

Down With the Middle-Class Loo - Smash the Capitalist Building

Trade – or:

How to Grow your Own House

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Obviously a text as short as this one cannot explain fully the intricate details of growing houses, but can only be a guideline to your decision on whether you want to go ahead with this project.

Enthusiasts should therefore consult the relevant literature for further details. Before starting a major gardening project such as this, you should be certain what you want to do with your house once it has grown up. Do you just want to live in it? Maybe you could grow some cockroaches in it and open a speciality restaurant ("*Renfield's Restaurant in the Vampire State Building*" perhaps? Or "*The Reader's Indigestible*"?). Or you might want to make it simple and just eat your house?

Have I gone bananas? No, I am just describing some ideas that have been put forward by allegedly respectable people and described without serious criticism by major publications that consider themselves serious. In at least one case these ideas resulted in a letter from a housing minister of a national government, who only had the highest praise for all this.

Only the restaurant is my own idea, or at least in part, for when I left Germany (West Germany that is) in 1980, people were just considering the utilisation of various insect-species as a source of food, and samples of honey-bees in sugar were well received by those stopped in the street and asked to taste them (yes, they were told what they were supposed to eat).

Methods of Planning

So that brings us to the two questions of the article: 1. How do the state and pressure

groups bring about a deterioration in residential construction?

2. How far can they go in doing so?

In answering these questions I wish to put most of the emphasis on the second one, as I believe that most readers will not be familiar with the extraordinary insanity that can be used as the basis for organising vital aspects of everyday life. This is not, I might add, about politicians of the recognised loony left or about the Khmer Rouge or some Eastern Europeans but about politicians who not so long ago went into a general election under the slogan: Freedom instead of Socialism.

Some years ago a Libertarian publication argued that we already have laws of the kind that would ban people from having purple cars because they are ugly. I would not disagree that they are ugly and of course I agree that such laws are bad. But suppose the government thought that purple cars were immensely pretty. At first they might start one of their usual poster campaigns and you would be greeted everywhere by slogans like: "An orgasm only lasts a few seconds. A purple car will give you pleasure for many years. Don't be frigid. Buy a purple car!"

Of course some people would notice, that blue cars last just as long and so the campaign would have little success. Then more direct measures would follow. Purple cars might become exempt from parking restrictions or even from car tax. Local councils would give you grants to have your car painted purple. But certainly measures would be implemented to prevent the number of purple cars actually going down. They could no longer be sold off to the scrap yard. To keep them as attractive as on the first day their owners would have to wash them daily. What has that got to do with buildings? Well, purple cars would in effect become listed. To cause a major change to their appearance like fitting an aerial for a car-radio would require listed car consent from the Department of the Environment.

The listing of buildings and conservation areas are the means by which houses deemed desirable for whatever absurd reasons are

being preserved. Planning controls make sure that nothing can be built that was not previously considered desirable by some bureaucrat or other.

Architecture: The Neo-Paleolithic School

Currently a high proportion of existing housing in the UK is still habitable, and all new houses are. But can we be so sure that this will remain the case? Can we trust planners not to actually require new buildings to be unsuitable for human habitation? Let us see what people might think up for housing. Let me quote from *Omni* Vol.3, No. 1 page 84: "In Germany's Black Forest the Luddite of the biotecture movement, Rudolf Doernach, director and founder of the Biotecture Institute in Stuttgart, has adapted a 300-year old weaving technique to build living willow houses. 'Architecture, as well as technology, is an evolutionary mistake,' Doernach comments caustically. 'It is basically parasitic, polluting and non-productive.'"

Would you want to live there? I remember all too well, when I was still a student at the University of Bochum, how fellow-students had vandalised the walls with graffiti like "concrete makes you ill". It was an established belief, that the sight of concrete would cause some sort of acute attack on the brain called "*Betonkoller*" (concrete sickness). Leftwingers thought that suffering *Betonkoller* was a valid excuse for any action whatsoever, and, while this was not accepted in general, the population at large agreed that looking at concrete was making people suicidal. Large numbers of so-called suicides among students were explained by the fact that the buildings of the university were made of concrete. Nobody bothered to question whether these were suicides at all, people just said: "Good students without major private problems get just as depressed by all this concrete as others", and that was enough to account for a corpse.

We see the alleged opposite effect in the *Omni* article mentioned above: 'Better health results from exposure to "psychological green" which benefits the mind.' Well, let me benefit your mind. Read my last quotation from *Omni* and think that it is YOUR house, that is being described. Please put a cushion

into your mouth first. Now read: "A biohouse sports the obvious advantages of any plant. It recycles water. It uses HUMAN WASTE (my emphasis) to fertilise the house. It produces food."

Now take the cushion out of your mouth again. See, it prevented the neighbours from hearing you scream. Imagine you don't go to a middle-class loo anymore. You just leave it on the carpet. Oh, I forgot of course there is no carpet, we wouldn't want to be imperialists and exploit the poor carpet-making Iranians, would we?) WCs are bad for the environment anyway. See *Der Spiegel* of March 29, 1982 page 90: 'In Hessen, where the state government recently had to answer a parliamentary question "regarding the removal of human excrement" environment secretary Kari Schneider (SPD) had it calculated that in his state annually 50 million cubic metres of water were being used to flush toilets.(1)

It was subsequently discussed by the German Standards Institute, how less water could be used. But on page 92 the same article asks us to consider: "In the eyes of consistent conservationists the reduction of water consumption in the WC is only half a solution anyway. Already it is being discussed in the BBU publication *Umweltmagazin* [Environment-magazine, my translation, BBU stands for Federal Association of Pressure Groups for the Protection of the Environment] whether water should be used for the purpose of removing faeces at all."

Towards the Slum of the 21st Century

Der Spiegel of September 24, 1984 has 12 pages with nothing but Doernach-style construction. If it is at all possible for you to see that article, even if you cannot read German, it is worthwhile. At the top of page 230 you find a photo of the 'grassroof estate' "*LaherMeadows*", with new houses that no self respecting drunken tramp in the slums of Manila would want to be seen in.

I translate from the same page: "A loam and grassroof estate is going up in Kassel since August. Planning: Professor Gemot Minke. The buildings are facing south to use solar energy; rainwater is not going into the drains

but is collected and kept in ponds." On page 231: ..."A child must be able to eat any building material without coming to harm", says Joachim Eberle who is building the flats-to-rent by contract for the *Karlsruher Life-insurance*.¹ This is referring to a different estate of moderately higher quality.) See, if a child swallows a blue car it will die - buy purple cars! The life insurance apparently also hired a dowser to look for water and "magnetic fields". Whether magnetic fields can turn you into a werewolf we are not told. A modern German knows such things.

What they can do though we find on page 242: 'At least as important as the building materials, the building-biologists consider the location of "sickening" rays, emanations and "fields" of terrestrial and extra-terrestrial kinds: Such "negative-zones" at the place of living or work are allegedly causing cancer and infertility, debility or at least sleeplessness.' (Quotation marks in original. Apparently even the authors of this newspaper-article don't believe all of this.)

Planning: The Consequences

But what does it all have to do with the state, coercion and parties which like to call themselves centre-right?

German towns prescribe a so-called "*Bebauungsplan*" for every area where construction is lawful at all. This plan details maximum and minimum size of permitted buildings, their overall type, number of windows, and all those sundry details that make you feel that you are really the mayor's property.

Professor Minke, the one working in Kassel, is quoted on page 239. He describes the *Bebauungsplan* for his area, for which he has the highest praise. Why is that? It makes it legally compulsory to have a roof made of grass. Apart from a plastic foil that carries the grass, the rest of the building *MUST* be made of loam.

Meanwhile the environment secretary lost his office. He was replaced not by a more conservative one, but by Joschka Fischer of the Green Party.⁽²⁾ The long article in *Der Spiegel* did not remain without response: the

edition of Oct 8, 1984 carries a letter from which I quote: "*Der Spiegel* title story describes construction from a point of view that has been much neglected in the past decades, much to the damage of our environment. In the past years we have often forgotten that ... construction requires much regard for the environment. To accelerate the necessary turnaround it is certainly helpful to learn about the colourful palette of possibilities of ecologically directed construction methods. ... I much welcome this development"

The letter is by Dr Oscar Schneider, federal secretary for planned land-usage, construction affairs and urban construction. He is a member of Helmut Kohl's cabinet and represents the "turnaround from Socialism".

Compulsory Follies?

Planning does not work. It does not even bring the results the majority of its supporters want. Most fears that might have any sensible foundation and an objective beyond preservation of the market value of one's house against competition are unfounded anyway. People should be free to build 300-storey skyscrapers in tiny Cornish villages. They probably could not afford it, and if they could, this would be a good way for them to become poor without hurting the rest of us. The village would not even necessarily become unpopular or lose out, for few things draw larger crowds (who will want to eat and drink and buy souvenirs) than the possibility of watching something outrageously idiotic.

Likewise, people should be free to build houses from the skulls of their ancestors held together by sea-gull droppings on prime inner-city building land. If you let people go ahead with their own brand of madness on their own land at their own expense, they will soon be so busy at it that they won't have the time left to attempt to impose it on us. If, however, we have a *Bebauungsplan* there is only one way for them to get what they want: make the rest of us have it too. Madmen put much more energy into lobbying than sane people who merely want to get on with their own lives. Sane people may then end up envying the early cave men.

The Libertarian Alliance is an independent, non-party group, with a shared desire to work for a free society.

1) Actually the idea was to store it in an open tank inside the house for a couple of years before fertilising the building with it, but I don't think that sounds much more attractive.

2) Since the time of writing Joschka Fischer has lost his office in the Hessen elections. The federal government of Helmut Kohl, mentioned later, is still in power and when they lose an election it will be won by a more left-wing party, not a more right-wing one

Free Life

POSCRIPT 2002: Peter Jansen was right. The Federal Government ruled by Kohl was eventually replaced by a coalition of Social Democrats and Greens. The foreign minister of this red-green coalition was none other than Joschka Fischer.