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II. REZENSIONEN

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The Aspectual Development of Performatives in Slavic

0. Preliminaries

This article attempts to sketch the aspectual development of performative utterances in the Slavic languages. It considers only indicative present-tense verb forms with a performative function, e.g., I promise ..., and not other constructions that also occur with a performative function (cf. the examples in Verschueren 1995, 302-303). Note here that morphologically present-tense forms of perfective verbs (e.g., Russian poprosu 'I ask/request') are considered to be just that—present-tense forms of perfective verbs. Unless otherwise specified, in this discussion the term performative is used as convenient shorthand for a performative utterance containing a present-tense verb form. Where verbs themselves are at issue, I employ the term performative verb.

The descriptive background of this discussion is the analysis of the aspectual coding of performatives presented by Dickey (2000, 175-202), according to which there exists an overall east-west division among Slavic languages regarding the acceptability of the perfective present in performatives, which is summed up in Table 1.

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1 This is in fact the only reasonable approach to such forms, as present-tense verb forms are used for future reference (the main function of the perfective present in North Slavic) in numerous languages. Further, even in North Slavic present-tense forms of perfective verbs are used in the narrative present, to express repeated events in the present, and in performative utterances (with varying frequency depending on the individual Slavic language). Finally, South Slavic languages all have separate, morphologically future-tense forms of perfective verbs (e.g., Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian pročitat ću 'I will read'). In view of these facts, the easiest option for description is to use the label perfective present to collectively refer to all morphologically present-tense forms of perfective verbs in Slavic languages.
As the research has shown the colour tone painting effect exists not only in the poetic but also in the prose text and functions as the artistic-expressive means underlining the general emotional-imaginative content of the work.

Privacy As They Saw It: Private Spaces in the Soviet Union of the 1920–1930s in Foreign Travelogues

While visiting Moscow in 1927, Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) wrote in his diary: "Bolshevism has abolished private life." (2005, 30). This view, shared by many other foreign travelers who visited the Soviet Union in the 1920–1930s, reflects the condition of what I propose to call “privatelessness”—the shrinking of the private sphere through the publicization of most spheres of social and personal life. The concept of privacy, which started to become more significant in the Western world in the 18th century, has long been challenged in Russia by its opposite of sobornost', which is inherent to the Russian religious and cultural tradition. "Privatelessness," present in Russian society even long before the Revolution, intensified after 1917 due to the complicated economic and demographic situation in the cities and the Soviet state's ideologically saturated housing policy, thereby leading foreigners to perceive the early USSR as a state without privacy.

This article investigates the writings of Western travelers of the 1920–1930s, the so-called Retours de l'U.R.S.S. [Returns from the

1 Walter Benjamin was in Moscow from December 6, 1926 until February 1, 1927. His visit to Russia was inspired by his love for a revolutionary named Asia Lacis, who lived in Moscow, as well as by a desire to better understand the situation in Russia and to find some work in Moscow. His trip was made possible by an editorial task to write an essay about Moscow for the magazine Die Kreatur. The notes he made for the essay were later published as Moskauer Tagebuch (1980).

2 "Der Bolschewisismus hat das Privatleben abgeschafft." (1927, 81) Here and further, translations from French and German into English are mine, apart from those for Benjamin's texts, which come from Benjamin 1986 and Benjamin 2005.

3 Cf. Utekhin's "transparency of life" (2004, 273), Schahadat's "Zwangsintimität" (2005, 8), and Grigor'eva's "total'naia intimizatsiia" (2005, 458).
Although foreign travels in the early USSR have received a great amount of attention in the academic community in the 20th and 21st centuries, these studies have tended to favor a more general analysis of how foreign tourism was organized and have elevated the "techniques of hospitality" over individual aspects of travelogues. This article aims to meet the challenge of filling this gap by exploring the portrayal of privacy in the main forms of housing in the early Soviet era (barracks, where workers had lived since Tsarist times, houses-communes, and communal flats, created in the post-revolutionary projects), which were often described by foreign visitors as places deprived of intimacy and individuality.

This paper tackles privacy from a cross-cultural perspective, focusing on Western travelers' perception of privacy in the USSR. The article endeavors to reveal the cultural uniqueness of privacy, which varies from culture to culture: a vivid picture of a perceived dissolution of privacy and its consequences for the individual should arise through the clash of the Western travelers' strong notion of privacy with its "weak" Soviet counterpart.

In order to present an integral picture of private life in Soviet homes as depicted in Western travelogues, I first develop a working concept of privacy and examine the cultural relativity of perceptions of privacy. Further on, I analyze foreign travelogues, which describe various types of housing in the early Soviet Union to uncover the depiction of the "abolition of private life" described by Benjamin, and of the effect that, according to foreign travelers, the infringement of privacy had on individuals. In doing so, I proceed from the larger structures of local privacy presented by houses to that of smaller objects, examining the depersonalization of the Soviet interior, and conclude by exposing the inevitable publicness of Soviet life as portended by Western visitors.

The "Untranslatable" of Privacy: Conceptual Framework and Cultural Variations

The key concept with which this article operates is privacy. Although its meaning may seem clear in everyday usage, attempts to
define it scientifically are somewhat more complicated. Etymologically, *private* comes from Latin *privatus* (the past participle of *privare* ['to deprive', 'to bereave']), which means 'apart from the state' (Merriam-Webster 1991, 378). Thus, the private sphere can be defined *ex negativo*, as one that is free of public or political influence. This liberal approach has been accomplished in Western philosophy by definitions of privacy bound together with the concepts of solitude (M. Weinstein 1971, Allen 2004), freedom (Westin 1967, W. Weinstein 1971), and autonomy (Beardsley 1971, Gross 1971). In this article, I will use Rössler's definition of privacy as "[...] a protected sphere or dimension of action and responsibility, where individuals can act in a way that is independent of decisions and influences from the public realm of state institutions and society at large." (2005, 6).

Rössler's definition suits the purpose of this article as it reflects the Western idea of what privacy is, or what it should be. This understanding of privacy had already begun to develop during the Enlightenment, as reflected in the individualization of civil architecture and domestic planning of the time. At the end of the 19th century Samuel Warren and Louis Brandeis advocated privacy as the "right to be let alone" (1890, 193). It is this understanding of privacy, based on the protection of individual interests from any intrusion, which prevailed in Western society of the early 20th century, when the travels to the USSR that are analyzed here were undertaken, and which thus was inherent to the mind of these foreign travelers and influenced their perception of Soviet society.

The primary hypothesis of this study is that the "cross-cultural travelers" (Boym 1994, 74) in the early Soviet Union were uniquely attuned to a more complete picture of the alleged "privatelessness" of Soviet citizens due to the stark incompatibility of Western and Soviet concepts of privacy. Despite the cultural "pervasiveness" of privacy, i.e. the fact that there arguably exists no culture without even a minimal requirement of privacy (Moore 1984, 276; Altman 1977, 66), it remains, according to Irwin Altman, "culturally unique" (1977, 66). Altman claimed that there are cultures with minimum or maximum privacy, within which privacy varies "in terms of the behavioral mechanisms used to regulate desired levels of privacy" (1977, 66). John Roberts and Thomas Gregor, having studied the existential anthropological research on the cross-cultural variability of privacy, sum up five privacy categories that the anthropologists single out: very low, low, intermediate, high and very high (1971, 201). If measured according to these models, European and American cultures seem to belong to cultures with maximum or high/very high privacy, as the traditional doctrine of privacy with inviolability of one's home and family prevails there. Meanwhile, early Soviet society, from a Western perspective, belongs to those with minimal or low/very low privacy, since after the October Revolution the key values of society found their expression in the collective, thus devaluing the importance of individual privacy:

Socialism began as a critique of "bourgeois" individualism and insisted that property must be converted from a private right to a public function. Marxists, more than most socialists, also elevated the collective—giving it moral and historical primacy over the individual and arguing that it was only in and through the collective that any individual could realise his potentialities. [...] A concern with privacy, let alone with private rights or individual satisfactions, was condemned as a bourgeois hangover (if not worse) and as totally alien to the collective spirit, culture and morality of peasants and workers. (Kamenka 1983, 274–275)

At the beginning of this section I called "privacy" an "untranslatable," building upon Svetlana Boym's idea that "privacy" belongs to the group of the so-called Russian "untranslatables"—"the

11 Mary Trull claims that an increased perception of privacy in England can be dated by the Great Rebuilding of the 15-16th century, when homes that were similar to Soviet commune-houses were replaced by more individual housing arrangements (2013, 52). Krishnan Kumar and Ekaterina Makarova argue that home became the key space of private life in the West in the 17th century (2008, 71).


13 However, even within this seemingly solid group of liberal societies there exist distinctions in the perception of privacy, according to Antoine Prost: "In theory the wall of private life encloses the entire domestic universe, the family and household. This frontier appears to be more sharply defined in France than it is in England or the United States." (1991, 51–52).
words that are culturally untranslatable into another language” (1994, 3). Whereas there do exist specifically Russian words that are untranslatable from Russian into other languages (Boym names, among others, sobornost’, sostradanie and toska; 1994, 3), “privacy” is untranslatable into Russian, which indicates the absence of the signifier, and, consequently, that of the signified. I believe that the privatization of Russian society, which intensified after the October Revolution, exerted an important influence on this weakness of the notion of privacy in Russian culture. Even before 1917, privacy in its Western sense was a rare guest in Russian homes—Orthodox religion building on the values of obshchina and the long lasting servdom preconditioned the collectivity of life of the majority of the Russian population (predominantly lower classes). The luxury of vie privée was available mostly to the upper-middle class and noble families, who could enjoy some solitude in their private rooms. The Revolution, which aimed to erase the differences between the classes, could not possibly raise all Russian workers and peasants to the level of noble life (it was not only economically impossible, but also ideologically contradictory to the cause of the Revolution), and thus downgraded the nobility to the level of the working class, imposing collectivity on everyone.

As emphasized earlier, the article focuses on Western perceptions of allegedly unprivate life in the early Soviet Union, without fully taking into account how Soviet citizens perceived those living conditions. However, this short historical overview may shed light on the intrasocietal discrepancy of perceptions of privacy by different groups in the Soviet population: whereas for some life with others was a normal condition, to which one had been accustomed before 1917, privacy in its Western sense was a rare guest in Russian homes—Orthodox religion building on the values of obshchina and the long lasting servdom preconditioned the collectivity of life of the majority of the Russian population (predominantly lower classes). The luxury of vie privée was available mostly to the upper-middle class and noble families, who could enjoy some solitude in their private rooms. The Revolution, which aimed to erase the differences between the classes, could not possibly raise all Russian workers and peasants to the level of noble life (it was not only economically impossible, but also ideologically contradictory to the cause of the Revolution), and thus downgraded the nobility to the level of the working class, imposing collectivity on everyone.

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14 Culturally-specific notions can never be translated absolutely adequately into another language, as a certain loss of translation data occurs due to the absence of cultural categories of the original language in the target language. Cf. “One country’s polarities of nature and culture which categories were a result of intersecting historical processes in the context of the development of Western civilization. Our pole is the ‘chaos’ of the popular culture, the private life of a person, the romantic countryside, the atmosphere of the rural house and the experience of life in the country. In contemporary Russian research, the term privatnost’ is used to denote “privacy” (see, e.g. Dzhoeva 2006, Prokhvacheva 2000). It is, however, a purely artificial construct for Russian, used exclusively in academic language and absent from colloquial or literary style.
by its striking otherness, which resulted in numerous testimonies in their travelogues, to be reviewed in the following sections.

Living Spaces Deprived of Intimacy: Soviet Housing in Foreign Travelogues

Once the Bolshevik Party seized power after the October Revolution, its first legal actions were directed at satisfying the demands of its most ardent supporters: the workers, the peasants, and the soldiers. This was achieved through the decrees “O mire” ( "On Peace") and “O zemle” (“On Land”). The latter, which abrogated private ownership of land, was complemented by the 1918 decree “Ob otmenе prava chastnoi sobstvennosti на nedvizhimost’ v gorodakh” (“On the abolition of the right to private property in the cities”), which nationalized all the housing facilities in cities with a population of more than 100,000 inhabitants (VTsIK 1918). This motion enabled the government to implement new housing policies, aimed at providing every city inhabitant with a living space: “quartering (vešeleniye), eviction (vyšeleniye) and concentration (uplotneniye).” (Sosnovy 1954, 15, emphasis and transliteration in the original). It was the implementation of these policies and the rapid urbanization after the introduction of the New Economic Policy and later industrialization campaigns that caused the condition of what foreigners perceived as “privatelessness” to flourish.19

At the beginning of the 1920s, most of the working population of the cities lived in barracks, which had been the typical housing since Tsarist times. Many foreign workers, who had come to the USSR either as invited instructors to teach leading Western techniques to their Soviet colleagues or as hopeful optimists disillusioned by the Great Depression in the West, depicted life in the barracks in their diaries. One of them was the American worker Andrew Smith, who arrived in the USSR with his family in March 1932 and found work in the Elektrozavod factory in Moscow.20 The book he wrote together with his wife Maria, I Was a Soviet Worker (1936), reflects his memories of the USSR, among which are those of life in barracks. In the following example, Smith describes a visit to the barracks where his friend, Kuznetsov, lived:

Kuznetsov lived with about 550 others, men and women, in a wooden structure about 800 feet long and fifteen feet wide. The room contained approximately 500 narrow beds, covered with mattresses filled with straw or dried leaves. There were no pillows, or blankets . Some of the residents had no beds and slept on the floor or in wooden boxes. In some cases, beds were used by one shift during the day and by others at night. There were no screens or walls to give any privacy . (Smith; Smith 1936, 43, emphasis mine)

An overcrowded space, which Smith describes as home to more than half thousand people, was a common picture in many industrial cities of the early Soviet Union. The shortage of space made it impossible to install any partitions (“screens or walls”), which resulted in total exposure as a normal condition of everyone living in the barrack. Whereas the Soviet workers were accustomed to it, Smith immediately noticed this obvious lack of the private space. He was also surprised that even inside one’s “supposedly private” part of the barrack the rights of the workers were further invaded upon: workers were obligated to share their beds with a person from another shift.

The motif of sharing a bed in turns with a stranger resembles the situation in a hotel, where guests sleep in beds soon after previous guests have left them.21 A hotel room is thus a space that is sequentially “shared” with people who have come before and will come after, the whole place depersonalized, rendered anonymous.

20 Disillusioned by the Great Depression, Smith decided to take a chance and move to the USSR in search of a better life. Unlike some of his compatriots, who moved to the USSR without prior knowledge of the system, he had been to the country before he decided to move, having visited it as a member of the workers’ delegation in 1929.

21 A hotel obviously offers to its visitors more comfort and service, protecting their privacy during their stay. Here neither access to the bed was limited nor was the bedding even changed in the barracks where people literally shared the same bed.
through this stream of temporary visitors. A hotel is a station of passage, a place to which an individual develops no or minimal personal connection, due to the short duration of one’s stay. Building on Michel Foucault, it can be designated a “heterotopia”—a place of otherness, a space where one is simultaneously inside and outside the normal world (Foucault 1984). Heterotopias include (among others) prisons, mental asylums, and military schools—all of these places united by their unhomeliness, which they develop through passage function, otherness, and depersonalization.

Due to the loss of both physical and moral intimacy, witnessed by foreign travelers in the Soviet private spaces, which seemed to them highly “unprivate”, the heterotopian comparisons are a recurrent motif in the travelogues. Thus, the French M. Yvon22 compared the barracks to a military casern:

Une autre sorte d’habitation, très répandue à l’heure actuelle, est celle des grandes baraques en bois, du genre des baraques Adrian de la guerre. Elles forment une pièce unique contenant de 25 à 40 lits, où couchent les célibataires et parfois même des ménages. [...] Dans l’Oural et en Sibérie de grandes villes de 100.000 habitants et plus sont formées, en grande partie, de ces baraques.23 (1936, 8, emphasis in the original)

Yvon’s comparison of Soviet workers’ housing to the military barracks of Louis Adrian24 reflects the discomfort the Frenchman felt, caused by the implementation of a system that, to him, would otherwise only be a temporary housing solution necessitated by war. He found it particularly inappropriate that not only the unmarried shared the place, but “even couples” (“mêmes des ménages”), who obviously needed more privacy in their marital life. Thus it is called into question whether a proper marital life is possible at all under such conditions—an issue addressed by John Scott (1912-1976), an American worker, who moved to the USSR in the early 1930s:25

Most of young workers in Barrack No.17 were unmarried. This was due, in the first place, to a general shortage of women in Magnitogorsk, as in any large construction camp. In the second place, it was a reflection of hard living conditions. After doing two shifts of heavy physical work at low temperatures on a bad diet, little energy was left for making love, particularly if it had to be done out-of-doors or in overcrowded rooms. (1989, 40-41)

The necessity to satisfy one’s sexual needs either by searching for privacy “out-of-doors” or in the “overcrowded rooms” was neither inspiring to the American nor his Soviet co-workers.

The desire to have a protected sphere and seclusion in certain periods of life is proper in a human being. In Privacy and Freedom, Alan Westin uses territorial patterns in the animal world to demonstrate that humans need privacy to satisfy basic biological necessities (1967, 9). The natural human striving for socialization alternates with just as naturally recurring demands for seclusion. Privacy is sought when we consider our actions to be high-

"And then, above all, there are other blocks. These squalid huts, houses on the outskirts of the city, stinking of a cesspit and swarming with bugs, where whole families are cramped in. These spacious salons cut into rooms with wooden partitions that do not reach the ceiling. These kitchen sinks, at which one stands in a queue to bathe. These Adrian barracks converted into a dormitory. Go and see it yourself, for God’s sake! There is no turnstile at the door.” (1937, 43).

23 “Another type of dwelling, very widespread at present, is that of large wooden barracks, like the Adrian barracks of the war. They form a single room containing 25 to 40 beds, where the unmarried and sometimes even couples sleep. [...] In the Urals and Siberia, big cities of 100.000 or more inhabitants are formed largely of these barracks.”
24 The barracks of Louis Adrian were prefabricated demountable wooden constructions which were introduced in the French Army in 1914 due to a shortage of tents and became widely used during World War I to lodge soldiers (Greenhalgh 2013, 121). Yvon’s compatriot Roland Dorgeles also saw some similarity to Adrian’s barracks, but in the communal flats: “Et puis, surtout, il y a les autres quartiers. Ces bicoques sordides, ces logis de zoniers, empuantis de vidange et grouillants de punaises où sont encaquetées des familles entières. Ces vastes salons découpées en chambre, avec des cloisons en planches qui n’atteignent pas le plafond. Ces éviers devant lesquels on fait queue pour se laver. Ces baraques Adrian converties en dortoir. Allez-y voir, bon Dieu! Il n’y pas de tourniquet à la porte.”
25 A 1931 graduate of the University of Wisconsin, he found himself “in America sadly dislocated, an America offering few opportunities for young energy and enthusiasm” (Scott 1989, 3). While America was recovering from the Great Depression, the USSR was building “an American dream,” trying to fulfill the Five-Year-Plan. The prospect of becoming a part of a grandiose project inspired Scott to try his luck in the country of Soviets, and in September 1932 he arrived in Magnitogorsk—a developing industrial city in the Urals. Scott lived there five years, described in his book Behind the Urals (1989).
ly intimate, connected to the experiences of shame and exposure (Gernstein 1978, 76). The ability to obtain privacy during these moments is constitutive for one's personality, as it protects one's sense of dignity. I believe that in the early Soviet Union, where the infringement upon one's dignity was unavoidable due to the massive publicization of everyday life, one had to shift from external mechanisms of self-protection to internal ones. If privacy (on a Western scale) was not available, one had to learn not to demand it, forging another ideal of privacy, in which the life shared with others was taken for granted. Especially striking for Western visitors was the communal usage of toilets and bathrooms by many families, presented by Alexander Wicksteed (1875–?), an Englishman who worked ten years as a schoolteacher in Moscow from 1923 to 1933:

I live in a large block of workmen’s dwellings, the two hundred rooms of which contain a population of one thousand odd, of whom over three hundred are children. The house is built on what is known here as the corridor system, that is to say that the great majority of the rooms are not arranged in flats but each opens independently on a common corridor with a common kitchen and lavatory! (Ten years in Russia have more or less acclimatized me, but by no means reconciled me, to the treatment an average Russian gives to a lavatory.) (1933, 112–113)

Such indiscretion about one's most intimate experiences was a shock for the Western visitors, because they came from what Stanley Benn called “a society with the concept of pudenda” (1988, 281). Although the concept of shame did not disappear from Soviet society after the October Revolution, it was re-evaluated, allowing for sharing private places of intimate experience such as beds, bathrooms and toilets due to an extreme housing situation, which was perceived by the Soviet population as a temporary inconvenience on the way to a bright Communist future. A new personality was molded in the USSR, one that was less demanding of privacy. Theodore Dreiser (1871–1945) perfectly portrayed this changed perception of reality in 1928. During his visit to the “capital of Bolshevia,” he was invited to visit Vsevolod Meierkhol’d, the renowned theatre director, in a mansion, “assigned to him and his artistic, technical and financial staffs after the revolution”:

But to return to Mr. Meierhold. To and fro go the members of his grand family—to the kitchen, the bath, the writing room, or the special chamber or chambers of the more important members—each one crisscrossing the steps of the other, each one achieving what, if any, privacy? Lord, I exclaimed! But neither in my distinguished host nor any member of his organization could I discern the least trace of self-consciousness in regard to all this. Russia. Government orders. The new social order. You might as well expect self-consciousness in a general and his staff encamped in a field. (1928, 66)

Apart from giving us yet another allusion to a military camp, Dreiser also found it deplorable that the further the implementation of new housing policies went, the less self-conscious people appeared to be about the opportunities that, in his opinion, had escaped them. What was incomprehensible for a Western visitor was becoming the norm for a Soviet citizen, whose mentality was slowly

26 For a detailed study on the connection between privacy, shame and exposure see Schneider 1977.

27 The results of this reprogramming of the self can be witnessed in the writing of Iosif Brodskii, who sixty years after the Revolution recollects his childhood of the 1950s in the communal flat with no sign of uneasiness: "Of course, we shared one toilet, one bathroom, and one kitchen. But the kitchen was fairly spacious, the toilet very decent and cozy. As for the bathroom, Russian hygienic habits are such that eleven people would seldom overlap either taking a bath or doing their basic laundry. The latter hung in the two corridors that connected the rooms to the kitchen, and one knew the underwear of one’s neighbours by heart." (Brodsky 1986, 454).

28 Cf. "[...] the Revolution, which [...] has inspired the mass of the proletariat, at any rate, with a genuinely actinic hope. They are prepared, quite cheerfully, to submit for the sake of the future to privations that would seem to the Englishman or American altogether intolerable." (Wicksteed 1933, 39–40).

29 The American author sailed from New York on October 19, 1927 and spent 11 weeks in Russia, visiting not only Moscow and Leningrad, but also "such far inland cities and outlying regions as Perm, Novo-Sibirsk, Novgorod, Kiev, Kharkov, Stalin, Rostov, Tiflis, Baku, Batoum, and all of the region bordering on the Black Sea between Batoum and Odessa" (Dreiser 1928, 9). He belonged to some of those famous people who were specially invited to Russia: in Dreiser’s case, for the 10th Anniversary of the October Revolution (Razvinova, 1967). His trip resulted in the book Dreiser looks at Russia (1928).
ly being adjusted to state policy. An effective method of enforcing this new mentality was collective living, which, in addition to the barracks, was implemented through houses-communes and the infamous kommunalki—the communal flats.

Houses-communes (doma-kommuny) were an innovative project that aimed to create a new, collective personality, in opposition to the individual aspirations of the bourgeoisie, through collective byt.\(^\text{30}\) Herbert (1896–1983) and Elsbeth (1900–1988) Weichmann, a German couple who visited the country in autumn 1930 as tourists, were brought by a guide to see a house of the future, which “is shown to every foreign excursion”\(^\text{31}\)—a visit they described in their book Alltag im Soujetsstaat [Everyday Life in the Soviet State] (1932):

Interessiert durchwandert man die Räume und ist bereit, das tägliche Leben eines solchen Kommunehauses kennenzulernen. Die Zimmer münden alle wie in einem Hotel auf einen breiten Korridor. Sie sind räumlich gleichmäßig klein angelegt, nur 2½ mal 3 Meter groß, und haben ein einziges Fenster gegenüber der Tür. In einem solchen Zimmer leben zwei Menschen. [...] Nur dem Schlaf sind also Wände zwischen Menschen und Menschen gestattet. **Jede wache Lebensäußerung muß sich in einer Gemeinschaft vollziehen.**\(^\text{32}\) (1932, 30–31, emphasis mine)

Despite the much greater intimacy such houses offered in comparison to the barracks, the German couple still did not feel like they were in a home: they subconsciously perceived a multitude of rooms giving way to a long corridor as a hotel (“like in a hotel”).

The external publicization of life in the houses-communes through architectural planning reinforced the internal publicization cultivated in the inhabitants: one was habituated to spend most of one’s time in public (“Every activity while awake must take place in a community”). The kindergarten, communal cooking laboratories and canteens were necessarily present either in the building itself or in the adjacent complex, facilitating and simultaneously collectivizing the life of the inhabitants. Some of the houses-communes also provided facilities for leisure. These were pointed out to the Weichmanns during their visit, but all of them turned out to be locked:

Die gemeinsamen Räume, die Bücherei, das Klubzimmer, das Theater und die Nästube waren alle versperrt. Welches Gesetz der Geselligkeit öffnet sie den Hausbewohnern? Wo ist die Grenze zwischen freiem Willen und Dienstreglement, zwischen Wohnung und Kasern?\(^\text{33}\) (1932, 31)

The border between free will and enforced daily routine seemed very fragile to the German couple: just as Yvon saw the Adrian barracks in the barracks of the workers, so did the Weichmanns perceive the limitation of one’s will and personal space as a sign of a regimented military life rather than a civil one (“Where is the line between free will and military regulations, between home and the casern?”). Autonomy was gradually excluded from the menu of homo sovieticus, and with little autonomy left, freedom was also bound to vanish. The travelers perceived it so trenchantly that in some of the travelogues it resulted in comparisons to prisons, such as Henri Béraud’s (1885–1958) Ce que j’ai vu a Moscou [What I Saw in Moscow] (1925):\(^\text{34}\)

\(^{30}\) The project started in the mid-1920s and was abolished after the resolution “O perestroike byta” [“On the reconstruction of daily life”] adopted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party on May 16, 1930 (Lehina 1999, 169). Some of the houses which had been built before the project was turned down, were finally given into the usage of the privileged groups of the Soviet society (Boyym 1994, 128). For a detailed presentation of the houses-communes, see Khazanova 1970, Khazanova 1980, Lissitzky 1970, 35–42, and Lebina 1999, 159–176.

\(^{31}\) “Jeder ausländischen Exkursion gezeigt wird” (1932, 30).

\(^{32}\) “One wanders with interest through the rooms and is ready to get to know the daily life of such a house-commune. All the rooms open on a wide corridor, like in a hotel. They are spatially all uniformly small, only 2½ on 3 meters large, and have a single window opposite the door. Two people live in such a room. [...] The walls thus exist between people only for sleep. **Every activity while awake must take place in a community.**”

\(^{33}\) “The common rooms, the library, the clubroom, the theater and the sewing room were all locked. Which law of sociability opens them for the residents? Where is the line between free will and military regulations, between home and the casern?”

\(^{34}\) Béraud was a French journalist sent to Russia by the editor of Journal in the summer of 1925. He had been born to a family of workers—a fact that he claimed to be an advantage of his travel account: “Ainsi, camarades, c’est avec les yeux d’un citoyen très attaché aux droits de sa classe que j’ai vu la Russie.” [“Thus, comrades, it is with the eyes of a citizen committed to the rights of his class that I saw Russia.”] (Béraud 1925, II).
Béraud's lines describe the infamous condensation policy, which brought the “most Soviet” housing arrangement—communal flats—to life.36 Despite his biased opinion, based on the nobility’s rather than lower classes’ past (“Before, the apartments were big in Russia [...]”), he manages to reflect quite truthfully the essence of the condensation process. The inevitability of living in a kommunalka seemed to him to match the inevitability of someone being sent to prison: once inside, one lived “incarcerated in a kind of a vicious terror,” which one could not escape. Just as a prisoner’s will is limited upon entering the prison, so were the wills of the inhabitants of communal flats: it was the authorities and not the inhabitants who could decide on the number of tenants and the rooms they received. With more and more people coming to the cities, new tenants were constantly being quartered until the flat turned into a military camp or small town. As Benjamin noticed, joining Yvon, Dreiser and the Weichmanns in military metaphors:

Es bleibt auch kein Raum. Wohnungen, die früher in ihren fünf bis acht Zimmern eine einzige Familie aufnahmen, beherbergen jetzt oft deren acht. Durch die Flurtür tritt man in eine kleine Stadt, öfter noch in ein Feldlager. Schon im Vorraum kann man auf Betten stoßen. Zwischen vier Wänden wird ja nur kampiert [...]) (1927, 81, emphasis mine)

Instead of being private spaces, as—from the travelers’ point of view—homes should be, communal flats became spaces where the private and the public were mixed to such a degree that one could no longer differentiate between the two (cf. Evans, 2011, 46). In a space crammed with strangers borders between private and public were extremely fragile, which determined their high degree of transparency and violability (Vorob’eva 2014). The following section analyzes the depictions of what seemed to the travelers the infringements of privacy and sums up their consequences for individuals, highlighted in the travelogues.

What Was Lost and Gained on the Way to the Soviet Personality

When speaking about the violation of privacy, i.e. infringement of the physical and immaterial borders of personal space, it is important to differentiate between deliberate and voluntary intrusions. My analysis of the travelogues will demonstrate that both were present in the early USSR. It is also vital to understand how exactly privacy is invaded upon. Debbie Kasper singles out three types of privacy invasion: extraction (“a deliberate effort made to obtain something from a person or persons”), observation (“active ongoing surveillance of a person or persons”), and intrusion (“an unwelcome presence or interference in the life of a person or persons”)

35 “This is how the Soviet power has solved the housing crisis. They call it ‘condensation policy.’ [...] Is it necessary to describe the monstrous existence to which millions of Muscovites are convicted? It is easy to imagine when one knows the system. It consists of a policy of leaving citizens no more than sixteen cubic arshines (that is [...] eleven cubic meters per person). You have an apartment; the census commission arrives. Anything beyond the quantity of the air, walls and ceiling that you are entitled to is assigned to other tenants. Before, apartments were big in Russia: now, there are often two, three, four families who share a kitchen, a hall and everything else. [...] Everyone lives incarcerated in a kind of a vicious terror.”

Within each of these groups she identifies primary activities through which privacy is violated: “extraction” is performed via “taking”, subdivided into stockpiling, appropriation/disclosure and inner-state invasion; observation, which can be physical, communicative or behavioral, via “watching”; and intrusion, either bodily or sensory, is achieved by “entering” (2005, 76–80).

In connection to the three-dimensional model of privacy, extraction and observation can undoubtedly be identified as violations of informational privacy, whereas intrusion is linked to local privacy. What is missing from Kasper’s classification is “verbal” intrusion—an orally expressed disapproval of one’s actions. This category would complement the possible violations of the three-dimensional sphere as it describes an infringement of decisional privacy.

Whereas the local dimension might seem the most encompassing, as both informational and decisional privacy are usually protected if they are within a protected local dimension, I maintain that no dimension can be separated from or prioritized over the others. In certain conditions each of the three can play a crucial role in safeguarding one’s personality. The tangible local privacy, based on physical structures, and the more metaphysical informational and decisional privacy are narrowly intertwined, so that once one of the components is violated, the others might be under threat as well. Although the present article claims local privacy to be its main study target, other dimensions will inevitably come into play, and the infringements upon them will have to be analyzed as side effects of local privacy violation.

Although the above-mentioned theory is based on the Western concept of privacy, it proves helpful in structuring the depictions of what seemed to foreign travelers as infringements of privacy in the Soviet Union, and allows for establishing cause-and-effect relations between these alleged infringements and *homo sovieticus* traits portrayed in the travelogues.

First, as the travelogues show, when living in a communal flat, one automatically gained access to information about one’s neighbors: the infringement of local privacy entailed the violation of the informational one, as discussed earlier. The “taking” of information described by Kasper already started at the front door with one bell for more than a dozen people. The visitor therefore learned the names of everyone living in the flat, while the tenants learned upon whom the visitor was calling, as Egon Erwin Kisch related:

In der inneren Stadt gibt es Wohnungen, in denen früher eine einzige Familie lebte, jetzt liest man auf der Tafel vierzehn Namen; besucht man den, der als erster angeschrieben steht, so läutet man einmal, besucht man den zweiten, so läutet man zweimal, auf vierzehnmaliges Signal erscheint der Letzte der langen Reihe. Dieser Unglückliche muß immer zählen, solange ein Besucher klingelt, während sich zum Beispiel sein Nachbar vom „Quartier vier“ ruhig auf die andere Seite legen darf, da das fünfte Signal ertönt [...] (1927, 61)

Control over one’s own information was not in the hands of individuals in the overcrowded flats: in the early Soviet Union instead of private possession of information collective possession arose. The borders of one’s intimate sphere were redrawn on the principle of neighborhood: self-disclosure was not a choice (at least in front of one’s neighbors), for it was unavoidable that neighbors would eventually discover much information about their flat mates.

The appropriation of information was facilitated by the architectural features of the *kommunalka*, namely the thinness of walls or partitions between the rooms, which increased one’s exposure to the others. Emil Julius Gumbel (1891–1966) described private life in an ultimately public space, in which details of one person’s

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371 “There are apartments in the city center where only one family lived previously, but now one reads fourteen names near the doorbell. If one visits the person listed first, one rings once, the second–twice, and after ringing fourteen times the person listed the last in this long list appears. This unfortunate person must always count as long as a visitor rings while, for example, his neighbor from the “fourth flat” can turn quietly on the other side, once the fifth signal sounds [...]”

40 For control over information and its relation to privacy, see Westin 1967, 5. For personal and collective possession of information, see Petro­nio 2002, 6.

41 Emil Julius Gumbel made a trip in winter 1925/1926 as an individual traveler, without a guide. He worked in the Marx-Engels-Institute in Moscow and thus lived in the same conditions as his Soviet co-workers.
everyday life were continuously in plain view and within another person’s hearing:

Zur Linderung der Not werden die vorhandenen Räume durch Bretterwände aufgeteilt. Die Teilung ist nur fiktiv, und wenn auf Zimmer Nr. 1 Iwan Iwanowitsch niest, so kann auf Nr. 10 Peter Petrowitsch ihm Gesundheit wünschen.42 (1927, 56)

One knew when the neighbors were having a fight, who was drinking heavily, who had problems at work, etc. Even one’s feelings were no longer a mystery if the emotions became so strong that they were reflected on one’s face:

Il y a l’homme que l’on croise dans le vestibule et dont la face fer­mée est une meule que l’on a sur le cœur. Il y a l’enfant qui crie, le ménage qui se querelle ... [...] Mais ce compartimentage, ces rapprochements forcés et qui deviennent intolérables, ces gens, comme des cailloux dans vos chaussures! Véritable leçon de haine universelle. Le premier droit de l’homme et, peut-être, son plus grand besoin: la solitude. On est si difficilement seul à Moscou!43 (Durtain 1928, 218-219, emphasis mine)

Solitude, which Luc Durtain44 designated “a person’s primary right,”44 was a rare treat in urban parts of the early Soviet Union. According to Hourmant, “au pays de l’avenir radieux” (2000), hunting for privacy was the primary activity of the homo sovieticus (cf. Fitzpatrick 1999), as the “distance-setting mechanisms,” which “define territorial spacing of individuals in the group” (Westin 1967, 9), were reset in the common spaces of the early USSR, shortening the intimate distance to a minimum. It had a deep effect not only on the individual, whose feelings were “read” by the neighbors, but also on the neighbors, who, as Durtain rightfully observed, had from now on “cobblestones in their shoes”—the moral weight of sharing others’ secrets. I argue that the travelogues thus demonstrate that not only was one’s privacy violated in a positive sense, but it also was infringed upon in the negative—one’s right “not to know” the personal information of the others.46

The inevitability of personal disclosure was perceived by the government as an unparalleled opportunity to gather information about potential “enemies of the state.” The collective, which was supposed to become the primary law-enforcement structure, turned into the primary source of information for one of the most omniscient law-enforcement structures in history—the GPU. Beginning in the 1920s, by the mid-1930s a widespread network of GPU informants developed, which allowed Alfred Fabre-Luce (1899–1983)47 to describe communal flats in 1927 as places where “Don Juan dines every evening with the Commander.”48

According to the Western travelogues, being under constant surveillance deeply affected the personality of Soviet citizens. The urge to have a protected sphere is justified by an individual’s inability to act freely under constant observation by other members of society. Hubert Humphrey points out that total exposure affects the truthfulness of one’s actions: “We act differently if we believe we are being observed. If we can never be sure whether or not we are being watched and listened to, all our actions will be altered and our very character will change.” (1967, viii; cf. Wasserstrom 1984, 321-322). One needs a “safe haven” (Rössler 2005, 93) to act genuinely, a metaphorical veil,49 which was hard to find when living together with

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42 To meet the need the existing rooms are divided by wooden partitions. The division is only fictitious, and if Ivan Ivanovich sneezes in room 1, so Petr Petrovich in room 10 can say: “Bless you!”

43 “Don Juan dines every evening with the Commander.” (1927, 94).

44 Durtain came to the USSR in 1928 as a companion to Georges Duhamel, who had been invited by the Soviet Academy of Arts.

45 Cf. Warren and Brandeis’s “right to be let alone” (1890, 193).

46 Cf. “principle of disattendability”, developed by Raymond Geuss on the basis of Erving Goffman’s theories of disattendability and civil inattention: “The principle of disattendability states, that in such [public] contexts and places I am to be unobtrusive or, at any rate, to avoid being systematically obtrusive. In other words, I am to allow the other whom I may encounter to disattend me, to get on with whatever business he or she has without needing to take account of me. I am not to force myself on anyone’s attention.” (2001, 13-14.) Whereas disattendability prescribes one to refrain from attracting too much attention to oneself in public places, civil inattention requires one to abstain from paying unnecessary attention to people around (Goffman, 1963a, 1963b).

47 Fabre-Luce visited Russia on June 26–August 4, 1927, accompanied by André Beucler. His trip resulted in the book Russie 1927 (1927).

48 “Ici Don Juan dine tous les soirs avec le Commandeur.” (1927, 94).

49 The veil is a part of traditional male clothing among the Tuareg.
other people. With the daily obligation to conform to others' opinion and to the universally implanted model of a good Soviet citizen, people gave up the traits that made them unique because everything that was different was suspicious and, potentially, counter-revolutionary. The communal flat was a kind of a Goffmanesque "total institution": it mortified the individual through "contaminative exposure" (Goffman 1961, 23). Conformism was becoming the main trait of the Soviet character, as Lion Feuchtwanger (1884–1958) remarked in his Moskau 1937 [Moscow 1937]:

Daß diese Psychose um sich greifen konnte, spricht für jenen Konformismus, den viele der Sowjet-Union vorwerfen. Die Menschen der Union, sagen diese Tadler, seien entpersönlicht, ihr Lebensstil, ihre Meinungen normalisiert, gleichgeschaltet, uniformiert. (1993, 36)

Although for Feuchtwanger "conformism" meant the sharing of ideas about the basic principles of Communism, love for the Soviet Union, and the belief that the Soviet Union would be the happiest and most powerful country in the world (1993, 37), his words can also be applied to the Soviet personality. People were depersonalized, because the "authenticity" of their actions, which is constitutive for their autonomy and freedom (cf. Rössler 2005, 43), was taken away from them and substituted by conformity and universal collective values. André Gide (1869–1951) reported in his Retour de l’U.R.S.S. (1936/1937) an amebic "uniformité" of the Soviet people:

Une extraordinaire uniformité prévaut dans l’habillement; tout le monde est coiffé de la même coiffure. L’homme est si peu personnalisé qu’il semble qu’on devrait, pour parler des gens, user d’un partitif et dire non point: des hommes, mais: de l’homme. (1936/1937, 33)

Durant les mois d’été presque tout le monde est en blanc. Chacun ressemble à tous. Nulle part, autant que dans les rues de Moscou, n’est sensible le résultat du nivellement social: une société sans classes, dont chaque membre paraît avoir les mêmes besoins. J’exagère un peu; mais à peine. Une extraordinaire uniformité règne dans les mises; sans doute elle paraîtrait également dans les esprits, si seulement on pouvait les voir. [...]. À première vue l’individu se fond ici dans la masse, est si peu particularisé qu’il semble qu’on devrait, pour parler des gens, user d’un partitif et dire non point: des hommes, mais: de l’homme. (1936/1937, 33)

The individual was dissolving: in Gide’s eyes there was only a tiny part of him left, hence the usage of the partial article in French: "de l’homme." According to the French writer, one was not simply living life with others: one was co-living the life of others: people woke up in the same flats, put on the same clothes, went to the same working places, ate the same food, and spent their leisure time in the same way. Although the shortage of living space and everyday goods partially accounted for this situation, it also reflected the Soviet state’s ideological politics: instilling conformity guaranteed the communist machine would run smoothly. According to the historian Jochen Hellbeck, Soviet power was bringing up "atomized" individuals, who were "(...) deprived of the means to organize themselves independently and forced into silence" (2000, 78).

What Western travelogues also show is the reinforcement of individual depersonalization by relational depersonalization: with the shortening of intimate distance, the value of intimate experiences and relations decreased drastically. Privacy, as Ferdinand Schoeman argued, serves as a necessary precondition for the rise and development of personal relations and as a guarantee of their inviolability: "(...) respect for privacy enriches social and person-

Robert Murphy studied the role of the veil in the construction of social relations and regulation of privacy distance in their society (1984).

Feuchtwanger belonged to the so-called "sympathizing intellectuals" who visited the USSR in 1937 by invitation of the Soviet Government. He was one of the few writers who were honored with a personal interview with Joseph Stalin. His book Moskau 1937 mostly praised the achievements of the Soviet system and was thus met with great enthusiasm.

"The fact that this psychosis is widespread is confirmed by the conformity, of which many accuse the Soviet Union. The people of the Union, these critics say, are depersonalized, their lifestyle and their opinions are normalized, brought into line, uniformed."

"...Almost everyone wears white during the summer months. Everyone looks like everyone else. Nowhere, except in the streets of Moscow, is the result of the social equalization so vivid: a classless society, each member of which seems to have the same needs. I exaggerate a little, but barely. An extraordinary uniformity prevails in dress; undoubtedly, it would appear also in their minds, if only one could see them. [...] At first glance, the individual dissolves into the mass; he is so little individualized that it seems that in order to speak about a person, one would have to refer to him as a part of the whole (‘of man’)."
al interaction by providing contexts for the development of varied kinds of relationships and multiple dimensions of personality." (1984, 413; cf. Fried 1984, 205). Quartered with a dozen strangers in one flat, one did not feel the sense of belonging that one feels when sharing a home with family. People are somehow united in heterotopias,: in military camps—by war, in prisons—by crime, in hospital—by illness, in hotels—by travel (cf. Lebina 1999, 183). In the communal flat, the uniting factor was the housing need and the bureaucratic will that brought people together. This did not suffice to raise the affection and care necessary for the development of proper personal relations. Not only were the Western travelers' expectations of friendship, mutual support and trust re-evaluated in the common spaces of the Soviet Union, but in many situations they seemed to be actually substituted by polar opposite feelings: suspicion, mistrust and sometimes hatred developed under the roofs of the communal flats, as the Weichmanns wrote:

Ein Vertrauen in die Hilfe der Gemeinschaft und eine Erziehung zur Gemeinschaft kann sich gewiss nicht unter Menschen entwickeln, die ihr Leben Schlafstelle an Schlafstelle verbringen müssen. Eine Atmosphäre von Haß, Mißtrauen und Mißgunst muß die Folge solcher Wohnverhältnisse sein [...].

(1932, 33)

The need for housing and the new ideology went hand in hand, weakening the bonds between individuals and strengthening their ties with the collective. Collective housing and the consequent devaluation of family were the first steps which the Soviet state undertook to build the collective man, followed by the transformation of the interior discussed below.

54 What also distinguishes most heterotopias is their temporariness: people usually remain there just for a certain period of time, having homes or private spaces they are planning to return to. Unlike heterotopias, to which they were often compared, kommunalki were a site of permanence: there was nothing else to go back to, no foreseeable end. This permanence is another uniting factor in kommunalka in addition to the housing need.

55 "A trust in the help of the community and education for the community can certainly not develop among people who must spend their lives with one bed next to another. The opposite must occur. An atmosphere of hatred, mistrust and resentment must be the result of such housing [...]."

The Depersonalized Interior of Soviet Homes

A new Soviet individual could only be raised in a new setting, stripped of the remnants of the past and adapted to new conditions. The micro-architecture of rooms was as important as the macro-architecture of the cities. Whereas the latter manifested itself in the construction of houses-communes, canteens, palaces of culture, and other places, impregnated with ideology of communal life, the former was implemented through multiple programs aimed at remodeling the flat itself.

An ideal "suitcase-flat" (Lisitskii 1975, 145–146), furnished with only the basics, became a model for most Soviet homes in the 1920–1930s. The minimalist interior was supposed to liberate the energy of the Soviet citizens by freeing some space: "Мы должны искать новых систем организации жилья, соответствующих линии нашего роста, жилья, преодолевающего мещанский идеал мой дом—моя крепость, жилья, освобождающего нашу энергию." (Lisitskii 1975, 145). This was also practical, as the new Soviet homes were not the noble and upper-class families' flats of Tsarist times, but just rooms and thus had little space for things not considered daily necessities. However, it turned out that this reduction went a bit too far, liberating the flat not only from superfluous objects, but also depriving it of some necessary ones. The prevalence of heavy industry over light industry in the Soviet economy resulted, among other things, in a decrease in furniture production, which had turned into a drastic shortage by the mid-1930s, as reported by Yvon:

Le mobilier des habitations est plus que primitive. Il n'y pas de lits pour tous les membres de la famille; les vêtements d'hiver étendus sur le plancher forment fréquemment le lit. Presque pas de chaises. De grandes malles pour ranger la vaisselle et les vêtements. L'armoire est rare; une armoire à glace, as simple soit-elle, est un luxe inconnu. (1936, 11)


57 "The rooms' furniture is beyond primitive. There are not enough beds for everyone in the family; winter clothes lying on the floor frequently serve as bed. There are almost no chairs. There stand large trunks for the dishes and clothes. A wardrobe is rare; a wardrobe with a mirror, as simple as it is, is an unknown luxury."
The interior, which in the spirit of communism was supposed to inspire the citizens to self-improvement, turned out to be a manifestation of their misery and need. Moreover, just as with clothes, food, and leisure, it enforced conformity: everyone felt at the same time equally rich and equally poor. Only in rare exceptions did some families possess a piece of furniture or room decoration that the neighbors did not have: everything was bought from the same shops, produced in the same factories—a gigantic IKEA project of the first half of the 20th century. Albert Rhys Williams (1883–1962), an American journalist who visited the USSR several times throughout the 1920-1930s, described the Soviet interior in his book The Soviets (1937) as “bleak and barren,” concluding that “[t]he innate artistry of the Russians manifested in so many other realms somehow fails to assert itself in their homes” (1937, 254).

Limited in choice and access to furniture, Soviet citizens developed a resourceful approach to creating a semblance of variety by moving furniture from time to time to “chase away the melancholy,” as Benjamin wrote:

Allwöchentlich werden die Möbel in den kahlen Zimmern umgestellt – das ist der einzige Luxus, den man mit ihnen sich gestattet, zugleich ein radikales Mittel, die „Gemütlichkeit“ samt der Melancholie, mit der sie bezahlt wird, aus dem Haus zu vertreiben. Darinnen halten die Menschen das Dasein aus, weil sie durch ihre Lebensweise ihm entfremdet sind.58 (1927, 82)

“Gemütlichkeit” [coziness] became a rare guest in Soviet homes, which was accounted for not only by deplorable furniture, but also by the absence of small personal objects. The latter disappeared from the Soviet interior as a result of a massive campaign against the symbols of the ancien régime, which started in the mid-1920s, when Vladimir Maiakovskii (1893–1930) called for disposal from petit-bourgeois objects in his poems “O diani” (1920/1921) and “Daesh’ iziachnuui zhizn” (1927). Maiakovskii’s appeals were backed up by Komsomol’skaia Pravda, the most influential Soviet newspaper of that time, which launched the “Protiv domashnegno khlama” [Down with Domestic Trash] campaign in 1928, aiming to purge flats of the filthy influence of the past (Boym 1994). The result of this campaign was sadly acknowledged by André Gide:

J’ai visité plusieurs des habitations de ce kolkhoze très prospère... Je voudrais exprimer la bizarre et attristante impression quil se dégage de chacun de ces intérieurs : celle d’une complète dépersonnalisation. Dans chacun d’eux les mêmes vêtements, le même portrait de Staline, et absolument rien d’autre; pas le moindre objet, le moindre souvenir personnel. Chaque demeure est interchangeable; au point que les kolkhoziens, interchangeables eux-mêmes semblent-t-il, démenageraient de l’une à l’autre sans même s’en apercevoir. Le bonheur est ainsi plus facilement obtenu certes! C’est aussi, me dira-t-on, que le kolkhozien prend tous ses plaisirs en commun. Sa chambre n’est plus qu’un gîte pour y dormir, tout l’intérêt de sa vie a passé dans le club, dans le parc de culture, dans tous les lieux de réunion. Que peut-on souhaiter de mieux? Le bonheur de tous ne s’obtient qu’en désindividualisant chacun. Le bonheur de tous ne s’obtient qu’aux dépens de chacun. Pour être heureux, soyez conformes.59 (1936/1937, 40-41, emphasis mine)

Gide condemned this policy of achieving common happiness at the cost of individual happiness and forced conformity: with everyday and everyone being the same, life for him seemed to be stripped of its unpredictability, thus depriving people of the joy of life. The French writer also recognized the high value placed upon personal objects that, “displaced from a common into individual history” (Boym 1994, 159), become the trace of one’s life and the

58 “The furniture in the bare rooms is rearranged weekly; this is the only luxury indulged in with them, and at the same time it is a radical means of expelling “coziness”—along with the melancholy with which it is paid for—from the house. People can bear to exist in it because they are estranged from it by their way of life.” (Benjamin 2005, 30).
telling of one's story. One personalizes the interior by choosing and placing objects into it. Any contestation of this choice is a limitation of one's decisional privacy. When the Soviet machine emptied the rooms of the symbols of personal life choices, it emphasized once again the importance of conformity over individuality, autonomy, and freedom. Depersonalization of the interior provoked the depersonalization of the self: the "I" of the Soviet citizen was supposed to merge with the "We" of the collective, individualization giving place to collectivity, both physical and moral (cf. Boym 1994, 159).

For Benjamin, the rooms that had been stripped of their individuality evoked a feeling of being in a hospital (yet another heterotopia):

In diesen Räumen, welche aussehen wie ein Lazarett nach der letzten Musterung, halten die Menschen das Leben aus, weil sie durch ihre Lebensweise ihnen entfremdet sind. Ihr Aufenthalt ist das Büro, der Klub, die Straße.60 (Benjamin, 1980, 38-39, emphasis mine)

The writer justly remarked private spaces become hostile when they are depersonalized—the bourgeois notion of "home, sweet home" clashed with the project of the "collective society-home" of the Soviet state. Western travelers tried in vain to see their ideal of home in Soviet houses:61 "Man haust in Rußland, aber man wohnt nicht. Man hat ein Dach über dem Kopf, aber kein Heim. Heim ist aber ein unmodern gewordener bourgeoiser Begriff." (Weichmann, 1932, 33, emphasis mine). Unable to find home at home, early Soviet citizens searched for the feeling of hominess elsewhere, and they found it in public places, as Feuchtwanger argues:

Das Dasein des Moskauers aber spielt sich zu einem großen Teil in der Öffentlichkeit ab; er liebt Straßenleben, hält sich gern in seinen Klubs und Versammlungsräumen auf, er ist ein leidenschaftlicher Debattierer und diskutiert lieber, als daß er still

60 "If people manage to bear rooms which look like infirmaries after inspection, it is because their way of life has so alienated them from domestic existence. The place in which they live is the office, the club, the street." (Benjamin 1986, 26). Cf.: "Like the ancient Greeks, Soviet citizens increasingly do a great deal of their living in public—in forums, sportfields, and the open-air." (Williams 1937, 253).
61 "One houses in Russia, but does not live. One has a roof above one's head, but not a home. Home is an obsolete bourgeois concept."
aim was the complete defeat of the enemy, i.e. private life, as the Weichmanns wrote:

_Das Privatleben wird nicht nur eingeschränkt, wie es verständlich wäre, um soziale Störungen des Gemeinschaftslebens auszuhalten. Es wird gleich reiner Tisch gemacht und die Abschaffung des Privatlebens überhaupt verkündet._

(1932, 75)

The notion of the private sphere that reigned in the West was unachievable for Soviet citizens due to the communality of their lives. They were building their own private sphere—a private sphere in public places, which induced a lack of autonomy and conformity. In a study of the diary of Stepan Podlubnyi, Jochen Hellbeck stated: "Podlubnyi's commitment to public values was all-embracing and unconditional because he possessed no positive notion of a private sphere in which to anchor a sense of self and personal values divergent from public norms." (2000, 95).

The evolution of the Soviet state was achieved at the cost of the "devolution of privacy" (Kasper 2005). The meticulously planned and implemented housing policy predetermined the success of the offensive against Soviet homes, which was fast and ruthless: the precarious private gave way to the newly appreciated public sphere, which became an omnipotent and almost exclusive ruler of the lives of Soviet citizens for the next several decades.

The Other Europe: A Conclusion

The deprivatization of individual life that occurred in the 1920 and 1930s and found its reflection in Western travelogues, depicting the publicization of Soviet homes, was an inevitable result of a new order trying to rid itself of the vestiges of the old. The Revolution brought about a change that history had witnessed previously in the heart of Europe: during the French revolution of 1789, when "the boundaries between public and private life were very unstable. _La chose publique, l'esprit publique_, invaded spheres of life that were normally private." (Hunn 1990, 13, emphasis in the original).

However, unlike France, which eventually reestablished the boundaries between these spheres, the Soviet Union transformed from the European ideal of the cradle of private life into the out-post of publicity, changing home and family were subjected substantially in order to forge the way for a new collective life. Multiple changes in legislation reduced the value of marriage, and new housing policies fostered communal life, bringing about intense transformations of the individual's personality, thereby engendering the phenomenon of the _homo sovieticus_.

Cross-cultural travelers who visited the USSR during the 1920–1930s witnessed and documented how the dictatorship of the proletariat was turning into the dictatorship _over_ the proletariat, as the value of the individual was decreasing proportionally to the increase of the role of the Party and the collective. The personal space that is so vital to the development of self-criticism and self-realization was swept away to give way to the collective _byt_. "Togetherness" became the nation's new salient trait and it remained on the scene for a long time.

Privacy, so cherished in the West, became a luxury that few Soviet citizens could afford. The infringements on local privacy triggered violations of the informational and decisional dimensions through the stockpiling of private information by GPU, the appropriation of information through the neighbors and the inner-state invasion of one's personality, which was possible due to the constant physical observation to which one was subjected. In the Soviet Union, living life with others turned into co-living the life of others: identical flats induced a sense of uniformity with the people, thereby stripping individuals of their personalities and the distinctive traits that made them who they were. It was this standardization of life, which started in the 1920 and 1930s in the USSR, that made the appearance of El'dar Riazanov's film _Ironia sud'by_ [The Irony of Fate] possible in 1975.

In the end, it seems that in this fight between public and private, only the state won and only the citizens lost. "Private" privacy of the few gave way to the ubiquitous "public" privacy, engendering a different perception of private space from the one in the West. The ideal of a rewarding life, self-realization, and self-respect was constructed in accordance with the Soviet context, deviating from its Western counterpart. Whereas the post-revolutionary publicization of life finally resulted in the development of a stronger
craving for privacy and the construction of a “more sharply differentiated private space” in Europe (Hunn 1990, 13). Soviet Russia continued the path of the highly public nature of the individual’s life, resulting in a gradual diminution of the private and individual rights claimed by its citizens in comparison to those called for by Western Europeans and Americans. It was only in the 1960s that a “privacy turn” occurred, triggered by the housing programs of Nikita Khrushchev’s government. Gradual individualization of housing in the Thaw period continued throughout the Stagnation era and continues in contemporary Russia.

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