of this country produce things not fit for personal consumption. Their salaries do not depend on the quantity nor the quality of their labor. The centralized system of distribution, which operates under conditions of complete and incurable shortages, cannot relate consumption to the character and quality of labor. There is no apparent causal relationship between production and consumption. Thus consumption takes on a magical character, it appears to be produced by the distribution system itself—by lines, shopping counters, and one's place near the distribution feeding-trough.

Our compatriot is simply unable to independently control the level and character of his personal consumption. He consumes what he is given and depends entirely on the system of distribution. His own personal feeling of the "womb" is an ontological given for him and thus psychologically justified. The centralized system of distribution necessarily concentrates goods in certain places creating the "Horn of Plenty" prototype through the back door, or in shops where goods in short supply are hidden, in storage depots, in special hard-currency shops, and lastly, in foreign countries from which our fellow countrymen—if they have been allowed out—return looking noticeably better.

Complete, harsh dependence on the state distribution system creates the idea that the in-the-womb state is the only one possible and therefore intellectual design energy is concentrated on its overall perfection. Yet the system is irrational; the simple communist principle underlying it—collect everything, then divide it equally—does not work. It is unclear just how and why we should divide excavators, slabs of pig iron, oil, raw cotton, pesticides, missiles, tanks, and other equally "necessary" products of everyday life that the Soviet autarkic economy has so enthusiastically been producing for fifty years. It is for this reason that the designs focus on the interaction between the consumer and the distribution system. Distribute to whom and how much? These are the questions that interest the majority of Soviet people. Accordingly, the "Horn of Plenty" and "Tea for Two" designs on the one hand, and the "Cell" designs on the other, reflect the decisions: "to me (us), and as much as possible" and "to all, at least a little," respectively. A compromise also suggests itself. "We should get everything and as much as possible, the others should get equal shares—a little of everything."

The "Horn of Plenty" designs in fact describe the consumer potential of an individual: snatch everything you can from the system, be ready to grab your chance when fortune smiles on you. The "Tea for Two" designs solve the problem by sharply raising consumption within the framework of the womb state; the source of goods is isolated from the remaining suffering masses with the help of "Concentration Camp" mechanisms described above. Thus, "Mother's Womb" designs declare the complete dependence of the consumer on the centralized state system of distribution and justify the superiority of this system over the consumer, "Horn of Plenty" designs provide for individual consumption under the most favorable conditions, and "Tea for Two" designs provide the mechanisms for creating such conditions.

How has elitist consumer lust been preserved with such stability within the barracks system of communism, given its more or less explicit goal of distributing poverty equally among citizens? First, in spite of everything, every Soviet man maintains and cherishes ideas about normal (and thus, clearly above-average level) comfort—in order to realize them when the opportunity presents itself. Second, he



knows from both experience and theory that such an opportunity can exist because the system is not perfect for the following reasons:

1) the system of distribution needs people to concentrate a certain amount of a product in their hands and they thus get a chance of appropriating part of it, 2) some goods in short supply cannot be divided equally among all and are thus sold at random in different places at different times, creating the possibility of accidental appropriation, and 3) the system of levelling, which fights against the unordered distribution of goods, tries to allocate goods to specific places and groups of consumers, necessarily producing elite consumer groups. The authors of the "Concentration Camp" designs model society as a system of such groups.

One would assume that the minimalist "Cell" designs are the mouthpiece of the subdued masses who understand that the principle, "a little for all," applies to them. Not so. Conversations with the authors of ascetic designs showed that they themselves preferred the "Horn of Plenty" model. The "Cell" model was for others—to keep them out of the "Horn of Plenty." The rabble is so impudent and inventive, even such powerful concentration camp mechanisms such as electrified barbed wire and electronic identification cards do not work perfectly. There is no better protection against socially unjustified consumer demands than total poverty. The inhabitants of such cells would not need furniture or crockery—there would be no room for them. The environment, if carefully designed, would decide the level of consumption for the individual.

Even though they appear obvious at first glance, the "Concentration Camp" designs deserve special consideration. An explanation is needed to understand why authors want to segregate society into fixed social groups of unequal social status. At first glance, this differentiation seems to contradict the levelling intentions of the system, but the system by virtue of its irrationality is viable only if certain strata of the population take an interest in it. The strata which has elite consumption status possesses this interest. If the vertical principle of distribution of privilege is complemented by a horizontal one, meaning each group has something unavailable to the others, then the system binds all those included within it by means of

an all-around defensive interest. Since, (we remind you) the quantity and character of consumption of each individual are unrelated to his social contribution, all goods received are accepted as gifts. We will not dwell on the violence underlying the "Concentration Camp" designs. The readiness with which the state, even today, uses all kinds of violence, and the readiness with which this violence is accepted, are well-known. This readiness stems from the recognition that the system has absolute rights with respect to its citizens, a recognition which is really atonement on the part of people who wish to preserve their "womb"-like state at any cost.

In comparison to the zoning ideas of the "Concentration Camp" designs, the escapist "Gypsy Camp" designs appear rebellious, but the truth is that the migrant psychology of a temporary resident is nothing but an adaptation to the system. Feelings of temporality and the ephemeral nature of social, civil, and property ties redouble an individual's dependence on the mother's womb, i.e., the state. Throughout this century vast expanses of the country have been filled with huge waves of migrants. There was the forced resettlement of entire nations and classes (well-known operations involving enormous numbers of people), forced "voluntary" resettlement (evacuations during the war, for example, or the reprisals against "nonprogressive" villages), voluntary-administrative resettlement (i.e., the development of Siberia and the Far East, the colonization of the Union Republics, the construction of new cities), and finally, natural migration due to catastrophically rapid urbanization. These migrations had their effect: the country was transformed into a land of nomads. Millions torn from their roots were rushed in directions predetermined by the whirlwind force of administrative tyranny. Analogies with the great migrations that laid the foundations of entire countries and nations, such as Australia or the United States, are irrelevant. Wherever he drove a stake into the ground, the wagon of an American pioneer signified his home, his castle. A Soviet man has no home, even if he lives in a government residence enclosed by a high fence.

The system has done everything possible to prevent personalization of relationships, personalization of place, of occupation, of provisioning the vital necessities of life. This kind of

personalization contradicts the basic condition of being in the womb, as the individual becomes capable of controlling and constructing the conditions and results of his socially meaningful activities. This is inadmissible. The system makes use of all means of de-personalizing the world of the individual: economic—the absence any kind of private property, including one's place of residence; political-administrative—the complete absence of legal guarantees for citizens (nothing has changed as of today); environmental—the de-personalized residential environment of cities with their unlimited potential for anonymous social control; ideological—the inspirational romanticization of migration, the heroism of migration as well as the hardships and communal character of daily existence, by all propaganda media, including the arts in which the state engages.

The psychology of migration that took shape under these conditions is an indifference to one's personal environment, even a consumer-like attitude towards the environment; everyday slovenliness; a readiness to change one's place of residence according to rules imposed by the state; and an abstract patriotism (i.e., a Great-Power or nationalist patriotism) instead of love for one's place of residence and human surroundings. This abstract patriotism can easily transform, however, into contempt for a greater or smaller nation—witness the emigration hysteria that has today seized wide sections of the Soviet city-dwelling petit-bourgeoisie.

The temporary migrant's consumer attitude towards his physical living environment has created an ecological situation in which the one-sixth of the earth's surface called the Soviet Union will be transformed into a lunar landscape within a generation. In this sense, the nostalgic "Paradise" designs coincide with a certain shift in time with which we are accustomed to viewing the "green" movement that has spread throughout the world. The social context is quite different here, however. None of the designers who chose the "green" path attempted to follow the organic logic of the natural world and fit themselves into it with the help of environmental means. We discussed this above, beginning with the "baobab" and ending with post-modernist attempts to include elements of nature in the architectural structure of residential buildings.

The semi-official slogan of the early industrial period in Soviet history, "One can't wait for favors from nature," and the populist slogan of our time, "Save Nature," create an opposition resolvable only by the synthesis of organic and inorganic logic. Such a synthesis would mean granting equal right to a second principle in addition to that of stinking, clanking, senseless, and alienated industry. Alas, one can serve two masters, but a slave can belong to only one master. As long as the present system is maintained, there can be no talk of synthesizing organic and inorganic principles of the environment. Our authors, although they angrily denied it, were driven by the same utilitarian, migrant approach that drove their fathers and grandfathers to destroy everything around them in industrial-technocratic ecstasy. The only difference is that the fathers simply turned living nature into inorganic matter, whereas our designers intended to consume organic elements according to inorganic logic.

It is difficult to resign oneself to total poverty, especially if one knows it's possible to live otherwise. It's an altogether different matter if one does so for the sake of a noble cause. In this case, a system of symbols comes into play; by this mechanism, false profundity is attached to an unpleasant picture. It would be difficult to imagine a more pseudo-intellectual people than our own: everything in existence *means* something, refers to some noble objective, meaning, or ideal. The technique of symbolization as a justification for reality is simple—it is based on the objective characteristics of symbols. The symbol is very poor in content, schematic, and contains an infinite number of inherent meanings. It becomes sufficient to attach some higher meaning to a miserable, schematic fragment of reality and pretend that the resulting material squalor is not the final outcome, but rather the beginning of a process of ideal, not material, development. And if it is only a beginning, then one can make no demands of it. All the incidents and conditions of a Soviet citizen's life—even the wildest, most humiliating, and senseless of them—possess a higher meaning and are justified in terms of ideals: for the sake of world peace, for the bright, shining future, for the freedom and democracy of some or another people, for "the people," for the Party, for the state, for subsequent generations, for the Motherland, for family and for friends, for life on earth.

Such were the unexpected by-products of the design game. The lecture we devoted to analyzing these results was a bombshell. The students-convinced champions of the new material world-were shocked. Their opponent turned out to be not so much the "Partocracy" or the *nomenklatura* (on whose illiterate decrees the architectural misery of our cities and dwellings has been blamed), as their own consciousness-the goals and traditions they imbibed along with their mother's milk.

The necessity of introducing special mechanisms of self-analysis and internal examination into the design process was made obvious to all of us, both teachers and students. These mechanisms, unknown in other countries and unnecessary for designers who are raised in a different tradition, are needed to prevent deeply-held stereotypes of *Homo Sovieticus* from bursting forth in our work.