A typical boat made of “space metal”. 3D-model by Alexandra Raeva. 2018.


The series of two posters presents the team project on exploring the inventive potential of the Russian northern periphery – the rural areas, distant from administrative centers, large industries and infrastructures, where people pursue a literally de-modernized way of living. In such settings, we searched for locally appropriate transport solutions to problems of daily mobility that involved minimum effort and material. The objects we found provided a new understanding of the “beauty and utility” formula, which appeared to be unique for each locality and personality of a maker. Our further plan is to move the research on the northern periphery inventiveness to the next level that is synchronous shoulder-to-shoulder collaboration between designers and real makers/users. Although the very idea of such collaboration with local makers is certainly not new, in our case what matters is the convergence of environmental, social, and economic factors.

Case Study 1. Cosmic Conversion

Moseevo is a remote village in Arkhangelsk Oblast with limited transport accessibility with the “outer world.” The primary transport vehicle is a traditional wooden boat called zyrianka, which is spread all over the area within the basin of the Mezen River. But in this particular village, since the 1990s, these boats have been made of metal: not of conventional steel or aluminum, but a high-quality rust-proof alloy.

Rocket parts found in the vicinity of Moseevo.
Credits: Igor Gmyrin, Alexandra Raeva.

Such an unusual material came literally from the sky: the village is situated on the course of space rockets launched from Plesetsk Cosmodrome. When rockets accelerate, their exhausted stages fall to the ground. Then the villagers search for them, collect fallen fragments, and reuse in a new practical way by making boats. To deal with this material, they invented and locally produced specific bricolage tools.

The space vessels are longer than traditional wooden boats – up to 2-2.5 meters – and their lifting capacity is up to 2.5 tons. Also, the space boats bypassed mass-produced factory models made of duralumin alloys in terms of running characteristics and lifting capacity. It takes about two-three weeks to make such a boat; the duration of use without repair is practically unlimited (while a wooden boat lasts about two years).

Today, when the spaceport is far from being in full use, and the metal is not widely available, people adjusted to new realities: they started using drones to search for remote crash sites.

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