Compact Tailored Knowledge for the Construction Sector
SURECON – Sustainable Renovation and Construction

Qualification as SURECON.EU-Advisor

Curriculum Strand: Communication

The Spheres of Dwelling – Building – Renovating

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The Spheres of Dwelling – Building – Renovating

Overview:

- **The drama of sedentariness**
- **Bringing calm to the drama: Dwelling**
  - **Solutions to the drama: Cultivation forms of dwelling**
  - **The psychological sphere of „Dwelling“**
  - **The forces at work within this sphere**
- **As the backdrop to the drama: Building**

The Drama of Sedentariness

To a greater or lesser extent European cultures have been sedentary for several thousand years. We can also add a few observations here.

- **Seen within the context of the history of mankind, this is a relatively short time frame. We were nomads in one form or another for much longer periods of time prior to becoming settled (hunter –gatherers etc.).**
- **Sedentariness has prevailed because it offers many advantages over nomadic cultural forms. For example it is a precondition for the accumulation of property and for higher levels of division of labour – that is for our established form of economy and for our wealth (which has achieved a high level over the passing of time).**
- **However as is the case with solutions to all problems, the solution brings with it new problems.**
- **One of these is that once a certain degree of agglomeration (cities) has been reached, sedentariness forces us to cultivate new forms of social living, and produces new options for curtailing life (some of them highly problematical in their own right: „Babylon“).**
- **To a great extent we are aware of this problem horizon. What we are not aware of to a great extent are the psychological problem structures which result from sedentariness: The soul had to learn how to dwell.**

The resting state of the drama: Dwelling

What changes does „Dwelling“ bring with it?

- **One reduces one‘s mobility to a small area (in comparision with the activity radius of nomads), because dwelling involves a lot of everyday work which cannot be easily abandoned.**
- **The calm of dwelling is thus the result of multiple efforts and not just of an omission (of nomadic movement).**
- **Throughout thousands of years however we can sense that this peace and calm, achieved as the result of considerable effort, also brings with it loss (the longing to be far away). This can lead to manifest envy of more mobile forms of living, but primarily is a constant source of unsettledness in the heart of sedentariness: there are motives which are not satisfied by ‚dwelling‘.**
- **Cultural formations, which furthermore follow the fundamental guiding principle of „great mobility“ elicit a greater and different kind of fear than before in those who have become sedentary. (E.g. Armies: equally all demonstrative forms of non-settlement from the Huns through the Vikings to gypsies, tinkers and asylum seekers.)**
- **As a sedentary being one must actively mothball oneself in many respects. Otherwise one is unable to ‚dwell‘.**
- **The dark side of sedentariness which is produced by these self-denials contains in many parts an unconscious but extremely effective (and as is so often the case with the dark side of anything, rather unappealing) mixture of fear of „far-reaching mobility“ and envy of everything we are missing out on as we mothball ourselves.**

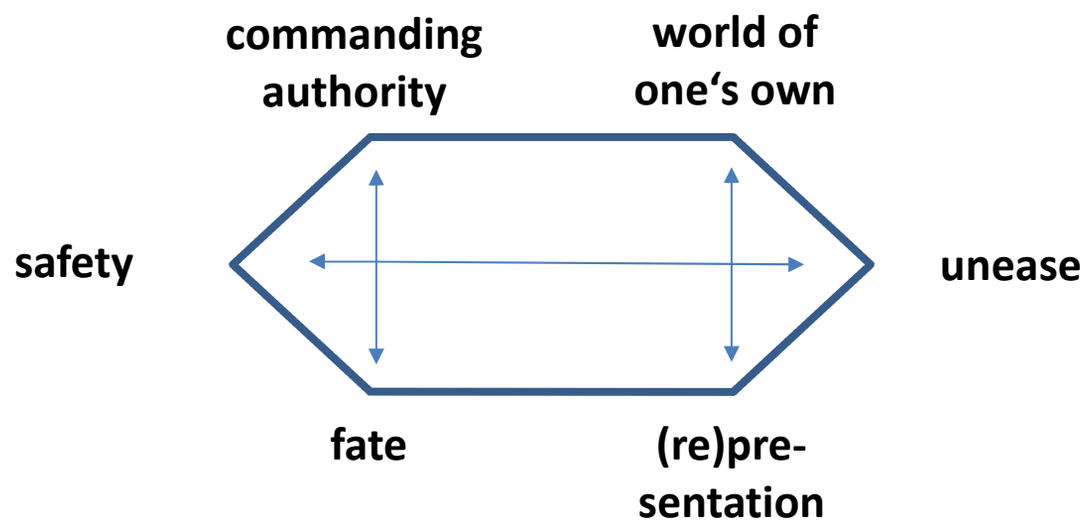
Solutions to the drama: Cultivation of forms of dwelling

What does the Fear-Envy-Combination bring about?

- **As a fundamental problem area it cannot be abolished. The resedentary lifestyle does have the aforementioned consequences (it has major advantages, as well), and they keep being dynamically effective.**
- **However in general it is possible to find good solutions in relation to the respective practical mode of dwelling, solutions which work, but do not dissolve the fundamental problem. Just as in the case of eating: it satisfies momentarily, but does not remove the fundamental problem – namely the dependency on food intake.**
- **The solutions for dwelling which have been developed over thousands of years, demonstrate in the final analysis two fundamental aspects: (1) They increase the level of safety within the dwellng sphere and succeed better and better in keeping at bay the hostile tendencies confronting it from the world outside. (2) And thanks to the continuum and frequency of invention , these solutions increase the level of comfort within the dwelling sphere (categories such as „room“, „furniture“, „technology“.....etc.). Of course all this is not free of drawbacks and downsides, but viewed overall the two trends prevails.**
- **This works, by , on the one hand , satisfying the fundamental motif of dwelling (namely safety) and, on the other hand, bringing the outside world - en miniature and domesticated - brought into the individual‘s own little dwelling world , with the result that you do not miss out on virtually anything while, calling it dwelling, you closet yourself away from the world**

The psychological sphere of „Dwelling“

The underlying tension in the dwelling sphere is that which exists between **safety**, which dwelling should guarantee and the constant **sense of unease**, which represents the principal (and not solely external) disturbability of the desired safety.



The forces within the sphere of dwelling: Safety

- The world outside remains outside (weather, intruders, neighbours…)
- ‚for eternity‘
- safe haven
- ‚being housed‘: The foundation of the form of living

→ A stable wall of protection

Internal tension: contentment ⟷ rigidification

The forces within the sphere of living: Unease

- „it‘s also nice somewhere else , and I‘m here in any case.“ (W. Busch)
- missed opportunities in life
- search for something new
- disposability of the form of living

→ **preliminary nature of life**

Internal tension: open mindedness ⟷ fearfulness

The forces within the sphere of dwelling: Commanding Authority

- house/apartment as a parade ground or battlefield
- ‚change the world' (neighbours, parking rules……asphalting….)
- (unremitting) DIY campaigns
- enforcement of the form of living

→ Command Centre

Internal tension: creating order ⟷ doggedness

The forces within the sphere of dwelling: Fate

- change as ‚a force in itself‘ (‚creature‘)
- traces of dwelling
- uninfluenceable things and events (weather, life cycles, accidents)
- adaptation of the form of living

→ a determining order

Internal tension: orientation ⟷ resignation

The forces within the sphere of dwelling: A world of one‘s own

- perfecting the world
- immunisation / isolation
- eccentricity (also in the sense of „more of the same“)
- taking the form of living to the extreme

→ the house of Eden

Internal Tension: creativity ⟷ overloading

The forces within the sphere of dwelling: (Re-)Presentation

- dimensions and proportions
- external ornamentation, fashions
- outward appearances (looking „established“)
- representation of the form of living

→ cultivation

Internal tension: realization ⟷ cliché

The backdrop to the drama: Building (I)

Our frame of reference here is exclusively that of the private building sector and buildings, which are generally in use by the building owners themselves.

Changes in focus in relation to „Dwelling“

- Solving the fundamental tension which exists in relation to motivation – namely safety versus unease - also remains a challenge when we deal with building, but the problem can be made more tangible if we change the focus: **The physical production process is moved to centre stage** thereby casting a whole new light on the scenario as a whole.
- On the one hand the problem of loss of flexibility re-emerges but in a slightly alleviated form. As long as one lives in rented accommodation, it will be relatively easy to transfer one‘s living style and all that goes with it to somewhere else. A house (property of one‘s own) involves a much more binding commitment on the part of its owner which makes it emotionally more costly for him/her to move on. However, this disadvantage is partially compensated by a considerably higher level of internal freedom.

The backdrop to the drama: Building (II)

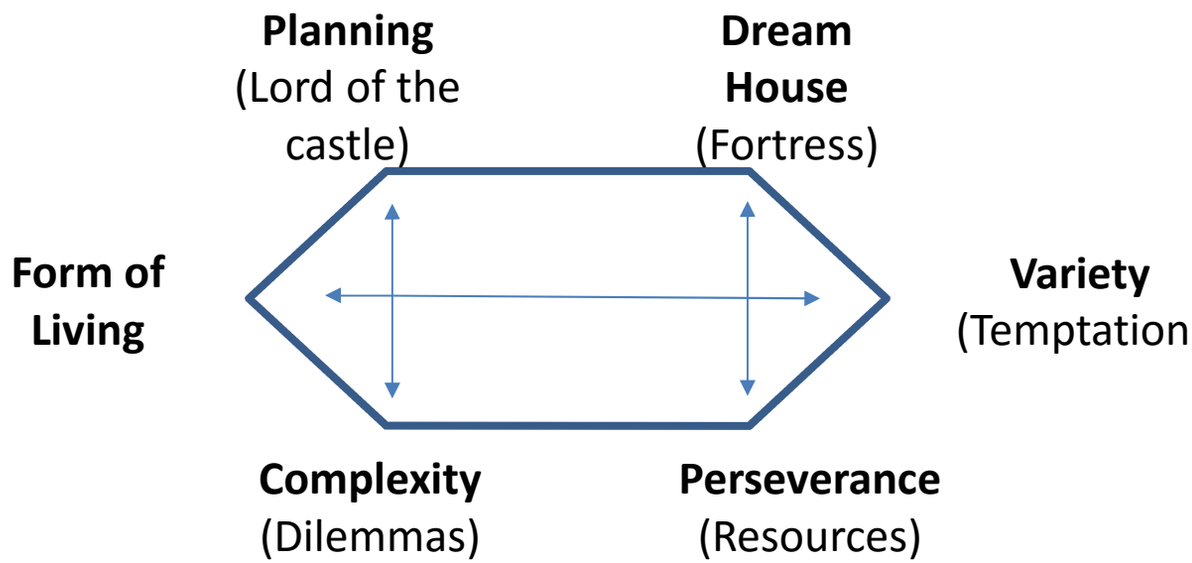
Our frame of reference here is exclusively that of the private building sector and buildings, which are generally in use by the building owners themselves.

Changes in focus in relation to „Dwelling "

- On the other hand however as a rule another topic is coming to the fore for building owners (and one not affecting people renting or living with their parents): the **„Family"** emerges as the main unit of importance. The family is to be provided with dwelling and parallel to this, the family is to be given the profile of a (mostly new) independent unit. In this respect building (or buying a house) represents a basic and very ancient form of social responsibility.
- Undertaking a build, makes it abundantly clear to the building owner that he will not be capable of assuming this responsibility on his own. He finds himself **in need of relying on others and being dependet of them** (architects, tradesmen). This is a constant source of irritation to building owners and nags at them.
- In the case of building, the mixture of fear and envy already present in relation to dwelling is further accentuated by the building owner's **shame** at his own powerlessness **and anger** towards those on whom he has become dependent - as a result of his own lack of knowledge and skills. Neither aspect will become fully expressed, but both will manifest themselves as mistrust and querulousness on the part of the building owners, or they take the form of complete submission to the views and suggestions of the experts – a behaviour which can suddenly and for no particular reason be reversed and cause the situation to escalate into a full scale revolt.

The psychological sphere of building:

The fundamental tension in relation to building is that which exists between the planning phase as a wish for empowerment and control and the vast complexity of the subject matter involved, which fundamentally endangers the security motive.



The ordinariness of the drama: Renovating (I)

Changes in Focus as compared with Building:

- The decision to build (or to buy a house) is mostly motivated by the orientation to create **„a world of one‘s own**“: One wishes by means of the social unit, for which one feels oneself responsible (Family) to move beyond the area of direct influence of other human beings (parents, neighbours, landlords) into a new area which promises a significantly higher level of freedom and self-determination.
- There is **something inherently heroic** in this decision and its realization. And this sense of heroism is significantly authenticated by the high level of expenditure involved (time, money, nerves) and the fact that for the individual concerned this is a unique happening. For the duration of the building project the building owner is at war with the world (blood, sweat and tears) but the objective makes it all worthwhile. The building owner perseveres and when the project is completed he will in fact have become what he already was in his imagination while building: The **Lord of the Castle**.
- In contrast **renovating** has its origins in a totally different corner of the motivation spectrum. Renovating **has its origins in „fate“**, but not in destiny as the inevitable frame of classical heroism or in a „stroke of fate“. Instead renovating reflects an everyday kind of fate. The forms of needs which lead to renovation work are unspectacular.
- Thus we have reached an interim conclusion: **Renovating isn‘t sexy!**

The ordinariness of the drama: Renovating (II)

Dealing with unspectacular needs

- How does the need to renovate come about? **The seal** on something or other within or on the house (the metaphor nearly always applies) **has failed** – in other words some component or material has finally fulfilled its destiny and reached the end of its decreed life cycle **in a manner impossible to overlook**.
- **Thus the basic motive** - the desire for „safety“ in the form of a safe interior-exterior boundary (self – other) - **has been offended**. Either the boundary has already been manifestly breached (the roof is leaking, the window is draughty, the water pipe is broken) or one anticipates that the breach will soon occur - because one is already so familiar with the forces of fate, that one knows exactly what‘s about to happen to the roof.
- The affront to the desire for safety inevitably leads first of all to a **strong reluctance** on the part of the individual to address the symptoms brought on by the breaching of the boundary in any way. The deciding question for advisory purposes is: **How does a building owner deal with his own reluctance** in a practical context?

The ordinariness of the drama: Renovating (III)

Dealing with unspectacular needs

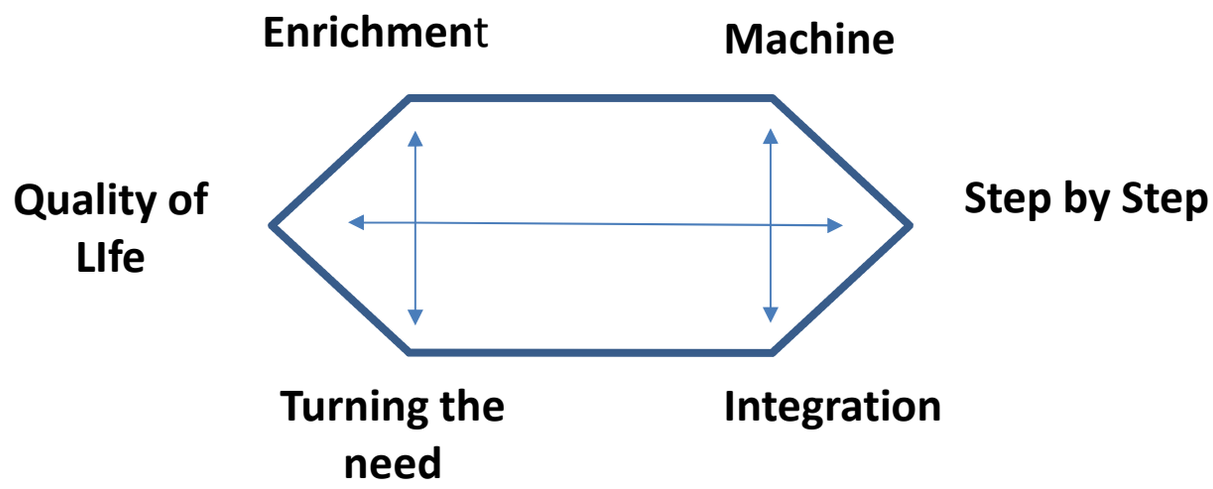
- When dealing with reluctance („one‘s weaker self“) a **continuum of strategies** will stretch out between the extremes of „wait until you have no other option“ and „nip things in the bud“.
- A deciding issue when giving advice is the picture that the individual building owner has of his position in relation to his own fate. In this case the continuum stretches **between the extremes of „victim of fate“ or „master of destiny“.**
- The basic psychological mechanism at play here is that of **active adoption**, which means that one actively embraces what has befallen one (or will befall one presently). A well known example of this is the „Stockholm Syndrome“ (Identification with the aggressor).
- **This mechanism is at work in the case of all building owners,** as are the extremes between which it is mediating. What distinguishes one building owner from another is the individual level of intensity.
- Put simply, the psychological benefit of active adoption consists in the **transformation of coercion into freedom** (without the coercion disappearing).

The starting point of the advisory process: Self image

- A key task in every individual advisory conversation is that of localising the respective building owner within the continuum of self images. In this respect **structured typification** provides a pragmatic and meaningful overview within the potentially endless variety of individual images.
- In each instance **Types are characteristic solutions to the basic tension**. They do not represent personality types or similar concepts. Types control all the factors involved in the sphere in a „typical“ form in terms of how they relate to each other without omitting anything. **They are always complete constellations of motives.**
- In this case, the typification orients towards the six factors at work in the sphere of „Renovation“ using them as potential sources of solutions. One factor will always come to the fore and lead, while the others will function as complementation, expansion, opposition etc.
- The orientation which achieves the assignment to one type is primarily of benefit to the adviser and not to the building owner. The building owners only profit from this on a secondary level, due to the fact that it forms the basis according to which type appropriate advice will be bestowed upon them.

The psychological sphere „Renovating“

The basic tension in relation to building is that which exists between the planning phase as a desire for empowerment and control and the vast complexity of the subject matter involved, which fundamentally endangers the security motive.



Preliminary closing comments:

The explanations of the sphere (typification) will follow later.

The sphere also describes two important possible variants:

- **Motivation:** a second source of predestined need can be **illnesses or accidents** the consequences of which may involve the necessity to carry out a deep renovation (conversion). Paradoxically from the advisory point of view situations which are more difficult in an existential sense may prove to be easier to manage, because the reluctance present is not primarily directed towards the need to renovate. On the contrary. In this case right from the outset renovating is part of a comprehensive solution to a form of living which has become problematical.
- **The advisory situation:** Suppose that **a couple** is seeking advice rather than a single building owner. Since spheres are collective anyway, this does not change the basic situation from the advisory point of view. In fact, the advisory process will gain, because in the case of married couples, appropriate conversation leading will make it by means of spontaneous representation (mini-drama) easier to identify the internal tensions within the form of matrimonial living.

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