

23 October 2024

Real Estate Policy of the Court – A Retrospective – Excerpts from EPSU-CJ flyers

➤ 11 Feb 2010

Building Projects: No more decisions without consulting the Staff!

The Court's building project has been the subject of many eulogies on the part of all those who commissioned, designed, financed and executed it.

In the words of the architect's self-panegyric in the Luxembourg review '*Wunnen*', the architectural ensemble of the Court of Justice is generously offered:

- *'to the individuals who occupy it and*
- *to those who look at it'.*

As regards the latter (in other words, as regards the image which the Court thus wishes to project to the outside world), it is entirely the responsibility of the Institution.

By contrast, as regards 'the individuals who occupy it', the least to be expected is to ask for their views prior to deciding to carry on regardless, along the same path, repeating and aggravating the same faults in future.

Five years ago, EPSU's forerunners predicted what has now become hard fact:

➤ 4 April 2005

Grandiose plans, miserable life!

The fourth extension of the complex of buildings used by the Court of Justice is under way.

The main new feature of this extension is that it is an upward extension: twin towers with 24 floors each, intended mainly to house the Translation Directorate.

A service structured into Language Units, each of which coincides, in principle, with a nationality!

Each language Unit will occupy 2 consecutive floors: to identify them, all that is needed is to hang up the flag of the Member State concerned!

What kind of image would that convey of a supposedly European civil service?

This kind of physical isolation will only reinforce clustering by nationality, a phenomenon that is already firmly rooted in the daily lives of our colleagues!

However, this was not taken into consideration at all; the architectural plans were only intended to enhance the image of the institution in the eyes of the outside world by incorporating it into a megalomaniac plan for the urban development of the Kirchberg.

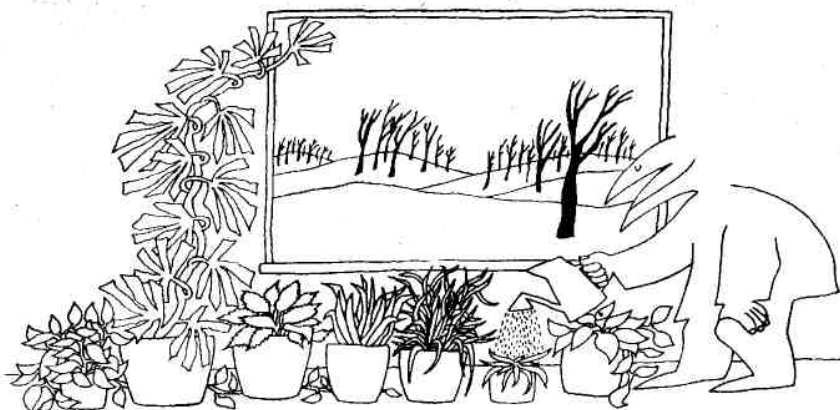
When this plan was adopted (in 2000, at the very latest), the Staff Committee, of which our trade unionists were not part, did not react or inform the personnel; when we were informed, we were told it was too late to bring changes.

Today, things look worse than we could have possibly imagined:

In the view of the technocrats, the current configuration of the rue du Fort Niedergrünwald is too "rural" and therefore incompatible with the plan to increase the density of the urban fabric, the stated aim of the development plan for the Kirchberg.

Acceptance of these grandiose plans by the institution gives the impression that it is sacrificing the working conditions of its staff to its own concerns about image and prestige.

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Before any further decisions are reached mortgaging the working conditions of future generations, EPSU requires that the Staff's representatives be consulted seriously, so as to avoid the humiliation of having to inform themselves about them from the Press.

No more decisions without consulting those most concerned: the Staff and their representatives!

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➤ 15 April 2010

A third tower: have you given it serious thought?

Tower buildings keep proliferating on the Kirchberg plateau regardless of the disastrous impact which they have on the morale of the occupants of this kind of buildings. By obtaining 'consensus' through opaque means, the Court of Justice seems to converge with interest groups which should be alien to, indeed incompatible with, its own nature and vocation, to reach a no-return 'decision' (?) bound to undermine the Institution's future.



In the 3rd-Tower business, several stakeholders are involved:

- (i) The Luxembourg authorities, which (having given a blank cheque to the Urbanisation and Development Fund for Kirchberg) wish to create a new 'landmark' and a new tourist attraction.
- (ii) The 'architect of sensations', who is establishing his fame and wealth at our expense.
- (iii) The construction businesses, which will not only line their pockets, but will also build in such a way as to ensure (through the height of the buildings and the materials they use) the highest possible cost of maintenance, safety and cleaning of the masterpiece of the 'architect of sensations'.

So far, the stakes involved are clearly identified. By contrast, what is puzzling is the ease with which the Court is rushing to endorse the construction of a 3rd Tower, higher than the previous ones, which are classified as monuments of aesthetic arrogance and contempt for people.

Without contesting the interest which the Court sees in having its entire staff together on the same site, EPSU opposes this being done:

1. In an artificial and thoughtless rush; and
2. To the detriment of a friendly working environment.

More specifically:

1. It can never be said that the office space created will be adequate to cover all future needs of the Institution (enlargements, new specialised bodies, etc.).
2. Underestimating the impact of the buildings on the 'morale of troops' will create a (probably latent) unease, which will result in a high staff turnover.

EPSU calls on the Court of Justice to avoid making twice –indeed aggravating– the same mistake, by building a 3rd Tower, which will increase isolation between services, and foster passivity, indifference and alienation of individuals from their Institution.

EPSU raises the question: What interest is there in a 29-storey Tower, other than installing on top of it a Belvedere, offering panoramic views over the Grand Duchy? Is such a 'tourist' use compatible with the sound functioning and the very nature of the Institution?

