Research Strategy

This essay is meant to illustrate the research strategies I applied in completing my project titled *Socialism and Representational Utopia: Club of the New Social Type* for graduate level course History and Theory III. The paper discussed an unbuilt architectural project *Club of the New Social Type* by a Russian architect Ivan Leonidov in 1928 in two major characteristics. It discussed in detail the brief, the drawing and the ambition of the project. The difficulty of this paper is that as an unbuilt project, there is only limited documentation that survived to this day. The architect himself is also not well-known as other modernist architects like Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and etc.

However, I was so fascinated by the drawings found in *Ivan Leonidov: The Complete Works* that I decided to work on it. The insufficient material at hand was the most difficult part of it. The architect barely talked on his design directly rather on his social ambition. I tried to looked into every single book and essay that I could found on Ivan Leonidov, yet those are all broadly discussing the formal architectural language or biography.

Then, I decided to look at other architects at a similar period hoping they would share similar ideas upon perception of art and world. I searched on Russian Avant-garde as key word instead of Ivan Leonidov only. Then I located those books and looked into the Index to see if they cover any material on Ivan Leonidov. If not, I would look alternately for the material covers his colleagues and teachers, whose name I learned from previous book on his biography. My bibliography grows largely in this direction, for example, *The Struggle for Utopia: Rodchenko, Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy : 1917-1946*, a book on his peers; *Dramaturgy and Architecture: Theatre, Utopia and the Built Environment*, a book on his teacher Vesnin and, a book on the general topic of Avant-garde.
By glancing through those books, I gained an essential background knowledge for the motivation of the architect in doing the project. Yet even though I managed to establish relationship between the project ambition to the social background, I still found it hard to link the formal expressions to the ambition. I went to my professor and talked to him about this separation of form, program and intention. My professor asked to look more into the drawing itself and distinguish it from precedents like Boulée, Ledoux or Mies. He told me to think about this cosmological expression to the ideological trends at that time in Soviet Union. This becomes the third key direction in my paper, on Marx, modernism and utopia. Under this topic, I looked into books like Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development, Architecture and Modernity: A Critique, and All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity. Those books are even more general and loosely related to my project, yet it is because of this looseness, it offered me more inspirations.

My research is mainly based on books and essays. As described previous, it is categorized into three phases, from specific to general. This accumulation of knowledge prepared me well enough to start my paper. I constantly referred to them during the writing to refine my thoughts. After the completion of the project, I am able to acquire a thorough understanding of not only the project itself but also the social and historical background.